

Heman Chong: The Endless Summer

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From October 27, 2024, to April 6, 2025, UCCA Dune presents “Heman Chong: The Endless Summer,” where the artist blends installations, video, and painting to construct an illusory tropical experience on a beach in North China as an exploration of blurring boundaries between memory, fantasy, and reality.

Exhibition Period:

2024.10.27 – 2025.4.6

Location:

UCCA Dune

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Beidaihe, CHINA—From October 27, 2024, to April 6, 2025, UCCA Dune presents “Heman Chong: The Endless Summer,” the second institutional solo of Singaporean contemporary artist Heman Chong (b. 1977, Malaysia, lives and works in Singapore) in China. This exhibition features a dynamic selection of the artist’s representative works across installations, videos, and painting, including seven commissioned by UCCA. Through a series of multimedia works and immersive environments, “Heman Chong: The Endless Summer” transports visitors to an everlasting summer in an illusory tropical narrative along a coast in Northern China. The interactive experience of the exhibition includes participatory elements such as purchasing postcards, reading in a miniature library, or sitting outside on a bench overlooking the sea. Each interaction encourages deeper reflection on the transmission of experience and the exchange of knowledge. In doing so, this exhibition invites visitors to explore the intersections of memory, fantasy, and perception, prompting reflection on material and economic foundations via deftly constructed storytelling woven with nostalgia. “Heman Chong: The Endless Summer” is curated by UCCA Curator Luan Shixuan.

Press material available at

ucca.org.cn/en/press

One of Singapore’s leading contemporary artists, Heman Chong embodies multiple identities – artist, curator, writer, and digital content creator – that infuse revitalized energy and perspectives into global art dialogue. His artistic language transcends a singular medium to fluidly navigate painting, installation, performance, and literature into intricate, interconnected networks. Chong often uses the term “post-studio” to describe his core methodology, in which he incorporates everyday behaviors such as walking, reading, and writing into his creative process with clever sematic shifts and contextualization to reveal deeper social constructs hidden in the familiarity of daily routine. Additionally, the artist is skillful at employing repetition, stacking, and other strategies to impart spatial dimension and sculptural qualities to flat objects and words. In his multimedia exhibitions, Chong’s works function as both static, visual presentations as well as dynamic, participatory artistic experiences in a vibrantly creative, imagined journey.

For this exhibition at UCCA Dune, the presentation of the tropics along a wintry northern coastline is a purposeful gesture of tension and paradox. The juxtaposition of a northern winter with tropical imagery and the stark contrast in the exhibition location and its thematic content is an invitation to ponder the boundaries between established realities and imagined spaces. The exhibition title itself is a description of tropical seasons as well as an allusion to a shared experience that transcends geographical boundaries. This prompts the questioning of authenticity and sustainability, which runs through the exhibition as a thematic undercurrent. There are no chapters in this exhibition; instead, all works resonate and connect with one another in a fluid narrative. Utilizing both indoor and outdoor areas of the museum, Chong constructs an imaginative and surreal exploration of senses and perception.

In his *106B Depot Road* installation, the artist reconstructs his residential building as a minimalist architectural model, transforming it into a space where personal memory and collective experience converge. This deliberate abstraction challenges our understanding of familiar surroundings, while subtly reflecting on the alienation of individuals within modern urban environments. In contrast, *Tanglin Halt Green (A Survey)* captures the impending demolition of Singapore's largest HDB (Housing and Development Board) public housing estate with scenes of people walking in the rain. Projecting building ruins across four LED screens onto columns, the artist weaves a nuanced atmosphere of absurdity and reality, nostalgia and horror, to unveil the social costs of urban development. Encircling *Tanglin Halt Green (A Survey)*, *Prospectus* unfurls a web of fragmented text across the museum space as an assemblage of scattered narrative from 239 AI-altered words salvaged from discarded novels. This work is a poignant reflection on the creative process, asking, "How does language shape our perception in an era of information overload? How can fragmented narratives spark new perceptions in our imagination?"

In *Paperwork*, bureaucracy is reimagined as A4 paper into rusted iron sheets, layered in a mandala-like formation to evoke endlessly sprawling organizational systems. The corrosion of the iron sheets is a powerful metaphor for passing time and shifting social dynamics. This theme is also emphasized in *Monument to the people we've conveniently forgotten (I hate you)*, one of Chong's most recognizable works, which features one million black namecards stacked in repetitive layers. Each layer represents a forgotten individual, and the precariousness of the towering pile reflects the fluidity and instability of identity in contemporary society.

Unfolding across UCCA Dune's largest gallery is *Perimeter Walk*, an expansive installation in the form of a temporary store featuring 550 photographic postcards. This photographic series represents the artist's long-term investigation of Singapore's borders, capturing the visual aspects of the physical border as well as social, political, and ecological realities of life at the margins. From heavily guarded fences to lush tropical vegetation, each postcard showcases a microscopic study of the island nation's edges. As with the exhibition's broader theme, this work blends personal narratives with the public in an exploration of the concept of borders.

The theme of migration is further explored in *The Library of Endless Journeys*, a miniature library comprising of one hundred travel and migration books, collected by the artist and the exhibition's curator. This work situates the act of migration within a more expansive cultural and historical framework, offering deeper reflection on the movement of people and the memories, identities, and information they carry to shape perception and society.

In *Constructions*, images of the jungle that are used on construction hoardings are recontextualized as visual elements of the exhibition, creating a spatial experience merging the real with the imaginary. Floor-to-ceiling windows and skylights are draped in jungle scenery, like a portal into another world. Visitors move through the immersive installation as though navigating a concealed cave enveloped by tropical greenery, where the visual distortions so prevalent in urban life are artfully brought to life. This illusion underscores the blurred boundaries between the real and artifice of today's societal complexities in an increasingly "constructed" world.

In another contemplative interplay of presence, identity, and space, the outdoor sculpture *A Different Kind of Loneliness*, featuring a circular bench made of recycled wood, makes anyone who sits on it a part of the artwork. Through these intertwined experiences, "Heman Chong: The Endless Summer" prompts reflection on the complex interconnection of personal and public narratives with a nuanced exploration of inhabiting, as well as shaping, the spaces around us and our memories of them.

Support and Sponsorship

Exclusive wall solutions support is provided by Dulux, and exclusive audio equipment and technical support provided by Genelec. UCCA thanks the members of UCCA Foundation Council, International Circle, and Young Associates, as well as Lead Partner Aranya, Lead Art

Book Partner DIOR, Lead Imaging Partner vivo, Presenting Partner Bloomberg, and Supporting Partners AIA, Barco, Dulux, Genelec, SKP Beijing, and Stey. Special thanks to the M Art Foundation for the support in the development “Perimeter Walk,” with acknowledgement to its founders Wu Meng and Michael Li, both longstanding members of the UCCA Foundation Council.

Public Programs

When artist Heman Chong lost a 200-page novel manuscript, a data retrieval company helped him recover only 239 legible words. With these 239 fragments, he assembled an exhibition landscape rich with metaphor and open to interpretation. On the exhibition opening on Sunday at 14:00, UCCA will host a poetry workshop led by poet Jia Wei, inviting participants to explore new methods and approaches to poetry by rearranging and perceiving new narratives with word fragments. Using a variety of texts, from magazines and newspapers to pictorials and flyers, the workshop encourages a poetized process that reimagines language and narratives.

About the Artist

Heman Chong (b. 1977, Malaysia, living and working in Singapore) is an 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.

The artist has developed solo exhibitions at Singapore Art Museum (Singapore), Het Nieuwe Instituut (Rotterdam), STPI (Singapore), Weserburg Museum (Bremen), Swiss Institute (New York), Rockbund Art Museum (Shanghai), NUS Museum (Singapore), Kunstverein Milano (Milan), Motive Gallery (Amsterdam), Art Sonje Center (Seoul), South London Gallery (London), Amanda Wilkinson Gallery (London), Rossi & Rossi (Hong Kong), Vitamin Creative Space (Guangzhou), Art In General (New York), Project Arts Centre (Dublin), Ellen de Bruijne Projects (Amsterdam), The Substation (Singapore), and Kuenstlerhaus Bethanien (Berlin).

His work has also been shown extensively in group exhibitions at different art institutions, including Serpentine Galleries, Tate Modern, New Museum New York, Museu d’Art Contemporani de Barcelona, Kroeller-Muller Museum, Stedelijk Museum Bureau, Nam June Paik Art Center, Gertrude Contemporary, Arnolfini, Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami, Hamburger Bahnhof, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, and Kadist Art Foundation.

Chong has participated in numerous international biennales including Sharjah Biennale 16 (2025), Lahore Biennale 3 (2024), 20th Sydney Biennale (2016), 1st Yinchuan Biennale (2016), 10th Gwangju Biennale (2014), Asia Pacific Triennale (2012), Performa 11 (2011), Momentum 6 (2011), Manifesta 8 (2010), 2nd Singapore Biennale (2008), SCAPE Christchurch Biennale (2006), Busan Biennale (2004), 10th India Triennale (2000), and represented Singapore in the 50th Venice Biennale (2003).

Chong is the co-director and founder (alongside Renée Staal) of The Library of Unread Books, a library made up of donated books previously unread by their original owners. It has been hosted by the NTU Center for Contemporary Art, The Museum of Contemporary Art and Design Manila, Casco, Kunstverein Milano, Jameel Arts Center, tranzit.cz, I_S_L_A_N_D_S, 7th Singapore Biennale, Blank Canvas, Seoul Museum of Art, and is recently installed in the Serpentine Pavilion 2024, designed by Minsuk Cho.

About UCCA Dune

UCCA Dune is an art museum buried under a sand dune by the Bohai Sea in Beidaihe, 300 kilometers east of Beijing. Designed by OPEN Architecture, its galleries unfold over a series of cell-like spaces that evoke caves. Some are naturally lit from above, while others open out onto the beach. As a branch of UCCA, China's leading independent institution of contemporary art, it presents rotating exhibitions in dialogue with its particular site and space. UCCA Dune is built and supported by UCCA strategic partner Aranya, and located within the Aranya Gold Coast Community.

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