HEMAN CHONG:
AN ARM, A LEG AND
OTHER STORIES
MAIN & FIRST FLOOR GALLERIES
ADMISSION FREE

EXHIBITION GUIDE

Main Gallery
1. Monument to the people we’ve conveniently forgotten (I hate you), 2008
Offset prints on 300 gsm paper, approximately 1 million copies, each measuring 9 × 5.5 cm
2. Index (Drown)
From the series Surfacing, 2009
3,000 self-adhesive stickers applied directly onto wall, variable dimensions
3. This Pavilion is Strictly for Community Bonding Activities Only, 2015
Vinyl letters, aluminium plate, gloss lamination, 60 × 45 cm
4. Rope, Barrier, Boundary, 2015
Altered rope, metal hooks
5. An Arm, A Leg, 2015
Durational performance between an instructor and a visitor
6. A selection of paintings from Cover (Versions)
First Floor Galleries
8. Writing, Rooms, 2015–2016
Site-specific residency for writers
All works courtesy of the artist and Wilkinson Gallery

Inclusions
To accompany An Arm, A Leg and Other Stories, Heman Chong has selected 38 second hand books which are available in the SLG bookshop.
The Futurological Congress / Stanislaw Lem
Satantango / László Krasznahorkai
2666 / Roberto Bolano
Correction / Thomas Bernhard
Waiting for Godot / Samuel Beckett
The Hour Of The Star / Clarice Lispector
The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle / Haruki Murakami
One Hundred Years of Solitude / Gabriel Garcia Marquez
High-Rise / J.G. Ballard
The Man in the High Castle / Philip K. Dick
Mrs Dalloway / Virginia Woolf
Fox / J.M. Coetzee
The Mysterious Island / Jules Verne
The Road / Cormac McCarthy
The Ruined Map / Kobo Abe
Star Maker / Olaf Stapledon
The Tempest / William Shakespeare
The Wizard of Oz / L. Frank Baum
Written On The Body / Jeanette Winterson
The Catch / Kenzaburo Oe
Slaughterhouse-Five / Kurt Vonnegut
The Wall / Jean-Paul Sartre
The Woman in the Dunes / Kobo Abe
The White Castle / Orhan Pamuk
The Elementary Particles / Michel Houellebecq
Leaving Las Vegas / John O’Brien
Solars / Stanislaw Lem
The Sirens Of Titan / Kurt Vonnegut
Under The Skin / Michel Faber
Never Let Me Go / Kazuo Ishiguro
The Music Of Chance / Paul Auster
Lust / Elfriede Jelinek
Play It As It Lays / Joan Didion
The Stranger / Albert Camus
Seeing / José Saramago
Beloved / Toni Morrison
The Savage Detectives / Roberto Bolano
Snow Crash / Neal Stephenson

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SLG

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND
HEMAN CHONG: AN ARM, A LEG AND OTHER STORIES

Heman Chong is an artist and writer whose work is located at the intersection between image, performance, situations and writing. His work continuously interrogates the many functions of the production of narratives in our everyday lives.

LEMI (A Science Fiction and Fantasy Book Store) 2001, for example, was an installment of second hand science fiction books that were available to purchase, effectively creating a shop in an art gallery and transforming the exhibition-viewing experience into one of exchange of goods and money. Calendars (2020–2096), 2011, was made over a period of seven years when Chong collected more than 1005 images of publicly accessible areas in Singapore, devoid of humans, to create a dystopian narrative set within familiar yet unsettling scenes of a possible future. Another work, Interview(s), 2012, was a sculptural collaboration initiated by Chong with artist Anthony Marcellini whereby a set of seven statements, functioned as parameters by which each artist put together their own collection of 100 objects over a six-month period. They then came together to install them within three days on mirrored tables in accordance with another set of rules to make the exhibition.

For his South London Gallery show, Chong presents a diverse but coherent group of works that continue to probe ideas of exchange, and the role of rules and regulations in determining codes of behaviour.

Monument to the people we’ve conveniently forgotten (I hate you), a million blacked out business cards covering the floor of the main gallery space, sets the scene for Chong’s exploration and exposure of different modes of exchange in everyday life. The excess and repetition in this work, characteristic of much of Chong’s practice, is carried through to Surfacing, a piece which has had more than 12 iterations to date, and for which thousands of stickers were installed high on the wall according to a loose set of instructions, allowing for a work to have multiple interpretations by people who install the work, within a restrictive set of parameters.

Presiding over the space, a small but persuasive sign instructs us that THIS PAVILION IS STRICTLY FOR COMMUNITY BONDING ACTIVITIES ONLY. The sign, an exact reproduction of one that Chong encountered in a public space in Singapore, is emblematic of an authoritarian voice and way of governance that extensively utilises a system of absolutes: ‘You must do this and not that, because it is something I imagine, is good for you.’

A wall of sixty-six paintings have been selected from three painting series: Cover (Versions), Things That Remain Unwritten and Emails from Strangers. Representations of books and spam emails interwoven with purely abstract designs plays further on the unavoidable association, however intangible, between simultaneous visitors to the gallery space. Randomly arranged on the wall, the paintings reveal a snapshot of some of Chong’s cultural points of reference, inviting visitors to navigate and hone in on their own, opening up the possibility of discussing them with others.

Four new works have been produced for this exhibition. The first, Inclusion(s) occurs in the gallery shop where second-hand copies of novels have been collected and made available for redistribution, providing further entry points into Chong’s ways of reading the world.

The second piece, Rape, Barrier, Boundary, appropriates a rape with metal hooks which is used in museums and spaces where art is shown. Extending this rape, Chong produces a space, isolates an area at one end of the main gallery which becomes a national stage for the third new work; an intimate and intense performance entitled An Arm, A Leg. Every Wednesday at 1pm and 5pm a different participant is taught by an instructor to memorise and recite a 500 word short story written by the artist and only ever transmitted by word of mouth.

The collaborative nature of this piece, central to so much of Chong’s work, continues in the fourth new commission, Writing, Rooms, an informal residency programme for fiction writers in the first floor galleries. The two spaces are occupied for ten weeks by Mira Mattar, and a collaboration between Natasha Soobramanien and Luke Williams, who are working on their own projects throughout the course of the exhibition. Chong invited the writers to develop texts they were already working on, creating a continuum undisrupted by the hosting institution. At the end of the residency they have been asked to publish an excerpt of their writings and hold a public conversation to discuss their experiences.

To take part in a Wednesday performance at 1pm or 5pm, email: anakmaieg@southlondongallery.org

www.southlondongallery.org/hemanchong @HemanChong @HemanChong

With thanks to Wilkinson Gallery

Photography is permitted in the galleries. Please refrain from touching the paintings.

Biography

Heman Chong (b. 1977) is an artist and writer. He has produced solo exhibitions at Art Sonje Center, Gallery Erin, Pl, FOST Gallery, Michael Janssen Gallery, The Reading Room Bangkok, Future Perfect, Wilkinson Gallery, Rossi & Rossi, SOTA Gallery, NUS Museum, Kunstverein Milano, Motive Gallery, Hermes Third Floor, Vitamin Creative Space, Art In General, Project Arts Centre, Ellen de Bujenie Projects, The Substation, Kunstenfahrhaus Bethanien and Sparwasser HQ.

In 2015, he has participated in numerous group exhibitions, including expo zero, Tate Modern, Take me (I’m yours), Monnaie de Paris, The Great Ephemerel, New Museum, Time of Others, The National Museum of Art in Osaka, When we share more than ever, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, Mises & Countermove: On Sweat, Paper, and Porcelain, CCS Bard/Heissel Museum, Museum at Large, Singapore Art Museum.


In January 2016, a major solo exhibition If, And, Or Buts will be presented at Rockpool Art Museum in Shanghai and is curated by its Senior Curator, Li Qi.

Writers’ biographies

Mira Mattar writes experimental fiction and prose poetry. She is a contributing editor at Muze and co-runs a small/DIY press. She recently edited the first critical anthology on Chris Kraus, You Must Make Your Death Public: A collection of texts and media on the work of Chris Kraus, and co-edited Anguish Language: Writing and Crisis, an anthology of essays, poetry and experimental works exploring self-publishing, poetry and political speech arising in the wake of the 2008 financial/social crisis. She lives in south east London. Some of her work can be read at: hermouth.tumblr.com

Natasha Soobramanien and Luke Williams are the authors of the first novels Genes and Paul (Myriad Editions, 2012) and The Echo Chamber (Hamish Hamilton/Penguin Viking, 2011). Their collaborative project, Diego Garcia, is a novel-in-installments. Chapter 1, ‘Debt’, first appeared in Issue no. 12 of The White Review and is now available on: diegogarciaobook.tumblr.com. Chapter 2, ‘Individualism’ will appear in the Winter issue of BOMB Magazine. During their writing residency, they will work on Chapter 3. They are both part of the collective of artists and writers who organised Plastic Words, an event series at Raven Row, held in January 2015 which sought to mine the contested space between art and literature. Natasha and Luke live in Brussels and London respectively.

ACCOMPANYING EVENTS

An Arm, A Leg
Every Wed, 1pm & 5pm, Main Gallery
Durational performance between an instructor and a visitor.
To sign up please email: anakmaieg@southlondongallery.org

To coincide with his current exhibition, Heman Chong selects three films:

Woman in the Dunes
Wed 13 Jan, 7pm, £5/£3 conc, Clore Studio
Directed by Hiroshi Teshigahara, 1964.

Time of the Wolf
Wed 20 Jan, 7pm, £5/£3 conc, Clore Studio

The Hole
Wed 27 Jan, 7pm, £5/£3 conc, Clore Studio
Directed by Tsai Ming-Liang, 1998.

Words, They, Wrote
Thu 18 Feb, 7pm, £5/£3 conc, Clore Studio
Words, They, Wrote is a performance by Heman Chong which uses words written or spoken by artists, allowing a moment to reflect on what artists write about their own lives and work. It is accompanied by an in conversation with the artist and Brian Dillon, writer, critic and UK editor of Cabinet Magazine.

Writers In Conversation
Wed 27 Feb, 6pm, £5/£3 conc, Clore Studio
The writers in residence, Mira Mattar, Natasha Soobramanien and Luke Williams, hold a public conversation to discuss their experiences of the residency.

Exhibition Tours
Daily, 1pm & Last Fridays, 7pm, Free
Join the SLO’s gallery assistants for an informative, drop-in tour of the current exhibition.