



“Never, A Dull Moment” with Heman Chong

BY DARRYL WEE | FEBRUARY 11, 2015



Welcome! Digital print on cloth, 1.5 x 7.5 m, 2015 Photograph by Sang-tae Kim
(Courtesy of Heman Chong and Art Sonje Center)

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Heman Chong

SEOUL — Singaporean artist **Heman Chong** opened his latest solo exhibition at [Art Sonje Center](#) on February 7. According to Chong, this show first came to life “as a short story that I have always wanted to write. About a non-profit art space caught in a mid-life crisis, the stuff of jokes and stereotypes, full of sordid detail and slander that nobody would care to hear.”

Although often identified as a visual artist, Chong shuttle easily between his various roles as artist, curator, writer, and all-around envelope pusher in a contemporary art world often beholden to a mindless cycle of regular gallery programming. Most recently, between 2012 and 2014, he produced “[Moderation\(s\)](#),” a collaborative program between Witte de With Contemporary Art in Rotterdam and Spring Workshop in Hong Kong that involved more than 50 artists. The results included three exhibitions, three residencies, a conference, and a book of short stories.



BLOUIN ARTINFO caught up with Chong to talk about some of the ideas surrounding his latest exhibition in Seoul.

The “press release” for your exhibition as advertised on e-flux talks about an art space that has been personified, or brought to life, as it were: “a space that becomes increasingly regretful of what has been done with it.” Is this a roundabout or indirect way of attempting to vindicate the hidden, squandered, or overlooked potential in an art gallery or exhibition

space? In general, do you feel that the specific physical parameters of individual exhibition spaces are often not taken full advantage of?

There are three things that can define the initial encounter a viewer might have with an exhibition. The title of the show, the name of the artist, and the so-called press release text. In a certain way, I regard these things as objects in themselves, in the sense that they are not mere appendages that support the exhibition (or at this point, the idea of the exhibition), but are independent objects, or even spaces that I could instigate a reaction out of that could become a part of the show.

So the title of the show is, in every way, a work in itself, just as the press release text is a short story. I’m not about to go down the rabbit hole of changing my name, so let’s just leave that process out. I’m not against marketing or making my claims explicit, but I just don’t think I have to do that all the time. I’m very fortunate to work with Art Sonje Center and Samuso, the curatorial office headed by **Sunjung Kim**, who has graciously curated this show, because Sunjung and her team never once questioned me about the viability of the short story as a press release text. Not once did they try and alter it — which surprised me a little, to be honest. I expected a lot of resistance, because most institutions today are so concerned about communication, audience accessibility, public outreach, and stuff like that. I thought it was interesting that they were so open to the idea of crafting the press release as a way of transmitting a short story.

One of the “signature” pieces in this show, “The Art of Production” (2015), refers to the title of the October 2007 issue of *Artforum*, which considers the physical process of making or fabricating things as a form of art. As you point out, the Korean translation of this title means something more akin to “the technique of production.” How important is

