

# Ben Coleman: Finders Keepers

Organ Projects is pleased to present the solo exhibition of artist Ben Coleman *Finders Keepers*. Playful compositions meet precarity in found, received, and sourced materials used by Coleman across his practice. With sculptural assemblages shown alongside his ever-growing collection of found paper collages; this show encompasses the crafting of chance, useful/less-ness, and the attentiveness of a maker.

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The additive process of assemblage and collage is precarious, balancing composition both in the two-dimensions of collage and three-dimensions of assemblage where gravity is also at play. This precarity is where Ben Coleman finds himself working within, not only in the making but in the sourcing of materials too.

Making hundreds of small found paper collages alongside the construction of free standing and wall-based assemblages compiled from found objects and salvaged wood, Coleman never buys any of the materials he uses. Instead, he relies on the provisions of other people's discarded odds and ends: unwanted or spare stickers, papers, wood and other objects. It is somewhat of a paradox: hand-to-mouth material provisions and the abundance of other peoples' waste. He also goes out scavenging on beaches, collecting the off-cuts from cleaning out machinery such as laser cutters and hole punches, and stopping on the street to pick up whatever catches his eye. With his selective collector's mindset, he builds up a reserve of bits and pieces waiting to be cast in their destined roles.

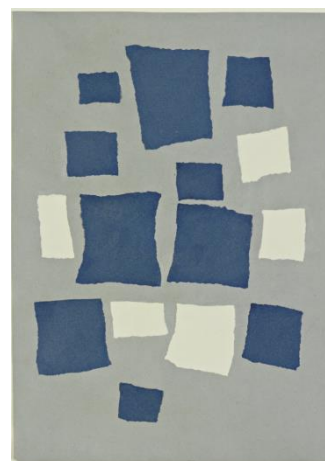
The infinite compositional possibilities of collage could be paralysing, but Coleman uses this as an opportunity to exercise automatism, a way of working in which the unconscious mind is engaged and bypasses the rational in order to make decisions about composition that are instinctual rather than premeditated. When making the collages each element is selected and placed in a way that does not attempt to make definitive meaning or be overtly pictorial. And yet, simply triggered by combinations of purely abstract shapes, colour, textures and marks it is almost impossible as a viewer to not begin to be reminded of things from everyday life, form narratives, or recall memories sparked from these combinations.

Allowing for chance meetings to occur between the formal qualities of the components placed within these small rectangles, Coleman keeps moving paper shapes around until the piece 'settles', never moving onto another collage until he senses the current one is complete. Historically automatism as a mode of creating has been intertwined with collage and assemblage, particularly since the Dada movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Beginning with poetry, the Dada movement applied automatism's use of free associations and collage-like-mentality of splicing, re-forming and juxtaposing with words, and then into music and art in order to channel something more unfiltered and irrational.

Looking at Coleman's work, the Dada artist Hans Arp's collages come to mind. Similarly, Arp gave chance the opportunity to dictate the composition of his collages made between 1916–17, by tearing up paper and the dropping them he let gravity place the pieces on larger rectangles which he then stuck down (or so the story goes). Chance is similarly explored and crafted by Coleman, with the introduction of inks and spray paint to his collage works, they are exploited for their own unpredictable qualities in which spray and bleeding lines defer from boundaries. These, like the edges of Arp's torn paper become glimpses of the artist's hand at work, distant but not absent.

This distancing of the maker within the work is also present with Coleman's assemblages, but in a way that these works seem to take on a life, or rather function, of their own. Reminiscent of analogue machines, like clocks, amplifiers, and weather gauges. These predominately found wooden blocks with integrated items such as pins, chains, fishing floats, toothpicks, buttons, plastic, and stickers are considerably crafted and feel hand-made in the way Frankenstein's monster would – being made of parts that had previous lives and functions, but are now brought together to become a whole different entity. These new assembled pieces appear to have functions not even the maker could of prescribed. Coleman's abstraction of recognisable materials aims to challenge the viewer's perception of the familiar as he draws inspiration from a variety of different topics such as science fiction, natural science and landscape.

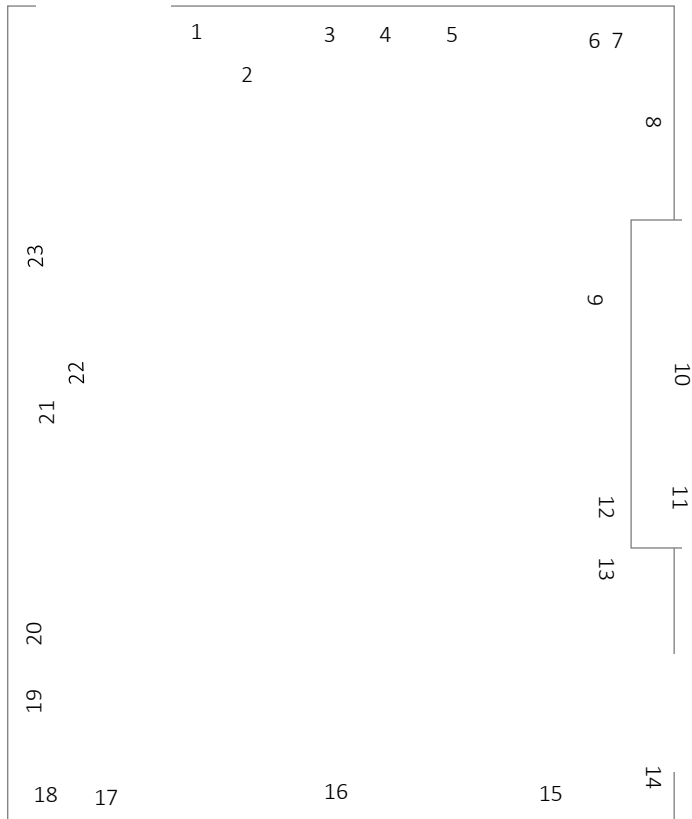
Rarely glued if gravity can do the job, Coleman's assemblages are moveable, adjustable, flexible and aware of their own precarity, being as easily taken apart as they are put back together. The collages although differing in their fixed state, also share this same dynamic energy and composition. As shapes appear in motion, floating in space, they are gathering and dispersing, ordering themselves and suggesting what they might become next.



*Untitled (Collage with Squares Arranged according to the Law of Chance). Jean (Hans) Arp. 1916–17, Torn-and-pasted paper and colored paper on coloured paper. 48.5 x 34.6 cm*

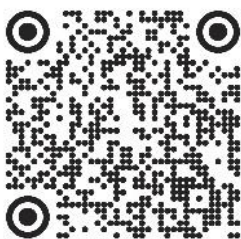
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Ben Coleman (b.1999, Bath) currently lives and works in Brighton, UK. Having received his BA in Fine Art at The Slade School of Fine Art (2019– 2023) he has shown work in Bath, London, Brighton, Bristol and Cornwall. Alongside his art practice, Coleman is co-founder of *Fresh Salad*, a nomadic gallery that helps to support emerging artists and curators.



1. *Plywood collage #1*, 2024, Plywood and spray paint, 15 x 10cm
2. *Ziggurat*, wood blocks, cast acrylic, rubber, sticker, monopoly house & tiddly wink, 10 x 12 x 10cm, 2024
3. *Party Popper*, 2024, wooden handrail, wooden beads, paper tape, electrical tape, cast acrylic, plastic ball, plastic star, found plastic and wire., 15 x 19 x 4cm
4. *Boardgame*, 2024, Wood block, wood trim, tiddlywinks, copper, fluorescent paper, found plastic, tape, fishing lure & bb gun pellets
5. *Bait*, 2024, wood blocks, stickers, wood veneer, electrical tape, coloured paper, found plastic, fishing beads, wood nail & a nail, 15.5 x 9 x 5cm
6. *Novel*, 2024, coloured paper and ink, 16 x 12.5cm
7. *Plywood collage #2*, 2024, Plywood and spray paint, 19.5 x 14cm
8. *Morphosis (Cycle)*, 2024, wood block, wood veneer, coloured paper, wire, sewing pins, metal tags, stickers, copper, 15cm x 15cm
9. *Red dot*, 2024, Coloured paper, 12 x 10 cm
10. *Galleon*, 2024, Wood blocks, wood dowel, toothpicks, paper, drumstick, plastic toy, safety pins, acrylic paint, 35 x 30 x 7cm
11. *Untitled*, 2024 Jenga blocks, toy block, wooden dowl, fishing lure, nerf gun bullet & ear plug, 7 x 14 x 5cm
12. *Plywood collage #3*, 2024, Plywood and spray paint, 14 x 12cm
13. *Solid*, 2024, coloured paper and stickers, 11 x 8cm
14. *Teenage bedroom bats*, 2024, coloured paper 14.5 x 11cm
15. *Plywood collage #4*, 2024, Plywood and spray paint, 13.5 x 10cm
16. *All collages made between January - July 2024, minus 50*, 2024, Coloured paper, stickers, tape, spray paint, ink, wood veneer, acrylic paint, wallpaper, cyanotype, train tickets, graph paper, paper bunting, sharpie, price tag, paint testers, paper streamers & post-it notes.
17. *Untitled*, 2024, game pieces and handmade wooden frame, 9 x 7cm
18. *Counter*, 2024, Clock body, draw handle, wooden dowl, wooden trim, stickers, found plastic, paper, spray paint, leather cord, 4.5 x 9.5 x 12cm
19. *Float*, 2024, fishing float and wood block, 5 x 17 x 5cm
20. *Orchid*, 2024, Wooden blocks, coloured paper, golf tee, ball baring, draughts piece, electrical wire covering & fishing float, 14 x 21.5 x 45 cm
21. *Treadmill*, 2024, Wood blocks, chopsticks, tooth picks, exterior wood paint, enamelled copper,

Coloured paper collages as part of  
***All collages made between January - July 2024, minus 50***  
 are available to purchase at £25 each.  
 Please enquire to reserve.



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