

**THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART PRESENTS ISAAC JULIEN'S ACCLAIMED FILM  
INSTALLATION *TEN THOUSAND WAVES* IN THE MARRON ATRIUM**

***Isaac Julien: Ten Thousand Waves***

November 25, 2013–February 17, 2014

The Donald B. and Catherine C. Marron Atrium, second floor

**Press Preview:** Monday, November 25, 9:30–10:30 a.m.

**NEW YORK, October 17, 2013—** The Museum of Modern Art presents renowned artist and filmmaker Isaac Julien's *Ten Thousand Waves* (2010), which was acquired by the Museum in 2012. The immersive installation, in a new configuration designed to fill the Donald B. and Catherine C. Marron Atrium, is on view from November 25, 2013, through February 17, 2014. The original inspiration for this 50-minute moving image installation, which is projected onto nine double-sided screens, was the Morecambe Bay tragedy of 2004, in which 23 Chinese cockle pickers drowned on a flooded sandbank off the coast of northwest England. ***Isaac Julien: Ten Thousand Waves*** is organized by Sabine Breitwieser, former Chief Curator (until January 31, 2013), with Martin Hartung, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Media and Performance Art, MoMA.

*Ten Thousand Waves* premiered at the 2010 Sydney Biennial and has since been exhibited internationally to wide acclaim. Its installation at MoMA is one of the most ambitious presentations of *Ten Thousand Waves* to date, and is the first to include screens hung at multiple levels. Measuring up to 23 feet wide, the screens are the largest ever to be hung in an exhibition at MoMA. Because the MoMA presentation is intended to be viewed not only from ground level in the Marron Atrium, but also from the upper floors that look down on the space, the configuration required the use of cutting-edge audio-visual and sound technologies. Much of Julien's work reflects on ideas of migration, and with this installation he intentionally requires multiple viewing perspectives, encouraging visitors' movement through the work.

On February 25, 2004, 23 Chinese migrant workers, employed as cockle pickers, were caught at night by a fast high tide and drowned in Morecambe Bay. *Ten Thousand Waves* incorporates archival footage recorded by a police helicopter on that night showing the rescue of one survivor from a sandbank in the rising tide, accompanied by audio recordings of the distress calls. With this tragedy at the center of the work, Julien poetically interweaves images of contemporary Chinese culture with its ancient myths—including the fable of the goddess Mazu (portrayed in the piece by Maggie Cheung), which comes from the Fujian Province, from whence the Morecambe Bay workers originated.

In one section of the work, titled "Tale of Yishan Island," Julien recounts the story of 16th-century fishermen lost and imperiled at sea. Central to the legend is the sea goddess figure who leads the fishermen to safety. Julien creates a cinematic passage between eras and incidents,

cutting between the police helicopter footage of Morecambe Bay and Mazu's gaze as she hovers protectively (via special effects) over the fishermen's journey.

In a preceding section, shot at the Shanghai Film Studios, actress Zhao Tao takes part in a reenactment of the classic 1930s Chinese film *The Goddess*, assuming the starring role originally played by Ruan Ling-yu. Here Julien fuses two tragic stories: one of the film's heroine, a mother who becomes a prostitute to support her son; the other of Ruan herself, the biggest star of Chinese cinema in the early 1930s, who committed suicide in 1935.

In addition to Cheung and Zhao, collaborators on *Ten Thousand Waves* include calligrapher Gong Fagen, film and video artist Yang Fudong, cinematographer Zhao Xiaoshi, and poet Wang Ping, from whom Julien commissioned "Small Boats," a poem that is recited in the film. The film is set on the streets of both modern and old Shanghai, and includes music and sounds that fuse Eastern and Western traditions. The installation's sound structure is as immersive as its sequenced images, with contributions from, among others, London-based musician Jah Wobble and the Chinese Dub Orchestra, and an original score by Spanish contemporary classical composer Maria de Alvear.

#### **ARTIST BIO**

Isaac Julien (b. 1960) is an internationally acclaimed artist and filmmaker based in London whose work incorporates different artistic disciplines, drawing from and commenting on film, dance, photography, music, theater, painting, and sculpture, and uniting them to create a unique poetic visual language in audiovisual film installations. He came to prominence with his 1989 drama-documentary *Looking for Langston*, a poetic exploration of Langston Hughes and the Harlem Renaissance. His 1991 film *Young Soul Rebels* won the Semaine de la Critique prize at the Cannes Film Festival. Informed by his film background, Julien's gallery installations form fractured narratives that reflect critical thinking about race, globalization, and representation.

Julien was nominated for the Turner Prize in 2001 for his film installations *The Long Road to* (1999) and *Vagabondia* (2000). His acclaimed five-screen installation *WESTERN UNION: small boats* (2007) is on display at the Reina Sofia, Madrid; Centre for Contemporary Arts, Warsaw; and is also in the Museum Brandhorst collection in Munich. In 2008 MoMA coproduced Julien's and Tilda Swinton's collaborative film project *Derek* (2008), a filmic biography of the late British filmmaker Derek Jarman, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival the same year. *Ten Thousand Waves* (2010) has been on display in cities in more than 15 countries so far, including Shanghai, Sydney, Madrid, Helsinki, Sao Paolo, Gwangju (Korea), Gothenburg, Moscow, New York, Miami, and London.

#### **SPONSORSHIP:**

Major support for the exhibition is provided by Leila and Mickey Straus.

Additional funding is provided by The Contemporary Arts Council of The Museum of Modern Art, The Friends of Education of The Museum of Modern Art, The Junior Associates of The Museum of Modern Art, and the MoMA Annual Exhibition Fund.

Video projectors are provided by Christie® with additional support from Michael Andrews.

**PUBLICATION:**

To accompany its presentation of *Isaac Julien: Ten Thousand Waves*, MoMA is publishing *Isaac Julien: Riot*, an intellectual and professional autobiography of the artist and filmmaker whose trailblazing career has moved across film and art and through the forms of documentary, biography, dance, narrative film, and multiscreen installation. With texts by Julien as well as Cynthia Rose, Paul Gilroy, Kobena Mercer, B. Ruby Rich, bell hooks, Mark Nash, Giuliana Bruno, Christine Van Assche, Laura Mulvey, and Stuart Hall, *Riot* is the first book to provide a career-long overview of this important artist's work and to situate it in the context of his personal and intellectual development: the friendships, mentors, films, politics, records, and artworks that have informed his practice. Each of the book's chapters examines a particular period in his career, and is set up as a dialogue between two essays: one by Julien himself, and another by one of the many writers and intellectuals with whom he has collaborated and shared ideas. The book is largely illustrated by images from Julien's personal archive. 9.5 x 12"; 248 pages; 300 illustrations. Hardcover, \$55. Available from the MoMA Stores and online at MoMAstore.org. Distributed to the trade through ARTBOOK|D.A.P. in the United States and Canada, and through Thames & Hudson outside the United States and Canada.

**PUBLIC PROGRAMS:****Conversations: Among Friends featuring artist Isaac Julien and Stuart Comer**

Tuesday, November 26, 2013, 7:00 p.m.

Theater 3 (The Celeste Bartos Theater), mezzanine, The Lewis B. and Dorothy Cullman Education and Research Building

Presented by The Friend of Education of The Museum of Modern Art as part of the series *Conversations: Among Friends*, this evening's program features a conversation between artist Isaac Julien and MoMA's new chief curator of media and performance art, on the occasion of the exhibition *Isaac Julien: Ten Thousand Waves*. Following the program, guests are invited to continue the conversation and meet the participants at an intimate reception catered by Fantasy Fare in the Cullman Mezzanine. Scholar and critic Sukhdev Sandhu, author of *Night Haunts: A Journey through the London Night* (2007) and editor of *Leaving the Factory: Wang Bing's Tie Xi Qu: West of the Tracks* (2009) will contribute a collectible essay for the event's program. *Conversations: Among Friends* is made possible by TD Bank.

Tickets (\$35) can be purchased at the Museum information and film desks, online at MoMA.org, or through The Friends of Education Office. All tickets will be held at the door.

**MoMA Modern Mondays****An Evening with Isaac Julien**

Monday, February 17, 2014, 7:00 p.m.

Theater 2 (The Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 2), T2

For this evening, Isaac Julien discusses the genesis and production of *Ten Thousand Waves* (2010) and his oeuvre as a whole.

Organized by the Department of Film and the Department of Media and Performance Art. Modern Mondays is supported in part by The Contemporary Arts Council of The Museum of Modern Art.

Admission to the day's Modern Mondays program is free for Museum ticket holders, but **separate program tickets are required**. A Modern Mondays admission ticket does not include admission to the Museum galleries. The price of a film admission ticket may be applied toward the price of a Museum admission ticket or MoMA membership within 30 days of purchase.

## Film Program

To mark the final weeks of *Ten Thousand Waves*, the Department of Film presents a survey of films by Isaac Julien on February 7–10, including short and feature films from the 1980s to the present. Emerging in the neighboring club cultures of funk, disco, and soul; leftist political activism; and collectivism in British independent filmmaking, Julien made his first films as a student at Central Saint Martins. Through his films, Julien charts new representations of a self—black, gay, and British—excluded from the cultural climate of the 1980s, heralding what came to be known as New Queer Cinema. From Langston Hughes to Frantz Fanon to the 1977 Silver Jubilee, Julien combines documentary or archival material with poetic fictionalizations that alternately stand in for a silenced ancestral past and act as the starting point for a viable future. While in the last 15 years, Julien has primarily created video installations, these more recent works only continue the inquiry and invention of his films, as Julien continuously challenges received structures of artistic form and cultural meaning alike. Further details will be announced on [MoMA.org/film](http://MoMA.org/film).

## ACCESSIBILITY:

In order to serve visitors with hearing loss, this exhibition includes induction hearing loops for sound amplification. Visitors to the installation can turn their hearing aid or cochlear implant to T-Coil mode to hear enhanced sound effortlessly. In addition, all MoMA theaters, lobby desks, ticketing desks, audioguide desks, and one of The Edward John Noble Education Center's classrooms are also equipped with hearing loops that transmit directly to hearing aids with T-Coils.



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**For downloadable high-resolution images, register at [MoMA.org/press](http://MoMA.org/press).**

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## Public Information:

**The Museum of Modern Art**, 11 West 53 Street, New York, NY 10019, (212) 708-9400, [MoMA.org](http://MoMA.org).

**Hours:** Saturday through Thursday, 10:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m. Friday, 10:30 a.m.–8:00 p.m.

**Museum Admission:** \$25 adults; \$18 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$14 full-time students with current I.D. Free, members and children 16 and under. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs). Free admission during Uniqlo Free Friday Nights: Fridays, 4:00 p.m.–8:00 p.m.

**MoMA.org:** No service charge for tickets ordered on MoMA.org. Tickets purchased online may be printed out and presented at the Museum without waiting in line. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs).

**Film and After Hours Program Admission:** \$12 adults; \$10 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$8 full-time students with current I.D. The price of an After Hours Program Admission ticket may be applied toward the price of a Museum admission ticket or MoMA Membership within 30 days.

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