



SOURCE MATERIALS

3-31 October

Saturdays, Sundays
12pm-4pm

book at
nadirproject.space

BEN YAU
PABLO PAILLOLE
UFUOMA ESSİ

LIST OF WORKS

BEN YAU

The Spectre of a World Which Could Be Free

Photocopy paper, newsprint, semi-gloss photo paper
2019

PABLO PAILLOLE

Things Are Improving

Three-channel video with audio
2019

Toxic

Single-channel video with audio and performance
2019

UFUOMA ESSI

All That You Can't Leave Behind

Single-channel video
2019

ARTIST BIOS

Ben Yau is a Chinese-Scots visual artist based in London. Ben's practice engages the aesthetics of global conflict, historical narratives, and social tensions. Trained in lens-based media and interested in the historical as a means to understand present crises, he now works with materials found from a research-intensive process that are then collaged or montaged in the mediums of works on paper and moving image. His multi-media projects engage a diverse range of materials, such as declassified CIA documents, British Ministry of Defence research papers, newspaper clippings, and videos found on the internet. By way of appropriation, Yau addresses the processes or moments of political rupture.

benyau.org

Instagram: @benyauhaus

In response to the fake news phenomenon, **Pablo Paillole** works with moving image, sound, text and performance to explore the relationship between popular culture and politics; fiction and reality. With audiovisual installations, he interrogates the extent to which fictional characters and narratives bleed into the world's socio-political reality. He is interested in the information that reaches our personal devices. Pablo intends to re-interpret the construction of narratives that takes place behind our screens; to disentangle the media's conglomerate of fictional and factual content. He sources

images, sounds or texts from archives and media as well as newly filmed footage to create unsettling audiovisual compositions.

bloping.wixsite.com/arts

Instagram: @bloping

Ufuoma Essi is a video artist and filmmaker from South East London. She works predominantly with film and moving image as well as photography and sound. Her work revolves around Black feminist epistemology and the configuration of displaced histories. The archive forms an essential medium for her as an artist and it's through explorations with the archive that she aims to interrogate and disrupt the silences and gaps of the historical narrative. By using the archive as a process of unlearning and discovery she seeks to re-centre the marginalised histories of the Black Atlantic and specific histories of black women. Drawing from a range of influences including Black popular culture, films, music, historical texts and Black feminist theory from writers such as Claudia Jones to Daphne Brooks.

ufuomaessi.com

Instagram: @ufuoma.essi

EXHIBITION ESSAY

Written by Kitty Bew

Ben Yau, Ufuoma Essi and Pablo Paillole are gatherers of material. Fragments of sound, image, text and video are deftly assembled into meaningful narratives about geopolitics, race, and political scandal in *Source Materials*, an exhibition of moving image and mixed-media works that are divided in subject, but united in purpose.

Each artist works with an assortment of found materials; taken from archives or image data banks and set side by side to subvert cultural assumptions and draw new meanings. Ufuoma Essi specialises in original footage. In her works she seeks to shine a light on invisible histories, notably those of the Black Atlantic. She is indebted to the archive, using it to both discover and give prominence to Black histories. Her video work, *All That You Can't Leave Behind*, features a stew of sources that charts the Black female trailblazers of music and dance. Soundbites of Nina Simone in conversation about race and footage of Abbey Lincoln singing the political protest song *Freedom Day* are mixed with convivial, B-roll footage of Black communities dancing and moving together. Layers of collective cultural history are interweaved with isolated panoramas of beaches, motorways and waterways in a poetic balance of identity and formalism. The result is a deft arrangement of sound, image and idea, brought together to transformative effect. For Essi the archive is a political tool that has the potential to both preserve and re-claim the histories of marginalised communities. By its very nature, *All That You Can't Leave Behind* is radical in its re-centring of Black women.

Ben Yau is also curious about hidden histories, more specifically the machinations of geopolitics. In *Source Materials* we see three mixed-media works on the wall, originally shown as part of a larger installation called *The Spectre of a World Which Could Be Free*. These works are composed of declassified documents, newspaper articles and archival images that detail covert CIA operations within Chile in the 1970s. His work is predicated on a practice of intensive archival research to deconstruct and scrutinise enormous historical shifts, with a wider view to revealing the nefarious political forces at play. The resulting works are precise and thoughtful arrangements of paper materials, existing somewhere between Dada-ist collage and visual essay. Declassified documents detail the US Government's conspiratorial plots against Salvador Allende's Marxist administration. These are fixed next to archival images of the bombing that took place as part of Augusto Pinochet's US-backed coup in 1973. It is a delicious balance of grey tone and radiant colour. In exploring critical moments in history Yau seeks to invite questions about the damaging effects of neoliberalism. Unsurprisingly he cites Mark Fisher's *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* and his dissection of free market ideology in his introductory blurb; "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.

Pablo Paillole has a similar cut and paste approach. Working at the intersection of politics and popular culture, he satirises both the fictional and the factual. His video work *Things Are Improving* is the ultimate in the 'clashing together' of unusual and disparate material and is made up of news clips, television, cinema and his own filmed footage. Shots from *The Simpsons* and Charlie Chaplin's *Monsieur Verdoux* are juxtaposed with Teresa May's awkward dance at the 2018 Conservative Conference and Donald Trump's speech about North Korea at the National Assembly. Images switch without warning from one sequence to the next, occasionally superimposed on one another or saturated with bright colour. His fragmentary approach builds more of a mosaic than a narrative. It produces an effect similar to that compulsively channel hopping or doomscrolling through a de-contextualised series of video and image. Concerns about the manipulation of media and the threat of misinformation are underlying. Paillole isn't afraid to embrace elements of humour as well, seeing it as part and parcel of exploring the political spectrum. In *Source Materials* he also exhibits a satirical reproduction of Britney Spear's noughties classic *Toxic*. Two figures dressed as Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un dance enthusiastically to a softly-spoken recording, sung by the artist himself. Paillole presents political figures as performers with scripted lyrics and pre-arranged dance moves, subversively touching a broader issue of celebrity politics.

Like Essi and Yau, Paillole is interested in how images interact when brought together. All three artists demonstrate the subversive potential of assembling disparate imagery, texts and media. In their approach, they offer fresh insights into the social, political emotional contexts from which their materials were taken.