

TEN THOUSAND WAVES

- PRESS RELEASE -
TEN THOUSAND WAVES
Isaac Julien

Isaac Julien's new film installation *TEN THOUSAND WAVES* is to receive its world premiere at the Sydney Biennale in May, followed by its Chinese premiere in Shanghai to coincide with Expo 2010 and its UK premiere at the Hayward Gallery, London in October.

Isaac Julien's *TEN THOUSAND WAVES* is a 9-screen installation shot on location in China. The work poetically weaves together stories linking China's ancient past and present. Through an architectural installation, the work explores the movement of people across countries and continents and meditates on unfinished journeys.

Conceived and made over four years, *TEN THOUSAND WAVES* sees Julien collaborating with some of China's leading artistic voices, including: the legendary siren of Chinese cinema **Maggie Cheung**; rising star of Chinese film **Zhao Tao**; poet **Wang Ping**; master calligrapher **Gong Fagen**; artist **Yang Fudong**; acclaimed cinematographer **Zhao Xiaoshi**; and a 100-strong Chinese cast and crew. The film's original musical score is by fellow East Londoner **Jah Wobble** and **The Chinese Dub Orchestra** and contemporary classical composer **Maria de Alvear**.

Filmed on location in the ravishing and remote Guangxi province and at the famous Shanghai Film Studios and various sites around Shanghai, *TEN THOUSAND WAVES* combines fact, fiction and film essay genres against a background of Chinese history, legend and landscape to create a meditation on global human migrations. Through formal experimentation and a series of unique collaborations, Julien seeks to engage with Chinese culture through contemporary events, ancient myths and artistic practice.

The original inspiration for *TEN THOUSAND WAVES* was the Morecambe Bay tragedy of 2004, in which 23 Chinese cockle-pickers died. In response to this event, Julien commissioned the poet Wang Ping to come to England and write *Small Boats*, a poem that is recited in the work. In the successive years, Julien has spent time in China slowly coming to understand the country and its people's perspectives and developing the relationships that have enabled him to undertake this rich and multifaceted work.

Through conversations with academics, curators and artists both in China and the UK, Julien uncovered a symbolic body of material which he has used to create a work that explores modern and traditional Chinese values and superstitions. These are encapsulated in a fable about the goddess Mazu (played by Maggie Cheung) that comes from Fujian Province, from where the Morecambe Bay cockle-pickers originated. *The Tale of Yishan Island* tells the tale of 16th Century fishermen lost and in danger at sea. At the heart of the legend is the goddess figure who leads the fishermen to safety. Using this fable as a starting point Julien deftly draws on this story and the poignant connection between it and the 21st Century tragedy of Chinese migrants who died struggling to survive in the North of England.

Following ideas surrounding death, spiritual displacement, and the uniquely Chinese connection with "ghosts" or "lost souls", the film links the Shanghai of the past and present, symbolising the Chinese transition towards modernity, aspiration and affluence. Here, Julien employs the visual language of ghost stories, with recurrent figures and images appearing and disappearing. Mazu's spectral figure traverses time and space, serving as a guide through the interlocking strands of the work. Mirroring the goddess of the fable, a ghostly protagonist (Zhao Tao) leads us through the world of Shanghai cinema via the Shanghai

Film Studio, to a restaging by Julien of scenes from the classic Chinese film *The Goddess* (1934), and finally to the streets of Modern and Old Shanghai.

Isaac Julien is as equally acclaimed for his fluent, arresting films as his vibrant and inventive gallery installations. *TEN THOUSAND WAVES* is his most ambitious project to date with the nine-screen installation forming a dynamic structure which choreographs the viewers experience of the multiple narratives. Julien deploys the visual and aural textures of the film to elicit a visceral response from the viewer, submerging them in the world of his making.

TEN THOUSAND WAVES - TOUR INFORMATION

WORLD PREMIERE | Sydney Biennale, Cockatoo Island, 12 May – 1 August 2010

For the work's world premiere at the Sydney Biennale in May 2010, *TEN THOUSAND WAVES* will be installed on Cockatoo Island – the largest island in Sydney Harbour and Australia's most unusual urban park.

CHINESE PREMIERE | ShanghART Gallery, Shanghai, 21 May – 20 June 2010

TEN THOUSAND WAVES will show in Shanghai to coincide with the Shanghai Expo.

TEN THOUSAND WAVES | RELATED WORKS | Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney, 10 June – 10 July 2010

Photographic and light box works from the Ten Thousand Waves series.

UK PREMIERE | Hayward Gallery, London, 13 October 2010 – 9 January 2011

TEN THOUSAND WAVES will be included in the show 'Move: Choreographing You'.

TEN THOUSAND WAVES | RELATED WORKS | Victoria Miro Gallery, London, October 2010

Isaac Julien has created a new body of photographic and light box works which will be exhibited at Victoria Miro to co-incide with the installation's UK premiere at the Hayward Gallery.

NOTES TO EDITORS

ISAAC JULIEN Artist

Isaac Julien is a British artist and filmmaker whose work incorporates different artistic disciplines, drawing from and commenting on film, dance, photography, music, theatre, painting and sculpture, and uniting them to create a unique poetic visual language in audio visual film installations. Isaac Julien lives and works in London.

Julien is represented in museum and private collections throughout the world, including the Tate, London; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Centre Pompidou, Paris; the Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington DC; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; and the Brandhorst Museum, Munich. His early work, *Looking for Langston* (1989) won several awards including the Teddy Award at the Berlin International Film Festival. In 1991 his debut feature film, *Young Soul Rebels* won the Semaine de la Critique prize at the Cannes Film Festival. Julien was nominated for the Turner Prize in 2001 for his films *The Long Road to Mazatlán* (1999) and *Vagabondia* (2000). In the same year, he received the Eugene McDermott Award from MIT in Massachusetts, USA: other recipients include artist Bill Viola. His acclaimed 5-screen installation, *WESTERN UNION: small boats* (2007) has been shown at Metro Pictures, New York; Galería Helga de Alvear, Madrid; Centre for Contemporary Arts, Warsaw; and also opened the new Museum Brandhorst in Munich in 2009. In 2007 he made *Cast No Shadow* - a collaboration with Russell Maliphant - at Sadler's Wells, London and Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York as part of PERFORMA07.

In 2008, Julien collaborated with Tilda Swinton on a biopic about Derek Jarman simply entitled *Derek*, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival the same year. The film received a Special Teddy at the Berlin Film Festival; the Documentary Prize at the 34th Seattle International Film Festival and Best Documentary at the Milan International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival. The film received nominations at the British Independent Film Awards; the Sundance Film Festival; and the Gucci Group Awards.

MAGGIE CHEUNG Actress

Maggie Cheung Man Yuk was born on 20 September 1964 in Hong Kong. She is a Cannes Best Actress, Berlin Best Actress, five-time Hong Kong Film Awards and five-time Taiwan Golden Horse Award-winning Chinese actress. Raised in England, she has over 70 films to her credit since starting her career in 1983. She is the first Asian actress to win the Best Actress awards at the Berlin International Film Festival (1992 - for *Centre Stage*) and Cannes Film Festival (2004 - for *Clean*). Her work includes *Irma Vep* (dir. Olivier

Assayas), *Centre Stage* (dir. Stanley Kwan), *Chinese Box* (dir. Wayne Wang), *Hero* (dir. Zhang Yimou), *In the Mood for Love, 2046* (dir. Wong Kar Wai), and *Clean* (dir. Olivier Assayas).

ZHAO TAO Actress

Zhao Tao worked with director Jia Zhangke on the Cannes-nominated *24 City* and the multi-award winning *Still Life* which received the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival in 2006. Zhao Tao was born on 28 January 1977 in Shanxi, China. As a child, she studied classical Chinese dance. In 1996, she enrolled in the folk dance department at Beijing Dance Academy. After graduation, she became a dance teacher in Taiyuan Normal College where she was spotted by director Jia Zhangke during casting for the film *Platform*. In 2010 she will appear in Jia Zhangke's next film, *I Wish I Knew*.

YANG FUDONG Artist

Yang Fudong was born in 1971 in Beijing. He trained as a painter in China Academy of Fine Arts in Hangzhou. Starting in the late 1990's Yang Fudong embarked on a career in the mediums of film and video. He is among the most successful and influential Chinese artists working today. Recent films include *Seven Intellectuals in Bamboo Forest* (2007), *East of Que Village* (2007), and *No Snow on the Broken Bridge* (2006).

WANG PING Poet

Wang Ping was born in Shanghai and grew up on a small island in the East China Sea. She attended Beijing University and in 1985 left China to study in the U.S., earning her Ph.D. from New York University. She has published numerous books including two collections of poetry, a cultural study of footbinding in China, a novel, two collections of fiction stories and a book of Chinese folklore. She is a recipient of fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, New York Foundation for the Arts, the Minnesota State Arts Board, Bush Foundation. www.wangping.com / www.behindthegateexhibit.org

TEN THOUSAND WAVES was narrated by **BENEDICT WONG** (*A Cock and Bull Story* (dir. Michael Winterbottom); *Sunshine* (dir. Danny Boyle); *Moon* (dir. Duncan Jones)) and **JENNIFER LIM** (*27 dresses* (dir. Anne Fletcher); *Rogue Trader* (dir. James Dearden)).

GONG FAGEN Calligrapher

Gong Fagen, born 1949 in Beijing, is a well-known Chinese calligrapher especially famous for writing various styles of the Chinese character "Shou", which means longevity. He became obsessed with China's traditional culture of "Longevity" in the early 1960s and dedicated years to the exploration of it. He has been collecting and studying different styles of the character for the last 40 years and finally made a great piece of calligraphy work called "Ten Thousand Shous of China", which he wrote the single character "Shou" with ten thousand different styles on a long roll of rice paper. It is highly praised as a valuable intangible cultural heritage for the Chinese people. He is also a member of Beijing Calligraphy Association. The Shanghai Expo have invited Gong Fagen to exhibit his calligraphy work in Shanghai during the Expo in 2010.

ZHAO XIAOSHI Cinematographer

Zhao Xiaoshi, born 1962 in Guangzhou, China, began working for the Zhujiang Film Studio as a cinematographer after being trained at the department of photography in Beijing Film Academy. At the age of 24 he won the Golden Rooster Award for Best Cinematography for his debut feature film, *Vanish* (dir. Zeming Zhang). His recent works include *Forever Enthralled* (dir. Chen Kaige), following the life of Mei Lanfang, one of China's premiere opera performers. The film was shown in competition at the 2009 Berlin International Film Festival for the Golden Bear award. Zhao is also the director of photography in the all-star casting historical film *The Founding of a Republic* (dirs. Sanping Han, Jianxin Huang). In the same year, he was nominated for both the Golden Horse Award and the Golden Rooster Award for Best Cinematography in the film, *Wheat* (dir. Ping He).

ADAM FINCH Editor

Editor Adam Finch has worked with Isaac Julien for over ten years developing new editing parallel montage techniques to evoke the spatial temporality of the moving image. He graduated in Fine Art Film from St Martin's School of Art. In 2008 he edited Isaac Julien's *Derek* which received several awards. He has collaborated with a wide variety of artists including William Orbit, Lynne Ramsey, Diamanda Galas and Ken McMullen.

JAH WOBBLE AND THE CHINESE DUB ORCHESTRA Composer and musician

Julien commissioned an original soundtrack for *TEN THOUSAND WAVES* composed by musician and founding member of Public Image Ltd. (PiL) Jah Wobble and the Chinese Dub Orchestra, interweaving influences from contemporary Western pop and traditional Chinese music.

MARIA de ALVEAR Composer

Julien has collaborated with composer Maria de Alvear on a unique contemporary classical soundtrack for a 45-minute single screen film version of the work, *The Tale of Yishan Island*, which will premiere at the Reina Sofia in Madrid in June 2010. Maria de Alvear has studied harpischord, organ, piano, conducting and composition in Spain and Germany, as well as completing a course in "Neues Musiktheater" with Mauricio Kagel at the Musikhochschule Köln. De Alvear's work is occupied by themes of interactivity and both physical and non-physical space.

MUKUL PATEL Sound design

Mukul's work spans various media (sound, word, light, data networks), and is equally informed by Steve Reich's idea of 'gradual process', by French literary-mathematical group Oulipo, and by the art music of North India. His installations have been exhibited widely, from Tokyo to New York. Compositions for contemporary dance include works for Russell Maliphant, Le Ballet de l'Opéra de Lyon, Akram Khan/Ballet Boyz and Shobana Jeyasingh. Mukul is Visiting Faculty at the School of Architecture (Ahmedabad, India) and Creative Director of the arts research company Ambient Information Systems (London).

MAGGIE STILL Producer

The work was produced by Maggie Still of Xanadu Productions in collaboration with Isaac Julien Studio and JN Films Ltd. Xanadu Productions has unparalleled access to China. It is the only independent TV Production Company in the UK working exclusively in China. As far back as 1996, Xanadu recognised the emergence of China as a future world influence. Since then the Company has won numerous awards including the CINE Golden Eagle for its work on the US Series Wide Angle.

HUANG FAN On-line producer (China)

Huang Fan has extensive experience including credits for *Kill Bill* (dir. Quentin Tarantino), *The Kite Runner* (dir. Marc Forster), *Panda: The China Adventure* (dir. Robert M. Young), and *Himalaya* with Michael Palin (dir. John-Paul Davidson), and has worked with major studios both in China and Hollywood.

VIRGINIA IBBOTT Executive producer

Virginia Ibbott was formerly the Director of External Relations at the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art in Beijing; Head of the International Council at the Tate, London; and Director of the Friends of the V&A. Whilst at the Tate, Virginia individually created and developed one of the top international support groups in the arts and founded the Asia Pacific Acquisitions Committee which oversaw significant acquisitions of Chinese contemporary art for Tate.


TOM CULLEN Chief installer

Tom Cullen is a freelance technician, multimedia technical manager and consultant who has worked with numerous international biennales, museums and galleries to install and consult on the installation of works by many of the leading contemporary moving image artists including Isaac Julien, Bill Viola, Gillian Wearing, Steve McQueen, Sam Taylor Wood, and Jane and Louise Wilson.

TEN THOUSAND WAVES was produced by the LUMA Foundation.

The work was made with the kind support of the Udo and Anette Brandhorst Foundation; Colección Helga de Alvear; and the Linda Pace Foundation.

Supported by the National Lottery through Arts Council England.

Avec le concours du  Centre national des arts plastiques (Image/Mouvement), Ministère de la culture et de la communication.

The artist would also like to thank Toby Devan Lewis and those who wish to remain anonymous for their kind support.



LINDAPACEFOUNDATION

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