

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

## RESOURCE FOR EDUCATORS

Suitable for ages 13 and above.

## ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

For this survey of artworks by Heman Chong, the exhibition space has been organised around nine keywords, which may be interpreted as chapters of a book: Words, Whispers, Ghosts, Journeys, Futures, Findings, Infrastructures, Surfaces and Endings.

This educational resource will focus on selected artworks that respond to the keywords **Words**, **Journeys**, **Futures**, **Findings** and **Endings**. Each room can be identified by a clipboard on the wall which includes an introduction to the room and the artwork labels for your information. Alternatively, you may download a digital copy of the exhibition content in English [here](#).

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Heman Chong (b. 1977) is a Singaporean artist whose work is located at the intersection between image, performance, situations and writing. His practice can be read as an imagining, interrogation and sometimes intervention into infrastructure as an everyday medium of politics.

He is the co-director and founder (with Renée Staal) of The Library of Unread Books which has been hosted by the NTU Centre for Contemporary Art, Singapore; The Museum of Contemporary Art and Design (MCAD), Manila; Casco, Utrecht; Kunstverein Milano, Milan; Jameel Arts Center, Dubai; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam and MOT (Museum of Contemporary Art), Tokyo.

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

## WORDS

### ABOUT THE ARTWORK

*The Library of Unread Books* is a library constituted by a community. To gain membership to this exclusive library, one will need to donate an unread book. Beginning with zero books in 2016, the inventory of books has grown with every presentation and currently comprises over 2,000 books. The books are arranged randomly so visitors will have to sieve through the different piles to look for a book of interest to them.

This library can be viewed as a “moving” sculpture as new members join with their unread books and visitors are free to move the books around.

This artwork is collected by the Singapore Art Museum under the National Collection and was previously presented at the Singapore Biennale 2022.

### DISCUSSION

- Do you think libraries hold books that are rarely or never read? Discuss if the existence of these unread books diminishes or enhances the library's value.
- Consider artist Joseph Beuys's theory of social sculpture. Can everything be art and does everyone have the potential to be an artist?



### ACTIVITY

- Browse the curated stack\* of unread books and write down one book title that piques your interest. List down two reasons for your choice.

*\*Please reach out to the Librarian for the stack of books recommended by the Learning Team for school groups.*

## *Perimeter Walk*

2013–2024

Offset print postcards

550 pieces

Commissioned by UCCA Centre for Contemporary Art

Development of Perimeter Walk supported by M Art Foundation

Collection of the artist

## JOURNEYS



### **\*To note:**

- Postcards are available for purchase with PayNow. No change will be given.
- Please refrain from handling the postcards unless you intend to purchase.
- Photography is allowed but please do not use flash.

## ABOUT THE ARTWORK

*Perimeter Walk* is an ongoing artwork that comprises a collection of 550 offset-printed postcards that catalogues the artist's sustained engagement with Singapore's periphery. Neatly lined up on shelves against the wall in this exhibition, it features nondescript sights and scenes photographed by the artist when he walked the circumference of Singapore. These images were selected from the thousands of photographs that captures the scenography of the island's borders, conveying a multifaceted view of the city-state.

Visitors are invited to interact with the artwork with the option to purchase a postcard at a nominal price. To the artist, the act of sending a postcard predates images shared through social media. It signifies the relationship between the sender and the receiver through the circulation and exchange of images with postcards being kept or shared with others.

## DISCUSSION

- Why did the artist choose to focus on the perimeters of Singapore?
- Apart from memory preservation and self-expression, list other reasons why you think people:
  - 1) choose to save an image; and
  - 2) share images as a form of social interaction.

## ACTIVITY

- Take a walk around the perimeter of your school and photograph at least three sights or scenes to share with your classmates on Padlet.
- Provide a reason on how or why you selected each image.

*Calendars (2020–2096)*

2004–2010

1,001 offset prints with matt lamination

Commissioned by NUS Museum

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

**FUTURES**



## ABOUT THE ARTWORK

1,001 picture calendars are installed in a grid covering the walls, showing different public spaces in Singapore. The artist spent seven years photographing these spaces, waiting patiently for each space to be devoid of humans before he took the shot.

While this artwork was completed in 2010, its calendar dates from a decade before that all the way to 2096. The “time” presented in this artwork is an imaginative and impersonal future. Artists can be inspired by other artists and their work. This artwork is a nod to Japanese conceptual artist, On Kawara, who is known for his artistic expression of chronological time.

## DISCUSSION

- Why do you think the artist chose to present images without any human presence in the artwork *Calendars (2020–2096)*?

## ACTIVITY

- In this in-gallery activity, find the calendar page that shows the current date. Take a close look at the image and compare it with another month. List one similarity and one difference between these two images.

*Stacks* series  
2012–ongoing  
52 books and 51 glasses  
Collection of the artist

## FINDINGS

### ABOUT THE ARTWORK

*Stacks* is an ongoing series that started in 2003, with one sculpture created annually. Each sculpture is made using an assortment of books and drinking glasses the artist had used in the previous year.

The act of creating an artwork after each year signals the crossing of a milestone in time. By choosing books and glasses he used frequently, Chong's materials are objects that have accompanied him throughout the year. In creating each sculpture, it's a struggle for the artist to part with the glasses he has frequently reached for, that he is fond of and is used to.



The books the artist chose to read also reflect his interests for that year. The time spent experiencing a book is more than the time spent merely reading it. We often spend a considerable amount of time looking over the concepts, plots or topics presented in the books we read. Hence, each sculpture can be viewed as the artist's summary of his year.

### DISCUSSION

- Chong started the *Stacks* series in 2003 with the intention of accumulating a stack each year. This passage of time is summarised through the books he read and the glasses he used frequently during that year. How would you represent each year to show the reflection of time, experience, and habits?
- If everyone in the class accumulates a stack of everyday items, would you be able to identify your classmate by looking at their stacks? What kind of information can we learn from an individual's stack?

### ACTIVITY

Accumulate a stack of everyday objects within a week. Photograph this stack and print the image on A5 or A4 paper. Write a clue about yourself on the back of this image. Play a matching game with your friends to identify the person based on the photograph of the stack.



## *The Singapore Flag*

2015

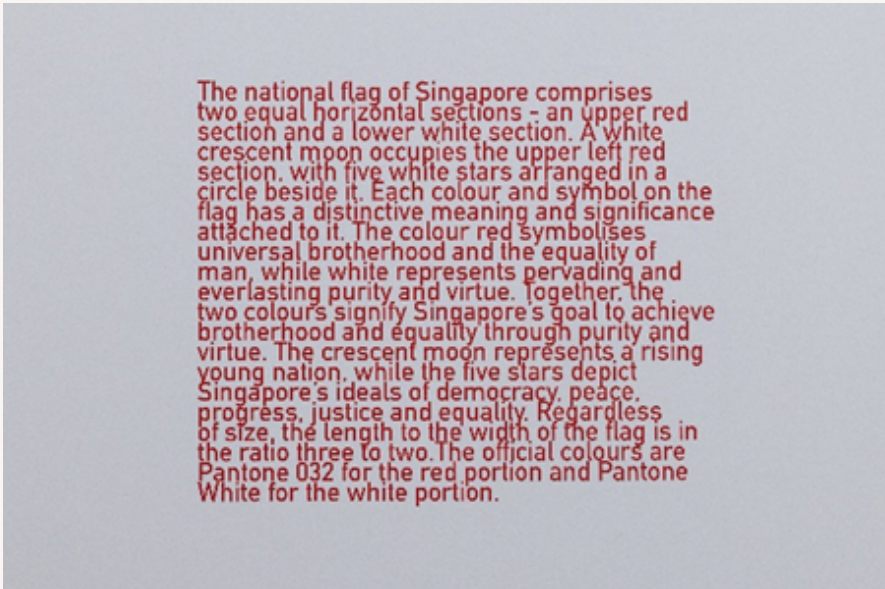
Site-specific wall installation, appropriated text

Materials and dimensions variable

Commissioned by Valentine Willie Fine Art

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

## FINDINGS



The national flag of Singapore comprises two equal horizontal sections - an upper red section and a lower white section. A white crescent moon occupies the upper left red section, with five white stars arranged in a circle beside it. Each colour and symbol on the flag has a distinctive meaning and significance attached to it. The colour red symbolises universal brotherhood and the equality of man, while white represents pervading and everlasting purity and virtue. Together, the two colours signify Singapore's goal to achieve brotherhood and equality through purity and virtue. The crescent moon represents a rising young nation, while the five stars depict Singapore's ideals of democracy, peace, progress, justice and equality. Regardless of size, the length to the width of the flag is in the ratio three to two. The official colours are Pantone 032 for the red portion and Pantone White for the white portion.

## ABOUT THE ARTWORK

A block of red text adorns the wall of the gallery. This artwork offers an alternative take on Singapore's national flag, one that is presented solely in text.

The colour of the text is in Pantone 032, which is the same shade of red on the nation's flag. The text on the wall is an outdated description of the Singapore flag, lifted from the National Heritage Board's website. The artist has formatted the text to be compressed, which can be mistaken for a painting when viewed from a distance.

This artwork invites the visitor to visualise the flag through text instead of providing an image directly. Through this indirect interpretation, the artist is able to bypass the laws governing national symbols to create this artwork.

## DISCUSSION

- Why are national symbols important?
- Compare Chong's *The Singapore Flag* with Jasper John's seminal work *Flag*. List two similarities and two differences.

## ACTIVITY

- This artwork describes the Singapore flag. Create a similar work by using text to visualise your school crest. Pay attention to the colours and the text used.

*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

## ENDINGS

### ABOUT THE ARTWORK

One million black cards are spread across the floor near the exit of the gallery. This massive pile is made of black cards in a uniformed size, measuring 8.5cm by 5.5cm—the standard size of name cards used by working professionals.



Instead of printing black cards, the artist painted over these cards that he collected. The black opaque ink he used covers the front and back of the name card. This obscures the pertinent information on the name card leaving only the edges unpainted. The name cards are slippery to walk on which parallels the “failed promises and the false intimacy of fleeting personal relations” for the artist.

The exchange of name cards is a form of sharing contact details; a common act for professionals during business events, meetings or official functions. While meant to facilitate networking, the reality is that most of the name cards collected are forgotten, along with their owners.

### DISCUSSION

- If name cards are used to identify working professionals, how do students identify themselves and share their details?
- Think of a friend whom you have not spoken to in years. What do you remember about the friendship and why do you think you have not reached out to this person?

### ACTIVITY

- Look for examples of name cards. What kinds of information do they contain? With this, design a name card of your own.
- Research an individual who may have been overlooked or forgotten by society, history or even their own communities.



The information is accurate at the time of print.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without prior permission of the copyright holders. We take no responsibility for your use of this Educational Resource.

Copyright of the content in this publication may also reside in persons and entities other than, and in addition to, Singapore Art Museum. We are fully committed to respecting the intellectual property rights of others and always use our best efforts to obtain permission for images used.

Please contact us at [learning@singaporeartmuseum.sg](mailto:learning@singaporeartmuseum.sg) should you have any queries.