

## BEN YAU

My interests concern the ways in which visual practice can engage in the research of global conflict, historical narratives, and the radical imagination.

Ben Yau (b.1992, Glasgow) is a Chinese-Scots visual artist based between London, UK and The Hague, NL. He graduated from Camberwell College of Arts in the study of Fine Art Photography in 2019 and in the same year was selected for Bloomberg New Contemporaries as well as Creekside Open. Selected exhibitions include his solo presentation Proximate Currents: When Everything Fuses Together, Iniva (online/London 2020); and group exhibitions The London Open, Whitechapel Gallery (London 2022), Bloomberg New Contemporaries, Leeds Art Gallery, Leeds, and South London Gallery, London (2019); We Breathe in the Space Between, MIR Project Space (London 2019); and Creekside Open 2019 Selected by Sacha Craddock, APT Gallery (London 2019). His practice concerns the neoliberal and postcolonial dimensions of global conflict, historical narratives, and the radical imagination. Trained in lens-based media, he works with materials collected from a research process that are then collaged or montaged in the mediums of works on paper, moving image and installation. His multi-media projects engage a diverse range of materials, such as declassified documents, British Ministry of Defence research papers, newspaper clippings, and videos found on the internet.

## WEBSITES

Artist website

[www.benyau.org](http://www.benyau.org)

## SOCIAL MEDIA

[www.instagram.com/benyauhaus](https://www.instagram.com/benyauhaus)

## EDUCATION

2021 - MA Photography & Society Den Haag,  
2023 Koninklijke Academie van Beeldende  
Kunsten diploma

2016 - Fine Art Photography University of the  
2019 Arts London, Camberwell College of  
Arts diploma

## EXHIBITIONS

2023 Stilled Images Tube Gallery Palma, Spain  
[www.instagram.com/tube\\_gallery/](https://www.instagram.com/tube_gallery/)  
Group

2023 Unstill Royal Academy of Art The Hague,  
Netherlands  
Group

2022 The London Open Whitechapel Gallery  
London, United Kingdom  
[www.whitechapelgallery.org/the-london-open-2022-artists/](http://www.whitechapelgallery.org/the-london-open-2022-artists/)

2022 Countercurrents Bunker at Waterkant The  
Hague  
Group

2020 Source Materials Nadir Project Space  
Brighton, United Kingdom  
Group

2020 Extractive Model Study Bloc Projects  
Sheffield, United Kingdom  
Solo

2020 Proximate Currents: When Everything Fuses

- Together Institute of International Visual Arts  
London  
[iniva.org/programme/projects/proximate-currents-when-everything-fuses-together/](http://iniva.org/programme/projects/proximate-currents-when-everything-fuses-together/)  
Solo
- 2019 Bloomberg New Contemporaries South  
London Gallery London, United Kingdom  
[www.southlondongallery.org/exhibitions/bnc19/](http://www.southlondongallery.org/exhibitions/bnc19/)  
Group
- 2019 We Breathe in the Space Between MIR  
Project Space London, United Kingdom  
Group
- 2019 Bloomberg New Contemporaries Leeds Art  
Gallery Leeds, United Kingdom  
[museumsandgalleries.leeds.gov.uk/events/leeds-art-gallery/bloomberg-new-contemporaries-2019/](http://museumsandgalleries.leeds.gov.uk/events/leeds-art-gallery/bloomberg-new-contemporaries-2019/)  
Group
- 2019 On Power Central Saint Martins London,  
United Kingdom  
Group
- 2019 Camberwell Degree Show Camberwell  
College of Arts London, United Kingdom  
Group
- 2019 Creekside Open APT Gallery London, United  
Kingdom [www.aptstudios.org/creekside-open](http://www.aptstudios.org/creekside-open)  
Group
- 2019 Meanwhile Four Corners Gallery London,  
United Kingdom  
Group
- 2019 The Spectre of the Real Socially Engaged Art  
Salon Brighton, United Kingdom  
Group
- 2019 Co-op(t) FarGo Village Coventry, United  
Kingdom  
Group
- 2019 P2 Copeland Gallery London, United  
Kingdom  
Group
- 2018 Pic.up Prints The Tea Building London,  
United Kingdom  
Group
- 2018 Unspoken The Stash Gallery London, United  
Kingdom  
Group

- 2018 Plane of Immanence Safehouse London, United Kingdom  
[Group](#)
- 2018 Over Capacity CGP London, United Kingdom  
[Group](#)
- 2017 Decade Zero Greenwich West London, United Kingdom  
[Duo](#)

## PROJECTS

- 2023 In the Shadow of Ashes The Hagude, Netherlands [www.benyau.org/In-the-Shadow-of-Ashes](http://www.benyau.org/In-the-Shadow-of-Ashes) What is erased in the editing process of history? History smoulders with flames that sanitise official narratives, reducing to ashes certain accounts that threaten authority. In the Shadow of Ashes is an immersive, multi-media installation that sheds light on potential histories that British colonial forces have attempted to incinerate. The assemblage and interplay of the original research prompts renewed reflection on atrocity and its subsequent erasure from official narratives. Visitors are encouraged to flip through the declassified documents – numbering over a thousand pages – presented in archival boxes. The installation is set into motion by an audio composition that includes dialogue between artist Ben Yau and one of the last surviving direct relatives of a victim of the Batang Kali massacre, Lim Kok. The exchange centres around the killing of Lim’s father by British colonial officers in Malaya in 1948, and recent revelations of a cover-up in the form of mass burnings of sensitive documents known as Operation Legacy. This conversation calls attention to the arrangement of materials presented on overhead projectors that turn on and off during the exchange, highlighting various dynamic elements. Once the medium of choice for disseminating colonial propaganda, projection has been employed in the installation as a form of ‘anti-redaction’. In the Shadow of Ashes subverts the interrogative spotlight, redirecting its beam towards declassified government documents

## COMMISSIONS

- 2020 Extractive Model Study Bloc Projects Sheffield, United Kingdom Commissioned by Bloc Projects, Extractive Model Study arranges images from the archive of the Ministry of Defence with illustrations depicting machinery used in the extraction of gold, silver, and diamond. These images and illustrations are imagined together as a visual blueprint for extractive capitalism, tracing the contours of new forms of British imperialism. In their original use cases, these constituent elements fit into a process of concealing and supporting imperial dominance. The diagrams reveal a structure of territorial conquest and dispossession of indigenous people’s lands, while the photographs showing military demonstrations disguise violence under a veil of awe and sublime.  
[www.blocprojects.co.uk/exhibitions-events/2020/bloc-billboard-ben-yau](http://www.blocprojects.co.uk/exhibitions-events/2020/bloc-billboard-ben-yau) finished
- 2020 Proximate Currents: When Everything Fuses Together Institute of International Visual Arts London, United Kingdom Echoing Stuart Hall’s 2011 essay “The Neoliberal Revolution”, the project collages a wide range of clips, focusing on moments of historical rupture and settlement in Britain. The work fuses together disparate footage with various sound clips from political speeches and interviews with Hall, in an attempt to capture fugitive images of past and present crises. Footage of the Brixton Riots, military airstrikes in Iraq, the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, as well as vehicle crash tests, wildlife documentary and televised advertisements, are conjoined in a mass of “proximate currents”, moments that brush up against each other. Slowly, they trace a non-linear narrative from the

copied from The National Archives of the UK, newspaper clippings, and newly unearthed archival footage of top-secret files being burned in Aden (now Yemen). As surrogate for erased histories, this diachronic installation aims to generate novel reflections of this atrocity, its subsequent obfuscation by successive British Governments, and the amnesiac consequences of these injustices.

Thatcher Era to the present moment, of “the long march of neoliberalism”.

[iniva.org/programme/projects/proximate-currents-when-everything-fuses-together/](http://iniva.org/programme/projects/proximate-currents-when-everything-fuses-together/)  
finished

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Sheffield, United Kingdom  
Commissioned by Bloc Projects,  
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- 2020 Proximate Currents Institute of International Visual Arts London, United Kingdom  
[iniva.org/programme/projects/proximate-currents-when-everything-fuses-together/](http://iniva.org/programme/projects/proximate-currents-when-everything-fuses-together/) Echoing Stuart Hall’s 2011 essay “The Neoliberal Revolution”, the project collages a wide range of clips, focusing on moments of historical rupture and settlement in Britain. The work fuses together disparate footage with various sound clips from political speeches and interviews with Hall, in an attempt to capture fugitive images of past and present crises. Footage of the Brixton Riots, military airstrikes in Iraq, the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, as well as vehicle crash tests, wildlife documentary and televised advertisements, are conjoined in a mass of “proximate currents”, moments

that brush up against each other. Slowly, they trace a non-linear narrative from the Thatcher Era to the present moment, of “the long march of neoliberalism”.

2019 The Spectre of a World Which Could Be Free London, United Kingdom "If there was a founding event of capitalist realism, it would be the violent destruction of the Allende government in Chile by General Pinochet's American-backed coup." -Mark Fisher In *Eros and Civilization*, Herbert Marcuse highlights a phenomenon in which the closer a society comes to liberating the individual, the greater the need for the established order to protect itself against "the spectre of a world which could be free". This is the lens through which the eponymously titled project investigates covert CIA operations within Chile in the 1970s. For the first time, period-appropriate declassified documents, newspaper articles, print ads, and archival images and video are reproduced and compiled, corroborating the narratives of public knowledge and top-secret activity into a parallel flux. Through such examination, questions arise of the neoliberal motives behind acts of tyranny and its contemporary relevance.

2018 To Lose This Wonderful Feeling London, United Kingdom To Lose This Wonderful Feeling is a collaboration with Aysen Dennis, a resident of the Aylesbury Estate who faces the prospect of losing her home. In 2005 Southwark Council announced that they would demolish the Aylesbury Estate - the largest social housing estate in Europe. This would displace thousands of residents from their homes and communities. The planning proposals expose that the council homes would be replaced by private housing, deemed unaffordable according to the council's own classifications. The council and property development partner Notting Hill Housing have been in battle with the remaining residents ever since. The series of three prints use pages of the redevelopment planning permissions, downloaded from the website of

Notting Hill Housing. Words have been selectively erased, and images of Aysen in her home have been placed on them, with her silhouette cut out.

Accompanying the prints is a sound installation in which Aysen speaks about her memories of living in her home and what the future brings for her. The series was created for the group exhibition 'Over Capacity' at Southward Park Galleries, 1 mile from the Aylesbury Estate.

2017 Oil Spill London, United Kingdom Oil Spill makes use of a traditional marbling technique of floating oil-based inks on top of water, with an alteration of using printed market data instead of plain paper to capture the ink. The market data used correspond by date to thirty oil spill events in the past five years, collected from the Financial Times archive. In this way, the aqueous patterns created by the floating black ink "recreate" the oil spills, while becoming part of the data material.

2016 The Council London, United Kingdom The Council was created in the period between 'Brexit' and the Trump presidency, and considers the escalating climate of tense anti-establishment feelings in 2016. Traditional, light-sensitive photographic paper is placed directly against a computer screen in complete darkness, and exposed as a result of turning the screen on and off, resulting in unrepeatably, one-of-a-kind prints. The sources used are videos obtained from the internet of world leaders speaking at the UN general assemblies. Leaders of the UK, US, Russia, China, and France are the focus in this work for their controversial positions as unelected, permanent members of the UN Security Council.

## PUBLICATIONS

2022 Reputation Regimes Book Art Monthly  
Emily Rosamond London  
[www.artmonthly.co.uk/magazine/site/issue/november-2022](http://www.artmonthly.co.uk/magazine/site/issue/november-2022)

## REVIEWS

2023 Decade Zero: Ben Yau and Zaneta Zukalova  
Interview Website Angela Chan London,  
United Kingdom

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|------|---|------|---|
| 2020 | Bloomberg New Contemporaries 2019<br>Book Studio International Rosanna<br>McLaughlin London, United Kingdom<br><a href="http://www.studiointernational.com/index.php/bloomberg-new-contemporaries-review-south-london-gallery">www.studiointernational.com/index.php/bloomberg-new-contemporaries-review-south-london-gallery</a> | 2022 | Ben Yau Interview with Inês Costa Website<br>Inês Costa London, United Kingdom<br><a href="http://www.whitechapelgallery.org/exhibitions/the-london-open-2022-2/">www.whitechapelgallery.org/exhibitions/the-london-open-2022-2/</a>  |
|      |   | 2022 | Against climate imperialism Blog/Vlog<br>Progressive International  |
|      |   | 2020 | Ben Yau Interview by David McLeavy<br>Website David McLeavy Sheffield, United<br>Kingdom<br><a href="http://youngartistsinconversation.co.uk/Ben-Yau">youngartistsinconversation.co.uk/Ben-Yau</a>  |
|      |   | 2020 | Sheffield billboard display for work by<br>exciting new artist Ben Yau Newspaper Julia<br>Armstrong Sheffield, United Kingdom<br><a href="http://www.thestar.co.uk/arts-and-culture/art/sheffield-billboard-display-for-work-by-exciting-new-artist-ben-yau-2947250">www.thestar.co.uk/arts-and-culture/art/sheffield-billboard-display-for-work-by-exciting-new-artist-ben-yau-2947250</a> |
|      |   | 2020 | Interview with Ben Yau Website Kitty Bew<br>Brighton, United Kingdom<br><a href="http://nadirproject.space/projects/source-materials">nadirproject.space/projects/source-materials</a>  |
|      |   | 2020 | Proximate Currents Reading Group Website<br>Annie Jael Kwan, Languid Hands (Rabz<br>Lansiquot & Imani Robinson) London,<br>United Kingdom<br><a href="http://iniva.org/programme/events/proximate-currents-reading-group/">iniva.org/programme/events/proximate-currents-reading-group/</a>   |
|      |   | 2020 | Ben Yau in conversation with Benjamin<br>Cook Website Benjamin Cook London,<br>United Kingdom<br><a href="http://iniva.org/programme/events/proximate-currents-reading-group/">iniva.org/programme/events/proximate-currents-reading-group/</a>   |
|      |   | 2020 | Bloomberg New Contemporaries 2019<br>Magazine Rosanna McLaughlin London,<br>United Kingdom<br><a href="http://www.studiointernational.com/index.php/bloomberg-new-contemporaries-review-south-london-gallery">www.studiointernational.com/index.php/bloomberg-new-contemporaries-review-south-london-gallery</a>  |

## AWARDS AND GRANTS

|      |   |
|------|---|
| 2022 | Participating Artist Grant Whitechapel<br>Gallery London, United Kingdom    |
| 2020 | Commission Institute of International<br>Visual Arts London, United Kingdom |
| 2020 | Commission Bloc Projects Sheffield,<br>United Kingdom                       |

## SECONDARY ART-RELATED ACTIVITIES

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| 2023 -<br>2023 | Talk the Talk Symposium: Design as World<br>Travelling |
| 2022 -<br>2022 | Coutnercurrents Panel Discussion                       |
| 2019 -<br>2019 | Leeds Art Gallery Artist Talk                          |

2019 Participating Artist Grant Bloomberg  
New Contemporaries London, United  
Kingdom



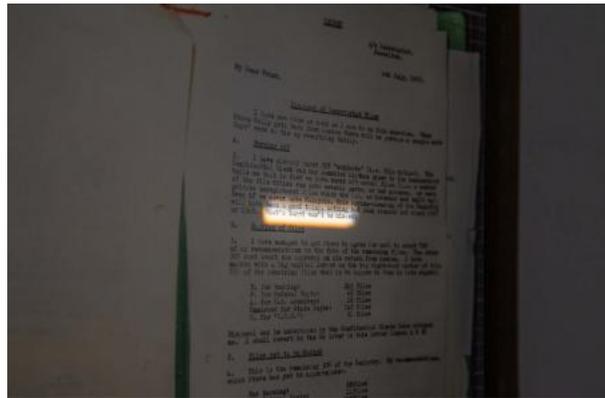
In The Shadow of Ashes, 2023  
Overhead projectors, Hahnemühle glossy, Hahnemühle rice  
paper, IBO, newsprint, archival boxes, copy paper, one-  
channel video, sound installation, Variable



In The Shadow of Ashes, 2023  
Overhead projectors, Hahnemühle glossy, Hahnemühle rice  
paper, IBO, newsprint, archival boxes, copy paper, one-  
channel video, sound installation, Variable



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paper, IBO, newsprint, archival boxes, copy paper, one-  
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Overhead projectors, Hahnemühle glossy, Hahnemühle rice  
paper, IBO, newsprint, archival boxes, copy paper, one-  
channel video, sound installation, Variable



Extractive Model Study, 2020  
Billboard, 170 x 474cm



The Spectre of A World Which Could Be Free, 2019  
Photocopy paper, newsprint, semi-gloss photo paper,  
acetate, vinyl, book, video, Variable



The Spectre of A World Which Could Be Free, 2019  
Photocopy paper, newsprint, semi-gloss photo paper,  
acetate, vinyl, book, video, Variable



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Photocopy paper, newsprint, semi-gloss photo paper,  
acetate, vinyl, book, video, Variable



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Photocopy paper, newsprint, semi-gloss photo paper,  
acetate, vinyl, book, video, Variable



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Photocopy paper, newsprint, semi-gloss photo paper,  
acetate, vinyl, book, video, Variable