

Victoria Miro



Isaac Julien's critically acclaimed, nine screen film installation TEN THOUSAND WAVES - starring Maggie Cheung, the legendary siren of Chinese cinema - is to receive its London premiere at the Hayward Gallery on 13 October, as part of the exhibition *Move: Choreographing You*. To co-incide with the exhibition Victoria Miro is delighted to present a new body of photographic work also titled TEN THOUSAND WAVES which opens on 7 October and continues until 13 November.

Shot on location in China this epic work poetically weaves together stories linking the nation's ancient past and present. Through an elaborate architectural installation the work explores the movement of people across countries and continents and meditates on unfinished journeys. A single screen version of the film called *Better Life*, premiered at **The Venice Film Festival** last week, where the Telegraph's **David Gritten**, described it as "a sorrowful, strong and haunting work".

Conceived and made over four years, TEN THOUSAND WAVES sees Julien collaborating with some of China's leading artistic voices, including: screen goddess **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.

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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

TEN THOUSAND WAVES was shown in May this year at **Sydney Biennale** and at **ShanghART** during the Shanghai Expo. It is currently on view at **Kunsthalle Helsinki**, until 10 October. It will form the central work in a major solo show by Isaac Julien at the **Bass Museum, Miami** from 2 December 2010 to 6 March 2011.

NINE-SCREEN INSTALLATION | Hayward Gallery, 13 October 2010 - 9 January 2011

TEN THOUSAND WAVES is included in the exhibition '*Move: Choreographing You*'.

PHOTOGRAPHIC WORKS | Victoria Miro Gallery, 7 October - 13 November 2010

Isaac Julien has created a new body of photographic works which will be exhibited at Victoria Miro to co-incide with the films UK premier at the Hayward Gallery.

TEN THOUSAND WAVES was produced by the LUMA Foundation

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