

PRESS RELEASE

14 March 2018

ISAAC JULIEN: TEN THOUSAND WAVES

30 March – 30 August 2018



Ten Thousand Waves is a spectacular immersive film installation by British artist Isaac Julien and is the most recent in a series of major moving image acquisitions by the Whitworth. The acquisition of *Ten Thousand Waves* was supported through Art Fund's Moving Image Fund.

The film is rooted in the Morecambe Bay tragedy of 2004, in which 23 Chinese cockle-pickers drowned off the coast in northwest England. Exploring contemporary experiences of desire, loss and separation, Julien interweaves news footage of the rescue mission with the mythical Chinese legend of Mazu the Sea Goddess, protector of seafarers, alongside scenes of the Guangxi province in southern China—where the cockle-pickers' spirits journeyed back to the 'Middle Kingdom', and Shanghai, a city rapidly transforming as a result of burgeoning Asian markets and urbanisation.

Combining archive footage with fiction scenes shot in China, *Ten Thousand Waves* alludes to both traditional and contemporary Chinese visual culture. It features leading Chinese artists and performers including actresses Maggie Cheung and Zhao Tao, video artist Yang Fudong, master calligrapher Gong Fagen, cinematographer Zha Xiaoshi and poet Wang Ping, whose verse pays tribute to the 'lost souls' of those who died in Morecombe. The film's score fuses Western and Eastern styles, incorporating music and original score by Jah Wobble and the Chinese Dub Orchestra as well as by the classical composer Maria de Alvear.

This acquisition of *Ten Thousand Waves* marks the first film by Isaac Julien to be acquired for a public collection in the UK outside of London. Landscape, and the impact it has on the lives of people within it, is a central theme throughout the Whitworth's historic and contemporary collections and *Ten Thousand Waves* serves as a vital contribution in exploring this complex condition.

Notes to editors

Ten Thousand Waves was co-acquired by the Whitworth and The Towner, Eastbourne, supported through the Moving Image Fund for Museums, an Art Fund project conceived in partnership with and supported by Thomas Dane Gallery with the generous support of a number of private donors.

About Isaac Julien

Filmmaker and installation artist, Isaac Julien CBE RA was born in 1960 in London where he lives and works. His multi-screen film installations and photographs incorporate different artistic disciplines to create a poetic and unique visual language. Julien's solo exhibitions and presentations include Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (Zeitz MOCAA), Cape Town (2017); Platform-L Contemporary Art Centre, Seoul (2017); The Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto (2017); Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris (2016); MAC Niterói, Rio de Janeiro (2016); Museo Universitario Arte Contemporáneo (MUAC), Mexico City (2016); De Pont Museum, Netherlands (2015); Museum of Modern Art, New York (2013); Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago (2013); Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (2005); Centre Pompidou, Paris (2005) and Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2005).

He participated in the Venice Biennale at the inaugural Diaspora Pavilion at the 57th edition in 2017 and his work has also been exhibited in the 7th Gwangju Biennial, South Korea (2008); Prospect 1, New Orleans (2008); Performa 07, New York (2007) and in documenta 11, Kassel (2002). His work is held in collections that include Tate, London; Centre Pompidou, Paris; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington DC; the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York and the LUMA Foundation, Arles. *Ten Thousand Waves*, 2010 premiered at the 2010 Sydney Biennale and has gone on to be exhibited extensively in 19 cities across the world including the Museum of Contemporary Art Taipei (MOCA) in Taipei (2018); Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (Zeitz MOCAA), Cape Town (2017); Platform-L in Seoul (2017); Fondation Louis Vuitton in Paris (2016); K11 Art Foundation in Shanghai (2016), the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York (2013) and the Museum Brandhorst in Munich (2012).

Ten Thousand Waves has been acquired by several public institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York; the National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo; the Fondation Louis Vuitton (LVMH), Paris; the Zeitz MOCCA, Cape Town, the M+, Hong Kong.

About the Whitworth

The Whitworth is part of The University of Manchester. It is home to internationally renowned collections of modern art, textiles, watercolours, prints, drawings, wallpaper and sculpture. Created in 1889 as the first English gallery in a park, the Whitworth has developed a new vision for the role of a university gallery. A creative laboratory within an ambitious university, the Whitworth is a place where good, unusual things happen. The Whitworth re-opened to the public on 14 February 2015 after a major £17 million redevelopment by architects MUMA. The Whitworth has welcomed over one million visitors since re-opening, and more than doubled its previous annual records. The redevelopment has doubled public space and created state-of-the-art new facilities including expanded gallery spaces, a study centre, learning studio, and a collections centre. The gallery was crowned Art Fund Museum of Year 2015, nominated for the prestigious Stirling Prize and named Best Emerging Cultural Destination in Europe. www.manchester.ac.uk/whitworth

About the Moving Image Fund for Museums

Launched in 2015, the Moving Image Fund is a scheme conceived by Art Fund in partnership with Thomas Dane Gallery to respond to the challenges faced by UK museums in building their collections of moving image works. As artists' use of digital media, video and film continues to increase, so does the desire of museums and galleries to reflect this growing body of work in their collections and to share it with the public. In the current climate, museums and galleries

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struggle to raise funds for new acquisitions of any kind, of which artists' film and video pose an even greater challenge as they are expensive to produce and technically complex to exhibit. The Moving Image Fund addresses this growing need by empowering museums to secure impactful and relevant works. Art Fund's Moving Image Fund is generously supported by Thomas Dane Gallery, Gerry Fox and the Edwin Fox Foundation, The Rothschild Foundation and the Sfumato Foundation together with the galleries who support Art Fund's Contemporary Fund including, Hauser & Wirth, Maureen Paley, Nicholas Logsdail and the Lisson Gallery, Sadie Coles, Victoria Miro and White Cube.

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