

AMANDA  
WILKINSON

**Heman Chong**  
*Foreign Affairs*

Private view: 8 March 2019, 6-8 pm  
Exhibition dates: 9 March 2019 - 6 April 2019

*Foreign Affairs* is a series of apparently banal photographs of embassy back doors. The systematic repetition of images simultaneously recalls a cinematic frame and the omnipresence of the surveillance camera that watches nothing and everything. As a literal and cumulative representation of embassy backdoors, each image of a backdoor can be read as infrastructural, making apparent the very form of the non-descript embassy backdoor and its component parts: greenery as camouflage, the solitary aspect of a strategically positioned surveillance camera, the additional lock or additional gates. These mundane representations are the threshold of the exceptional space of the embassy, which in and of itself is the physical manifestation of an agreement between two states of respective sovereignty.

*Foreign Affairs* speaks to the sites of infrastructural power in society today. The series implicitly points to society's real fears of 'back door' agreements, actors invisibly and insidiously pulling the strings behind the veil of the everyday. As representations of information, the images reflect both the back stage upon which fears of international conflict, calamity and national disaster play out and/or are produced.

Infrastructure has been described as an "overt point of contact and access, where the underlying rules of the world can be clasped in the space of Everyday life"<sup>1</sup>. Infrastructures are, by design, made to be banal and invisible as part of their everyday operations. Chong's oeuvre can be read as an imagining, an interrogation and sometimes an intervention into infrastructure as an everyday medium of politics. His works are ecological systems that take on a diversity of forms such as the book, the painting, the performance, the magazine advertisement, the party, the process of writing a novel, the social contract of an exhibition etc. Chong's work, in its adoption of conventions such as the cinematic frame or the calendar, casts a shrewd eye on how the world, as well our fear of what lies behind the curtain of the everyday, is produced.

Text by Kathleen Ditzig

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<sup>1</sup> Shukaitis, S. 2009. Infrapolitics and the Nomadic Educational Machine. In *Contemporary Anarchist Studies: An Introductory Anthology of Anarchy in the Academy*, ed. Amster, R. et al., 166-174. London: Routledge.