

Press Kit: Isaac Julien. What Freedom Is To Me

Isaac Julien. What Freedom Is To Me
September 23, 2023 – January 14, 2024
K21

Press conference and preview
Thursday, September 21, 2023, 11 am, K21

With:

- Susanne Gaensheimer, Director Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen
- Doris Krystof, Curator, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen
- Isaac Julien, Artist

K21

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#IsaacJulien
#K21Julien
#K21

Isaac Julien. What Freedom Is To Me at K21, Düsseldorf

K21 presents the first survey exhibition in Germany dedicated to the British artist Isaac Julien (b. 1960 in London, lives and works in London and Santa Cruz/California). It is a groundbreaking body of work that pushes the boundaries of film and art through expansive cinematographic installations. Julien's cinematic imagination, critical thinking and activist engagement with decolonial aesthetics are expressed both in his early films of the 1980s as well as in the exceptional cinematic images of his large, internationally acclaimed film installations of the last twenty years. At once radically political and highly aesthetic, the works bring to the fore overlooked issues and restore forgotten archive material. Using poetry, dance, aesthetics, architecture, and music, Julien explores the possibilities of film as a medium and disrupts traditional notions of linear history, space, and time. At the heart of his pioneering work is the demand for equality, and his work remains as fiercely experimental and politically charged as it was forty years ago. "I'll tell you what freedom is to me. No fear"—this quote by the American jazz singer and civil rights activist Nina Simone inspired Isaac Julien's subtitle for this exhibition.

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The exhibition opens with Julien's earliest experiments with the moving image, produced in the context of the Sankofa Film and Video Collective. Founded by Julien in the summer of 1983 together with Martina Attille, Maureen Blackwood, Robert Crusz, and Nadine Marsh-Edwards, this group of London art students from across the African, Asian, and Caribbean diaspora played a vital role in the establishment of Black independent cinema in Britain. Four works from this period will be brought together at K21, including Julien's first film, *Who Killed Colin Roach?* (1983), conceived as a response to the unrest following the death of a young man at the entrance to a police station, *Territories* (1984), which focuses on the Black British experience in the early 1980s, and *This Is Not an AIDS Advertisement* (1987), an important work of LGBTQIA+ history that continues to resonate powerfully today. The artist's pivotal film exploring Black, queer desire—*Looking for Langston* (1989)—is also featured, bringing together poetry and image to look at the private world of the Black artists and writers who were part of the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s.

Julien uses dance, theater, and poetry to articulate the movement of peoples across different continents, times, and spaces. This is reflected in his three-channel film installations *Western Union: Small Boats* (2007), *Ten Thousand Waves* (2010), and *Lina Bo Bardi – A Marvellous Entanglement* (2019). In *Western Union*, a series of danced vignettes, choreographed by the internationally acclaimed Russell Maliphant, creates a poetic reflection on African migration stories and the impact of trauma on people, buildings, and monuments. The internationally acclaimed multi-channel installation *Ten Thousand Waves* evokes ancient Chinese myths and the glamorous tradition of the early twentieth-century film city Shanghai to commemorate the Chinese migrant workers killed in a tragic accident off the English coast in Morecambe Bay in 2004. *A Marvellous Entanglement* explores the legacy

of the visionary modernist architect and designer Lina Bo Bardi in Brazil, featuring a stunning performance by the Balé Folclórico da Bahia, filmed at the Museu de Arte Moderna da Bahia in Brazil, as well as a filmic tour of Lina Bo Bardi's museums and public buildings in Sao Paulo and Salvador.

For the first time in Europe, the exhibition presents the artist's latest work, the five-channel cinematographic installation *Once Again... (Statues Never Die)* (2022), which explores the relationship between the American collector Albert C. Barnes and the renowned philosopher and cultural critic Alain Locke, known as the "Father of the Harlem Renaissance." The film examines their storied relationship, their mutually formative critical dialogue, and its significant impact on their work as educators and activists on behalf of various African American causes. The exhibition also showcases Julien's critically acclaimed ten-channel film installation *Lessons of the Hour* (2019). A portrait of the life and times of the former slave and self-liberated freedom-fighter Frederick Douglass, this work can be seen to represent Julien's forty-year long commitment to cultural activism and the politics and poetics of the image. Both Douglass's writings on photography and his use of photography (he is considered the most photographed personality in the United States in the nineteenth century) articulate the moral and social influence of image-making that Julien himself pursued with his work.

The exhibition was conceived in cooperation with the Tate Britain, London, where it was shown from April 26 to August 20, 2023. Following the station at K21, the exhibition will travel to the Bonnefantenmuseum in Maastricht, where it will be on view from March 8 to August 18, 2024.

Curator: Isabella Maidment (previously at Tate Britain); Nathan Ladd (Tate Britain). Curator of the exhibition at K21: Doris Krystof. Organised in conjunction with Isaac Julien Studio in London (Juanita Boxill, James Keith, Vladimir Seput, Paul Smith). Exhibition design Adjaye Associates.

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue in English published by Tate and a catalogue in German published by Hirmer Verlag (edited by Isabella Maidment in collaboration with Vladimir Seput). With contributions by Caleb Azumath Nelson, Maria Balshaw, Celeste-Marie Bernier, Adam Finch, Jack Halberstam, Isaac Julien, Nina Kellgren, Nathan Ladd, Luigia Lonardelli, Isabella Maidment, Mark Nash, Irit Rogoff, Wole Soyinka, and Bradford Young. With forewords by Susanne Gaensheimer and Doris Krystof (in the German edition only) as well as by Alex Farquharson. 207 pp., numerous illustrations, price: 46 €

Sponsors and partners of the exhibition

The exhibition "Isaac Julien. What Freedom Is To Me" at K21, Düsseldorf is supported by the Ford Foundation; got2b; The Arts Division, The University of California, Santa Cruz, and proAV.

With the generous support of Victoria Miro.

Media Partner of the Exhibition
Monopol Magazin

Media Partner of the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen:
Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung.

Supported by the Ministry of Culture and Science of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia

Opening, Supporting Program

Opening of the exhibition
September 22, 2023, 7 pm
K21

With:

- Susanne Gaensheimer, Director Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen
- Doris Krystof, Curator, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen
- Isaac Julien, Artist

Sneak Peek – Preview for Young Adults

Friday / September 22 / 4 p.m. – 5.30 p.m.
Admission free with student ID

GUIDED TOURS (registration required)

The exhibition at a glance

Sundays and public holidays / 3 p.m. – 4 p.m

Themed Tours

Tuesdays / 4.30 p.m. – 5.30 p.m

Düsseldorf Night of the Museums

Saturday / 22.4. / 7.30 p.m. – midnight

Experience the exhibition with art guides: Visitors to the Night of the Museums have the opportunity to talk to art historians in the exhibition.

Exhibition Tour for the Deaf

Sunday / 23.4. / 11.30 a.m. – 1.00 p.m

Registration with the City Association of the Deaf Düsseldorf:
r.witgens@gl-duesseldorf.de

Guided Tour of the Exhibition in Plain Language

Sunday / 30.4. / 3 p.m. – 4 p.m

In cooperation with Lebenshilfe Düsseldorf e.V.

Gallery Talks in English**Exhibition Tours in English**

Wednesday / 5.4. / 3.5. / 7.6. / 5.7. / 2.8. / 7 – 8 p.m

Wednesday / 5.4. / 3.5. / 7.6. / 5.7. / 2.8. / 7 p.m. – 8 p.m

Admission free as part of the KPMG art evening

"The making of..."

Wednesday / 3.5. / 5.7. / 7 p.m. – 8 p.m

Employees of the Kunstsammlung NRW accompany to selected works and report on the conception and preparation of the exhibition.

Admission free as part of the KPMG art evening

Dialogue Guides

Wednesday / 5.4. / 7.6. / 2.8. / 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m

Admission free as part of the KPMG art evening

City Walks

Saturdays / 3 p.m. – 6 p.m

In the footsteps of artists through the city.

Dates at: kunstsammlung.de

Start: Checkout K21

WORKSHOPS

Word objects by Jenny Holzer and Etel Adnan

Friday / 21.4. / 3 p.m. - 5.30 p.m., meeting point: K20

and Saturday / April 22, 11 a.m. - 1.30 p.m., meeting point: K21

Fee: €30, registration required

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES**Family Tours**

Every 1st Saturday of the month / 3 p.m. – 4.30 p.m

Experience art in the exhibition and museum workshop

Registration required

Das kleine ABC**Linklaters Theme Day for the Whole Family**

Sunday / 19.3. / 11.00 a.m. – 5.00 p.m

A whole day of workshops, guided tours and activities for young and old.

Admission free

Complete program for children, young adults and families as well as educators and teachers: www.kunstsammlung.de

Exhibition Preview

Andrea Büttner. No Fear, No Shame, No Confusion
October 28, 2023 – February 28, 2024

Press Conference: October 26, 2023, 11 am at K21

In her artistic practice, Andrea Büttner (b. 1972 in Stuttgart) combines art history with social and ethical issues. Her research-based works focus on wide-ranging themes such as poverty, shame, work, craft, religion, ascription of value, vulnerability, community, botany, philosophy, and art, which she examines in terms of their ambivalent tension between aesthetics and ethics. The internationally renowned artist uses various conceptual methods, materials, and media—from woodcut, painting, drawing, printing, and photography to installation, video, sculpture, glass art, and ceramics—to pose fundamental questions about the relationship between intimate artistic production and public exposure, between mechanisms of representation and ascriptions of value in art and society.

With the exhibition at K21, Andrea Büttner aims to bring together the various strands of her current research and work. Thematically, she focuses on the structural connection of shame, labor, power and the question of value creation processes and valuation systems, art historical images of so-called shame punishments and their contemporary relevance, arts and crafts as a political field and its ambivalent role for national and religious identity formation, and fascist continuities in the ecology movement. The exhibition will be accompanied by a publication conceived by the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen in cooperation with the Kunstmuseum Basel.

The exhibitions in the Bel Étage of K21 are supported by the Stiftung Kunst, Kultur und Soziales der Sparda Bank West.

Hilma af Klint and Wassily Kandinsky. Dreams of the Future
March 16 – August 11, 2024

Press Conference: March 14, 2024, 11 am at K20

Two great artists are considered the guiding stars of Western abstraction: on the one hand, Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), the Russian painter, co-founder of the “Blauer Reiter” in Munich, and teacher at the Bauhaus in Weimar and Dessau; on the other, Hilma af Klint (1862-1944), the Swedish artist whose visionary work has only recently been rediscovered and who has since inspired a large audience. With the exhibition at the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, the works of af Klint and Kandinsky will be united for the first time in a comprehensive exhibition. It offers the unique opportunity to view and compare the paintings, watercolors, drawings, and notes of both artists. Af Klint and Kandinsky, who lived almost simultaneously, have in common that, with abstraction, they strove

to invent much more than a new style of painting. Both dreamed of a future, to which art would point the way.

The exhibition is curated by Julia Voss, author of „Hilma af Klint: A Biography“, and Daniel Birnbaum, co-editor of „Hilma af Klint: Catalogue Raisonné“.

Annex

With Biography and Wall Texts

1. INTRO

K21 presents the first survey exhibition in Germany dedicated to the British artist Isaac Julien (b. 1960 in London, lives and works in London and Santa Cruz/California). Julien's critical thinking and activist engagement with decolonial aesthetics are expressed both in his early films of the 1980s as well as in the exceptional cinematic images of his large, internationally acclaimed video installations of the last twenty years. At once radically political and highly aesthetic, the works bring to the fore overlooked issues and restore forgotten archive material. At the heart of his pioneering work is the demand for equality, and his work remains as fiercely experimental and politically charged as it was forty years ago. . "I'll tell you what freedom is to me. No fear"—this quote by the American jazz singer and civil rights activist Nina Simone inspired Isaac Julien's subtitle for this exhibition.

2. BIOGRAPHY

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Isaac Julien's biography highlights some of the social, political and cultural events that have impacted Isaac Julien's life and work.

1960 21 February, Isaac Julien is born in the East End of London. Julien's parents had emigrated from Saint Lucia to Britain and met in London.

1964 The US Congress passes the Civil Rights Act.

1967 The Sexual Offences Act partially decriminalises sex between men in England and Wales.

1968 4 April, Martin Luther King is assassinated in Memphis, US.

1972 1 July, the UK's first Gay Pride march is held in London.

1977 Julien attends Notting Hill Carnival, witnessing police harassment that leads to rioting.

1979 22 February, Saint Lucia gains independence from Britain.

The Conservative Party wins the general election and Margaret Thatcher becomes prime minister.

- 1980 Julien begins studying at Saint Martins School of Art.

- 1982 Martina Attille, Maureen Blackwood, Robert Crusz, Nadine Marsh-Edwards, and Julien co-found Sankofa Film and Video Collective.

- 1983 12 January, 21-year-old Colin Roach dies in Stoke Newington police station and the police are accused of a cover up. The Commission for Racial Equality calls for a full inquiry into policing in the area. Julien makes WHO KILLED COLIN ROACH? during protests over the police's response.

- 1984 Julien graduates from Saint Martins

- 1986 Maureen Blackwood and Julien co-direct THE PASSION OF REMEMBRANCE, as part of Sankofa Film and Video Collective. The film premieres at the Edinburgh Film Festival and is released in cinemas.

- 1987 Julien meets Mark Nash, editor of Screen magazine, and they begin a lifelong partnership. Nash and Julien attend James Baldwin's funeral. Toni Morrison's eulogy will feature in the opening sequence of LOOKING FOR LANGSTON.

- 1988 Coco Fusco and Ada Gay Griffin curate the touring exhibition Young British and Black: The Work of Sankofa and Black Audio Film Collective.

- 1989 LOOKING FOR LANGSTON premiered at the Berlinale and brought about Julien's international breakthrough as a film director.

- 1991 Julien's first feature film, YOUNG SOUL REBELS, is released, winning La Semaine de la Critique Prize at the Cannes Film Festival.

- 1992 Critic B. Ruby Rich coins the term 'New Queer Cinema', describing films that are made by and for queer-identifying people using radical aesthetics. LOOKING FOR LANGSTON is described as the 'Rosetta Stone' of the genre.

- 1995 Julien and Nash are invited to teach on the History of Consciousness programme at the University of California, Santa Cruz. They begin working on FRANTZ FANON: BLACK SKIN WHITE MASK.
- 1997 The Labour Party wins the general election and Tony Blair becomes prime minister.
- 1998 Julien and Nash start teaching at Harvard University.
- 2000 24 September, Julien's first solo museum exhibition, The Film Art of Isaac Julien, opens at the Centre for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, New York.
- 2001 Julien is nominated for The Turner Prize.
- 2002 Julien makes PARADISE OMEROS in Saint Lucia, which is shown at Documenta 11, curated by Okwui Enwezor.

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- 2006 Julien visits Morecambe Bay in north-west England with poet Wang Ping to begin work on TEN THOUSAND WAVES. On 5 February 2004, 23 Chinese people working as cockle pickers were drowned by the incoming tide in the bay.
- 2008 Julien curates Derek Jarman: Brutal Beauty, an exhibition of Jarman's work at the Serpentine Gallery, London. Julien becomes professor of media art at the Staatliche Hochschule für Gestaltung, Germany. Barack Obama becomes the first Black and the 44th President of the United States.
- 2011 4 August, 29-year-old Mark Duggan is shot and killed by police in Tottenham, London. His death sparks uprisings in the local community which spreads to towns and cities across the country.
- 2013 The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill passes, making same-sex marriage legal in England and Wales.
- 2015 Julien and Nash present DAS KAPITAL ORATORIO at the Venice Biennale, curated by Okwui Enwezor.

- 2016 23 June, the UK votes to leave the European Union.
- 2018 Julien is awarded a CBE and elected as a Royal Academician. Julien and Nash join the faculty at the University of California, Santa Cruz, where they start the Moving Image Lab.
- 2020 25 May, 46-year-old George Floyd is murdered by police officer Derek Chauvin in Minneapolis, US. Thousands attend anti-racism protests globally in response.
- 2022 Julien is awarded the Goslar Kaiserring, a prestigious art prize. Julien receives a knighthood in the Queen's Birthday Honours List.
- 2023 On April 26, Julien's first solo show in a museum in London opens at Tate Britain. The show travels to Düsseldorf and Maastricht.

3. THE 80's

This area of the exhibition presents some of Julien's earliest experiments in moving image. Made during the 1980s, they trace the emergence of his unique visual language. For many Black British communities, the 1980s was a period characterised by high unemployment, police harassment, far-right intimidation and media hostility. 1981 saw uprisings in cities and towns across the country, including London.

'During my second year at Saint Martins, we had the Brixton riots. That was the biggest event in my new life, those riots ... It was then that I made the choice to do Fine Art/Film. So the spring of '81 also marked my first encounters with experimental film. Nevertheless, I was fascinated by its painterly aspects. The other thing I found attractive about it was more political: those works broke down preconceptions of what 'film' should be.'

Julien co-founded Sankofa Film and Video Collective in 1983, with Martina Atille, Maureen Blackwood, Robert Crusz and Nadine Marsh-Edwards. Kobena Mercer named the group Sankofa, an Akan word meaning 'to retrieve'. Mercer chose it as a metaphor for the act of reaching back to past knowledge to effect positive change in the future. A new wave of Black British filmmakers and artists were creating experimental films from within, and about, their communities and experiences.

'Works such as WHO KILLED COLIN ROACH, TERRITORIES, and THE PASSION OF REMEMBRANCE – essentially those were all responses to the riots. They were made in answer to certain fixed ways of looking. But not just ways of looking at Black cultures; they were also involved with ways we might feel about ourselves.'

4. WHO KILLED COLIN ROACH?

1983



Who Killed Colin Roach? 1983

U-matic transferred to digital, colour, stereo sound and 32 b-w Ilford Classic FB silver gelatin prints

34'42" / 34 mins 42 secs

Courtesy of the artist and/or Victoria Miro, London/Venedig

This work is held in museum collections including: Museum Brandhorst, München, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

'I insisted that my camera be engaged in politics, so it was positioned very deliberately opposite the traditional media ... My real aim was to turn that gaze on the police, because, in Colin Roach, they are the people rioting.'

WHO KILLED COLIN ROACH? is Julien's first film. It reflects on the death of Colin Roach, a 21-year-old who was shot at the entrance of Stoke Newington police station in East London in 1982. Roach's death and the alleged police coverup spurred protests against racism and police violence in the UK. Julien set out to make an activist video art documentary showing the protests that demanded an independent inquiry into Roach's death. The film is shown alongside his first photographic artwork, made from photographs taken by Julien during the production of the film.

'I was determined to appropriate early video-art techniques to make my campaign tape. I wanted to utilise this camera taken out of an art school context and repurpose its technology for the streets.'

5. TERRITORIES

1984



Territories 1984

16 mm film transferred to digital, colour, stereo sound

24'6" / 24 mins 6 secs

Courtesy of the artist und/and Victoria Miro, London, Venedig

This work is held in museumcollections including: Centre Pompidou, Paris; Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt/M.

'I wanted to experiment, to create different visual auras, play with time, play within the film using factual material. I wanted to find out how things could be visually poeticised. My ultimate aim, really, was to create a style for political remembering. When I made TERRITORIES, I shot on Super 8 film, put it onto video, experimented with those images, and then refilmed them in 16mm. I remained keen to disband all the categories.'

TERRITORIES is an experimental documentary about Notting Hill Carnival, reflecting on its history as a symbolic act of resistance within Caribbean communities. The title refers to the shifting territories of class, race, labour, sexuality, and policing in 1980s London. In response to a heightened police presence and hostility at Notting Hill carnival, Julien explores the often contradictory territories of surveillance and resistance.

Julien draws on imagery and sound from mainstream media and archives, combining them with fictional scenes to question the conventions of documentary filmmaking. The edit refuses any fixed representation of Black experience in its search for: 'a his-story, a her-story of cultural forms specific to Black peoples'.

6. LOST BOUNDARIES

1986



Lost Boundaries 1986

Super 8 film transferred to digital, colour, silent

4'14" / 4 mins 14 secs

Courtesy of the artist and Victoria Miro, London, Venedig

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LOST BOUNDARIES was made using Julien's personal super 8mm film archive, which spans the years 1981–1987. During this period, he made several films in diarist's form. Julien aimed to portray a lost part of an experimental film-making practice developed during the early 1980s, now known as the 'Independent Film Workshop Movement'. Lost Boundaries uses footage shot on location during the making of the Sankofa Film and Video Collective's first experimental feature film, THE PASSION OF REMEMBRANCE (1986), which Julien co-directed with Maureen Blackwood. LOST BOUNDARIES deconstructs, and foregrounds, the means of 16mm film production. Julien has described it as 'weaving together a community of Black artists and actors who came to prominence at a time when debates in film theory were at the forefront of establishing a new politics of artistic representation, a Black avant-garde.'

**7. THIS IS NOT AN AIDS ADVERTISEMENT
 1987**



This is Not an AIDS Advertisement 1987

8 mm film transferred to digital, colour, stereo sound 10'26" / 10 mins 26 secs

Courtesy of the artist und/and Victoria Miro, London, Venedig

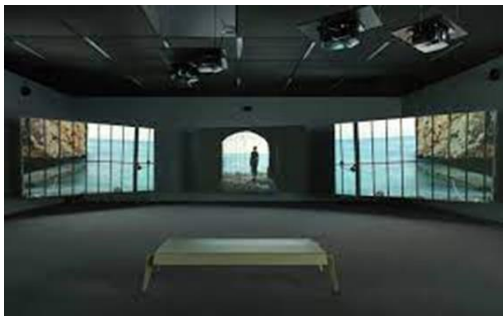
With its pink haze, seductive soundtrack and stylistic approach, THIS IS NOT AN AIDS ADVERTISEMENT celebrates sexual desire and queer relationships. Featuring Julien himself, it is a radical rejection of the fear that emerged during the HIV epidemic, focusing on love, desire and romance. Julien conceived the film as an activist video artwork for television broadcast. Julien asks: 'How is sexual desire surviving under the modern regime of AIDSfearing morality?' The video is an important work of LGBTQIA+ history that continues to resonate powerfully, encouraging us to reflect on what has changed.

8. WESTERN UNION: SMALL BOATS

2007

TEN THOUSAND WAVES

2010



Western Union: small boats 2007

Three-channel installation, 16mm film transferred to digital, colour and sound (5.1 surround)

18'22" / 18 mins 22 secs

Courtesy of the artist und/and Victoria Miro, London, Venedig

Versions of this work are held in museum collections including: Buffalo AKG Art Museum, New York; Israel Museum, Jerusalem; Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki; Milwaukee Art Museum, Wisconsin; Museum Brandhorst, München.

Ten Thousand Waves 2010

Three-channel installation, 35 mm film transferred to digital, colour and sound (5.1 surround)

49'41" / 49 mins 41 secs

Courtesy of the artist und/and Victoria Miro, London, Venice

Versions of this work are held in museum collections including: Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris; M+, Hongkong; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Nasjonalmuseet, Oslo; Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne; The Whitworth, Manchester and Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa, Kapstadt/Cape Town.

WESTERN UNION: SMALL BOATS and TEN THOUSAND WAVES explore the movement of people across countries and continents. Reflecting on unfinished journeys, Julien connects stories across different times, places and experiences. The two films shown here as three channel installations were made at a time when immigration policies were being discussed and debated in the UK and mainland Europe.

'TEN THOUSAND WAVES and WESTERN UNION: SMALL BOATS are kind of sister projects because they're both about people searching for the so-called 'better life', which, of course, is why my parents came to England from the Caribbean in the first place. Artists and filmmakers have always been involved in trespassing and translating cultures ... and I utilise fantasy to make political statements.'

Focusing on the dangerous and often life-threatening journeys of people across the Mediterranean to southern Europe, Julien traces how borders are used to control the movement of people. WESTERN UNION: SMALL BOATS explores the impacts of these journeys on the lives of people who make them and on those who must stay behind. He also considers how these experiences leave traces in buildings, monuments and architecture.

Dance plays a central role in the film, which was made in collaboration with choreographer Russell Maliphant. Images, dance and sound open up poetic spaces for reflection. Julien invites us to consider the many different journeys – some about to happen, some unfinished and some ending suddenly – that take place across water.

'IN WESTERN UNION: SMALL BOATS I'm showing human qualities, individual elements that get lost in all the official rhetoric. To try to really illuminate these, I turned to dance. In terms of bodies and movement, dance provides a different way in which I can look at things. Dance brings the story to what Derek Jarman used to call 'political lyricism'.'

TEN THOUSAND WAVES was made in response to the Morecambe Bay tragedy in 2004. In February that year, 23 people from China drowned while working as cockle pickers off the coast of north-west England. The film weaves contemporary Chinese culture with ancient myths, including the story of the goddess Mazu which stems from the Fujian Province, where they originated.

Ten Thousand Waves reflects Julien's commitment to telling stories that illuminate the human cost of capital, labour and extraction, exploring the movement of people across countries and continents.

9. LESSONS OF THE HOUR

2019



Lessons of the Hour 2019

Ten-screen installation, 35 mm and 4K transferred to digital, colour and sound (7.1)

28'46" / 28 mins 46 secs

Courtesy of the artist

LESSONS OF THE HOUR is being acquired by Artist Rooms Foundation for long loan to ARTIST ROOMS Tate and National Galleries of Scotland.

Versions of the work are held in museum collections including: Memorial Art Gallery, New York, Museum of Modern Art, New York, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Virginia.

LESSONS OF THE HOUR is a poetic journey into the life and times of Frederick Douglass (1818–1895), a visionary abolitionist, freedom fighter, activist and writer. The film installation focuses on Douglass's own memories of enslavement, and the untold stories of struggle and sacrifice of his ancestors who were also enslaved.

Julien brings us on a journey into Douglass's era, reflecting on its relationship to, and relevance with, the present. It focuses on 1845–1847, a period in which Douglass travelled to Scotland, Ireland and England to campaign against slavery. Filmed in Edinburgh, London and Washington DC, the film includes excerpts of his most powerful speeches such as 'Lessons of the Hour', 'What to the Slave is the 4th of July?' and 'Lecture on Pictures'. Here, Douglass sets out his belief that photography – which had just been invented – has the power to

influence human relations and connections. He goes on to suggest that photography might support people to shape their identity after gaining freedom from enslavement.

The installation mirrors a 19th-century salon-hang – large groupings of artworks hung together. Natural landscapes appear throughout the film. They shift between places of beauty, and sites of violence and trauma that hold histories of enslavement. It also focuses on the domestic life of Douglass and his wife Anna Murray Douglass, who was also an abolitionist. The multiple screens work as portals for travelling in and out of history, representing Julien's ongoing interest in using the archive to reflect on contemporary life.

'The film tries to build into the pictures this sense of rupture and sublimity, and at the same time to use them to look back into a history and a slavery that we've been resisting in the west in the 21st century, but which nonetheless haunts the spectre of all our actions in everything that we do.'

10. LINA BO BARDI – A MARVELLOUS ENTANGLEMENT
 2019



Lina Bo Bardi – A Marvellous Entanglement 2019

Three-channel installation, 4K, transferred to digital, colour and sound (9.1. surround)
 39'8" / 39 mins 8 secs

Courtesy of the artist und/and Victoria Miro, London, Venice

LINA BO BARDI – A MARVELLOUS ENTANGLEMENT signals Julien's commitment to dance and choreography. It honours the work and legacy of modernist architect and designer Lina Bo Bardi (1914–1992). Celebrated for her buildings in Brazil, Bo Bardi devoted her career to promoting the social and cultural potential of art, architecture and design. Like many of

Julien's films, sound plays a central role in the work, taking us through the film as the narrative unfolds. It was filmed across seven public buildings Bo Bardi designed: four in Salvador, in Brazil's north-east region of Bahia, and three in São Paulo. Each becomes a site for a performance, intervention, enactment or reinvention of scenes that have shaped the history of, and the legends around, Bo Bardi's architecture.

Julien presents a complex layering of sounds and images. This includes footage of Bo Bardi's buildings, and staged performances of music, voice and movement. It also features readings by Brazilian actors Fernanda Montenegro and Fernanda Torres, who portray the architect at different moments of her life. Performances by the dance company Balé Folclórico da Bahia also feature, filmed at the Museum of Modern Art of Bahia.

Motivated by the belief that Bo Bardi's work and legacy has yet to be fully acknowledged, Julien emphasises her social, political and cultural views, alongside philosophical reflections from her articles and letters. 'Linear time', she wrote, 'is a western invention; time is not linear, it is a marvellous entanglement, where at any moment points can be chosen and solutions invented without beginning or end.'

11. LOOKING FOR LANGSTON 1989



Looking for Langston 1989

Film, 16mm film transferred to digital, projection, black and white, stereo sound
 44' 26" / 44 mins 26 secs

Courtesy the artist and/or Victoria Miro, London, Venice

The work is held in museum collections including: Museum of Modern Art, New York, Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, Tate, London.

„The most interesting question for me proved to be: what did Black artists actually want to say? What would their art look like if its internal dialogues were made accessible to a wider audience? LOOKING FOR LANGSTON came out of such a conversation, one connected

to Black gay desire and to photography. But it was really born of thinking about the textuality that belongs to the innermost life of one's consciousness."

LOOKING FOR LANGSTON is a lyrical exploration of the inner world of the poet, novelist and playwright Langston Hughes (1902–1967), a foundational figure of the Harlem Renaissance. Julien filmed LOOKING FOR LANGSTON in London but set it in the jazz world of 1920s Harlem. Bringing together poetry, image and sound, Julien explores Black, queer desire while breaking down traditional divisions between art forms.

Using beauty and poetry to ask important questions, LOOKING FOR LANGSTON Looking for Langston was made at the height of the HIV epidemic. It is a powerful celebration of Black queer love and a rejection of homophobic rhetoric. Julien directed the film while he was a member of Sankofa Film. Its exploration of the complexity of the queer gaze led to the film gaining cult status, becoming a hallmark of what is now described as 'New Queer Cinema'.

'The central question in LOOKING FOR LANGSTON was how to portray desire, more specifically Black gay desire. To talk about that, I knew that right away one had to use fantasy. It's always been my observation that questions around desire tend to be located less in the real than in fantasy.'

K21

12. ONCE AGAIN ... (STATUES NEVER DIE) 2022



Once Again ... (Statues Never Die) 2022

Five-screen installation, 4K transferred to digital, black and white, 9.2. surround sound
 31'34" / 31 mins 34 secs

Courtesy of the artist und Victoria Miro, London, Venice

In ONCE AGAIN... (STATUES NEVER DIE), Julien returns to the Harlem Renaissance. The film centres on a conversation between Alain Locke (1885–1954), the philosopher, educator, and cultural theorist of the Harlem Renaissance, and Albert C. Barnes (1872–

1951), an early US collector and exhibitor of African material culture. Scenes, footage, and lines reappear from LOOKING FOR LANGSTON (also in the exhibition), as Julien explores Black queer desire through the relationship of Locke and artist Richmond Barthé (1901–1989). These references suggest that ONCE AGAIN... (STATUES NEVER DIE) could be a conclusion to LOOKING FOR LANGSTON – or even a new beginning – as time in and between Julien's films blurs and interconnects.

With this work, Julien also returns to the museum as a site of interrogation and dreams, imagining the installation as a form of 'poetic restitution'. With the inclusion of sculptures by Barthé and Matthew Angelo Harrison, the installation alludes to contemporary restitution debates, examining the collection, display and significance of African visual culture in western art museums. It was filmed at the Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia and the Pitt Rivers Museum at the University of Oxford, where Locke was the first Black Rhodes scholar.

It reflects on Locke's 'lifelong mission to reorient the aesthetic compass of the African diaspora in the direction of its rightful artistic heritage.'

Julien's footage is interwoven with extracts from You Hide Me, directed by the Ghanaian filmmaker Nii Kwate Owoo in 1970. This recently rediscovered film, which was shot in the stores of the British Museum, argues for the repatriation of Benin Bronzes. Julien also includes excerpts of Les statues meurent aussi (Statues Also Die), the 1953 film directed by Chris Marker and Alain Resnais. French authorities banned its screening soon after its debut for its anti-colonial sentiment. All of these works raise questions still relevant today about the collection, display and interpretation of 'African art' in European museums.