

Jes Benstock - Artist Filmmaker

Playfully Strange

Documentary, realtime cinema and immersive art -award-winning films, installations and live visual worlds where playful humour meets difficult truths, hidden emotions and emerging technologies.

DOCUMENTARY

REALTIME CINEMA

IMMERSIVE ART

INSTALLATION

ANIMATION

ARCHIVES

XR RESEARCH



PORTFOLIO JES BENSTOCK

For more than thirty years I've worked across documentary, animation, storytelling, live visual performance, interactive work and immersive installation - exploring how audiences emotionally inhabit and respond to images, spaces and stories.



Contact - jes@livingcinema.com

Contents

01 Art & Immersive Installations

Immersive spaces, live systems & realtime experiments

02 Film Practice

Films balancing humour, tenderness & difficult truths

03 Music & Live Visuals

Projection worlds, pop videos & improvised image systems

04 Process Journal

Realtime notes, unfinished thoughts & immersive experiments

05 Commissioned Work

Archives, museums & socially engaged storytelling

06 Corporate & Commercial

Narrative communication, animation & public engagement

07 Selected CV

A summary page of listed works and teaching

Evolving, cross fertilising, beating the bounds

My practice has always lived between worlds: documentary and performance, installation and cinema, humour and difficult subject matter, analogue mess and technological fascination.

I've directed feature documentaries, built immersive projection environments, toured live visuals, worked with archives, museums, galleries, broadcasters and musicians - and increasingly I'm exploring how realtime systems and immersive technologies can become emotional storytelling spaces, more than technological spectacle... but still playful.

What interests me most is not technology itself, but what happens when audiences begin to inhabit a story or a state of mind; physically, emotionally and spatially.



“The tools and sensibility developed over decades - rhythm in editing, observational instinct, a feel for how audiences inhabit a story - are beginning to translate naturally into immersive and realtime work.”

Working Notes · 2026

Selected Recognition

Broadcast & Film - BBC Films · Channel 4 · ITV · International festivals · UK theatrical release · BBC iPlayer

Art & Installation - Folkestone Triennial · Arts Council Touring · Big Chill Art Trail · Site-specific immersive works

Music & Performance - Orbital · My Bloody Valentine · Morcheeba · Catatonia · ENO · Terry Gilliam

Education & Mentoring - UAL · NFTS · Screen South · Four Corners · UK Jewish Film Festival

01 Art & Immersive Installations

Immersive spaces, live systems & realtime experiments

Site-specific installations, participatory environments, live visuals and realtime cinematic experiments where documentary sensibilities collide with immersive technology.

Squat City 73

Unreal Engine · Realtime Cinema · Folkestone Triennial



The story of how Hoppy and Sue found a new technology - portable video - and used it as an agent of change in their housing campaigns run from their Camden squat. A developing realtime interactive cinematic work blending archive imagery, documentary instinct and stylised real world environments in Unreal Engine into a single immersive narrative world. Part film, part installation, part speculative memory architecture. Shown as a Cinematic in the Folkestone Triennial.

The Effect

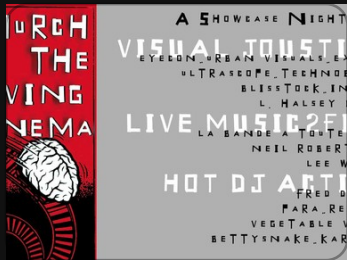
Arts Council Touring



After a residency as a guest of the AudioRom collective in STEIM the pioneering interactive and performance lab in Amsterdam, I came back to London with their amazing piece of live camera software - Image/ine. With my partner artist Melissa Bliss, we developed an Interactive live video installation commissioned for the Stoke Newington Festival which later toured with Arts Council support. A responsive digital toy exploring technology, performance and place.

Church of the Living Cinema

Immersive projection environments



Coming out of our amazing artists' studio in Elmore Street which had visual artists on all four floors, I wanted to try an event which was a mixture of installation pieces and live performances in a club setting. We also included elements of Uncle Bob's - a cinema night started by Giles Thacker where we also beta tested interactive games. Living Cinema was a multi-projector immersive environment combining VJs, DJs, live performance, projection mapping and visual improvisation - an exploration of collective cinematic space.

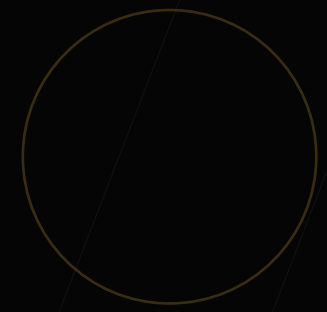
SK8N16

Curator · Festival · Live Camera Manipulation



We were asked by Stoke Newington Festival to helm this spin off - a local skateboarding festival with a strong element of live visuals and art. We curated art installations and live video manipulation for this successful large community Skateboarding, Art, DJs, Live Music and Lifestyle Festival. We also made documentary about the event for the Extreme Sports Channel.

01 Art & Immersive Installations contd.



Big Chill Art Trail

Curator • Woodland • Multi-year



Contributed to and curated several years of this immersive outdoor exhibition set in woodland - light, video and sound installations exploring the experiential edge of festival culture. Image: Mirror Screen, early web iconography projected onto a screen made of a thousand mirrors.

Moving While Standing Still

Artist • Interactive • Digital



My first digital interactive piece. The players are presented with two computer mice and a large projection. When they move the mice the image changes. The mice either multiply the effect of each other or cancel each other out. The net result when players work together is a high speed timelapse tour around London.

It used footage shot on 35mm in timelapse around Shoreditch, Notting Hill and the North Circular and the Westway. The whole installation was powered by an Avid non linear editing machine - the rolls royce of video playback in its time!

02 Film Practice

Films balancing humour, tenderness & difficult truths

Award-winning documentaries and experimental short films where animation, observation and emotional risk coexist.

The British Guide to Showing Off

BBC Films · UK Theatrical Release · International Festivals

A feature-length documentary mixing observational filmmaking and animation to explore the flamboyant world of Alternative Miss World - playful, tender and politically alive.

Premiered at Karlovy Vary
UK Premiere at ICA
Four weeks in UK Cinemas including Picturehouse chain



The Holocaust Tourist

Best Film - London Short FF

Documentary exploring memory, tourism and grief at former camp sites in Poland - holding humour, discomfort and human contradiction in fragile balance.

Also won Best Film from NPA and was shown in Cannes in a showcase



Orders of Love

Mental Health · Animation · Best Film

A personal documentary exploring mental health and family trauma. Best Film at the London Short Film Festival for sensitive storytelling and unexpected humour, integrating animation and observational filming.

Funding from Film London



Poof

First-Person · Comedy Drama · Kino Award for Innovation

A comedy drama addressing homophobia. Kino Award for Innovation winner. Shot entirely in first person for each character - blending satire with sensitive emotional storytelling.

Funding from Peabody and private sources



02 Film Practice contd.



The Man With The Extended Mind



ITV Commission • Paranormal

An ITV-commissioned documentary with animations about heretical scientist Rupert Sheldrake and his theories on the paranormal - a curious portrait of radical thinking.

Arnold Brown - Random Acts

Channel 4 • Short Films • Comedy



Two short films for Channel 4's legendary Random Acts strand, starring Arnold Brown - the legendary Glaswegian stand-up comedian. Surreal, deadpan comedy shot in a studio and set on the stylised streets of Glasgow - with a light anarchic touch.

03 Music & Live Visuals

Projection worlds, pop videos & improvised image systems

Live visuals, animated films and music collaborations - realtime image-making long before immersive media became fashionable.

The Box - Orbital

Brit Nominated · Silver Spire winner



Multi-award-winning timelapse and animated pop video / short film hybrid - Silver Spire winner and Brit Award nominee. Millions of views on Youtube in multiple postings.

Starring the brilliant Tilda Swinton

Live Projections

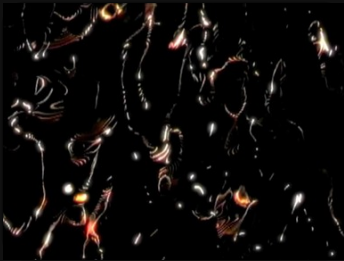
World tours · Custom live visuals



Custom live visuals and animation systems for world tours with Orbital, Richard Ashcroft, Catatonia and My Bloody Valentine.

Music Festivals & VJing

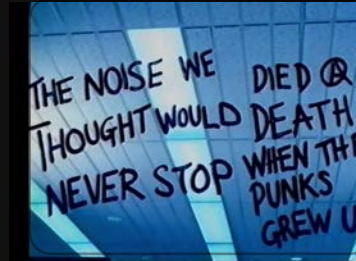
Megadog · Big Chill · Glastonbury



Improvised realtime visual performance at Megadog, Big Chill (UK and Naxos), Glastonbury and club events across the UK.

Pop Promos

From high rotation to digital curiosities



Directed a range of pop promos inc for Orbital (Nothing Left, Waving Not Drowning - an interactive experience including Brian Cant!), The Levellers (One Way), Morcheeba (Part of the Process) and the bizarre Banana Pizza for disability charity OneVoice

04 Process Journal

Realtime notes, unfinished thoughts & immersive experiments

Fragments from an evolving practice: Unreal Engine tests, visual sketches, technical dead-ends, accidental discoveries and notes from the edge of documentary and immersive media.



Field Notes - Unreal

Beginning to think of Unreal less as brain-aching software and more as the ultimate collage tool, which can also bring space and context - like a great installation.

Experiments with realtime game-like experience, encountering archive footage in the locations where it was shot. Exploring whether documentary memory can feel spatial rather than purely observational.



Installation Thinking

The audience becomes physically implicated the moment the image occupies the same space as them.

Returning to old installation projects and realising many were already proto-immersive experiences long before XR terminology existed.



Projection Ecology

100 projectors in a converted church full of people feels more immersive than any headset demo. Can you reverse engineer those feelings into a playable experience?

Thinking about collective spectatorship versus isolated immersion. How can realtime systems still feel communal - as if you were in a show or an installation?

05 Commissioned work

Archives, museums & socially engaged storytelling

Collaborations with museums, charities and public organisations - blending archives, participation and visual experimentation.

ResearchSpace

British Museum · Semantic web technologies

Experimental film for the British Museum exploring semantic web technologies through animation and immersive moving image.



Our Guild

Archive-led films · Interactive museum work

Archive-led films and interactive museum work foregrounding oral histories, forgotten memories, and underrepresented experiences. For AHOP and Screen South



Guild of the Brave Poor Things was founded by Grace Kimmins in 1894 as a club for young disabled boys

A Family Story

Animation · 500 years · Archive

A fully animated family history covering 500 years of a Swiss family - combining collage animation and hand-drawn characters into a deeply personal, richly layered archive film. Fondation des Archives de la Famille Pictet.



Something About Us

NAS · Treehouse · Autism

Produced for autism charities including NAS and Treehouse, this documentary interweaves contributions made by people with autism to authentically convey what it means to be autistic in a world that struggles to understand.



06 Corporate & Commercial

Narrative communication, animation & public engagement

Commercial collaborations using humour, visual experimentation and emotional storytelling to communicate complex ideas.

Coca-Cola - Heroes of Coke

Interactive safety campaign

Award-winning interactive safety campaign using comedy and playful audience engagement. With the brilliant Marcello Magni.



Pictet & Cie

Multilingual recruitment · Photography prizes · Investment storytelling

More than fifty films spanning multilingual recruitment, photography prizes and investment storytelling.



Future Talent

Animated marketing · Onboarding · E-learning

Animated marketing, onboarding and e-learning films combining accessibility, character design and kinetic typography. Some in collaboration with legendary animator Chris Shepherd



PWC - Fach Trottel

Studio green screen direction · Film Noir style

Studio green screen direction for award winning Film Noir style series exploring the challenges of corporate language. For Attic Media & PWC.



SELECTED CV

Selected CV

Artist filmmaker - editor - animator - curator

Selected films

- The British Guide to Showing Off - feature documentary; BBC Films; UK theatrical release; international festivals.
- The Holocaust Tourist - NPA award, best short documentary - a whistlestop tour of Krakow and Auschwitz
- Orders of Love - Best Film, London Short Film Festival. US Distribution
- Poof - Kino Award for Innovation.
- The Man With The Extended Mind - ITV documentary.
- Arnold Brown - Random Acts - Channel 4 short films.
- East London Institute of Needlecraft - ICA Dick Awards nominee

Art, installation & realtime

- Squat City 73 - developing realtime cinematic installation in Unreal Engine.
- The Effect - Playful Interactive live video installation, Stoke Newington Festival then Arts Council tour.
- Church of the Living Cinema - curated multi-projector immersive event with 100 projectors.
- SK8N16 and Big Chill Art Trail - curatorial and site-specific festival works.
- Mouthfeel and Universal Gyrator - Big Chill site-specific projection installations controlled by one player
- Moving While Standing Still - Interactive High Speed Tour controlled by two mice for two players and many observers

Commercial & music

- Coca-Cola - Heroes of Coke - award-winning interactive safety campaign.
- Pictet & Cie - 50+ multilingual films for a leading Swiss private bank.
- Future Talent - 50+ animated onboarding and e-learning films.
- The Box - Orbital - Brit Award nominated; Silver Spire winner.
- Live visuals and projections for Orbital, My Bloody Valentine, Catatonia, Richard Ashcroft and festivals.

Commissions, museums & charities

- ResearchSpace - British Museum film for semantic web research tools.
- Our Guild - archive-led films and interactive display for AHOP.
- A Family Story - animated family history using extensive archive, for Fondation des Archives de la Famille Pictet in Geneva Switzerland.
- Autism and Computing and Something About Us - documentaries for autism charities including NAS and Treehouse.
- ENO - Additional animations for Terry Gilliam's first Opera and a series of BTS films for John Adams Dr Atomic

Teaching & mentoring

- UAL, NFTS, Screen South, Four Corners and UK Jewish Film Festival - devising and delivering courses and modules for students, local communities, at risk pupils, disabled groups, special needs learners.

Portfolio PDF & Selected CV - Jes Benstock

A concise overview of selected films, installations, immersive work, awards, collaborations and current artistic direction.

Playfully Strange

Documentary, realtime cinema and immersive art - a practice built on the belief that difficult truths are often best approached sideways: through humour, curiosity, emotional participation and strange acts of collective looking.

Contact - jes@livingcinema.com

Artist Filmmaker · Editor · Animator · Curator

Realtime Storytelling · Installation · XR Research

London · UK & International