

Exhibition: *Isaac Julien: Playtime*
On View: May 5–August 11, 2019
Location: Resnick Pavilion



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(Los Angeles—February 22, 2019) The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) is pleased to present *Isaac Julien: Playtime*. Marking the artist's first major solo presentation in Los Angeles, the film *Playtime* (2014) stars actors Maggie Cheung, James Franco, Colin Salmon, auctioneer Simon de Pury, and others in a captivating critique of the influence of capital on the art market. *Playtime* has been exhibited at Fort Mason, San Francisco (2017), Platform-L Contemporary Arts Center, Seoul (2017); and Museo Universitario Arte Contemporáneo, Mexico City (2016); as well as other venues around the world. The exhibition is curated by Christine Y. Kim, associate curator of contemporary art at LACMA.

"*Playtime* explores global themes of the circulation of capital, economic disparity, migration, and geopolitics, and it offers rhetorical yet intimate narratives for a viewer to enter into them," describes Christine Y. Kim. "In this film, Julien realizes with great poetry, beauty and empathy, five disparate vignettes of compelling characters operating in fragmented zones of contemporary life. It forces us to recognize that the global economic and cultural systems that bring us together also keep us apart."

"LACMA continues to value strong connections between the art and film worlds," said Michael Govan, LACMA CEO and Wallis Annenberg Director. "Working in a range of artistic disciplines, Isaac Julien is the perfect example of an artist working at this intersection."

About *Playtime*

Isaac Julien's moving-image installation *Playtime* (2013) explores the complex subject of capital. A reconsideration of Jacques Tati's 1967 film of the same name,

Playtime unfolds across three metropolises—London, Reykjavik, and Dubai—that represent cities and populations extensively reshaped by the 2008 global financial crisis. Julien interrogates the effects of economic volatility on diverse individuals by weaving together the lives of six archetypal characters: the Hedge Fund Manager, the Artist, the Art Dealer, the Auctioneer, the Reporter, and the House Worker. Each narrative illustrates the disparate, dramatic ways that communities and people are affected by the fluctuations of financial markets, whether they are involved in them at a macro or micro level.

Conceived in dialogue with two other works by Julien—*Kapital* (2013) and *Ten Thousand Waves* (2010)—*Playtime* offers a late-capitalist revision of Karl Marx's identity-neutral definition of the proletariat. In *Playtime*, the occupation, aesthetic, dress, speech, and narrative of each character illustrate issues of migration, race, class, and gender, as well as the cardinal question of how such details affect individuals' everyday lives. Julien revisits several motifs throughout the film: the verticality of power versus the horizontality of impotence; the invisibility of capital; the art object as a substantiation of capital; and the questionable morality of wealth.

Julien achieved *Playtime's* spectacular immersive quality by shooting in high resolution on a 4k digital camera. The work is presented in a wide-screen format achieved by using an edge-blend technique to combine two 16 × 9 screens into a single 3 × 1 Cinerama-type screen. The equally immersive sound track is achieved using 5.1 surround sound.

About Isaac Julien

Isaac Julien CBE RA (United Kingdom, b. 1960) is an internationally acclaimed artist and filmmaker known for his technically complex, politically charged, and visually arresting installations. Born and raised in London's East End to parents from the Caribbean island-nation of St. Lucia, he co-founded Sankofa Film and Video Collective, a group committed to liberating the aesthetics of black independent film, in 1983, and received his Bachelor of Arts in Film from London's Central Saint Martins School of Art in 1984. In 1989 he completed a postdoctoral degree at Les Entrepreneurs de l'Audiovisuel Européen in Brussels and premiered his award-winning art documentary *Looking for Langston* (1989), a poetic exploration of Langston Hughes and the Harlem Renaissance, which gained him a cult following and international recognition as a pioneer in queer black cinema. His subsequent films, including *Young Soul Rebels* (1991), *Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Mask* (1996), *BaadAsssss Cinema* (2002), and *Derek* (2008) integrate aspects of as dance,

theater, history, painting, and sculpture while also invoking Hollywood and Blaxploitation films.

Julien has explored wider globalized perspectives in moving-image installations with works such as *Stones Against Diamonds* (2015), produced in the remote glacial caves of the Icelandic tundra, and *Ten Thousand Waves* (2010), shot in Shanghai with an entirely Chinese cast and crew. *Ten Thousand Waves* was exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 2013, accompanied by *Riot*, a publication surveying Julien's life and work. Julien featured prominently at the 56th and 57th Venice Biennales, directing a major durational performance, *Das Kapital Oratorio*, in 2015, and participating in the inaugural Diaspora Pavilion in 2017.

Julien's work is in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Hirschhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Kramlich Collection, San Francisco; Tate, London; Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris; and Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa, Cape Town. He has held multiple academic positions, including Chair of Global Art at University of the Arts London (2014–16) and Professor of Media Art at Staatliche Hochschule für Gestaltung Karlsruhe, Germany (2008–16). Among his numerous honors, Julien was awarded the title Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire CBE, RA in 2017, named Royal Academician in 2018.

Julien is the newly appointed Distinguished Professor of the Arts at UC Santa Cruz and head of the new Isaac Julien Lab with Arts Professor Mark Nash, an established critic and curator and Julien's longtime partner and collaborator. Designed as a counterpart to Julien's London studio, the Lab invites students from across disciplines to conceptualize, create, and curate visual and sonic languages. Students will spend time assisting Isaac Julien in project research, producing moving image and photographic works in both locations, and consider archive sampling, remixing, and reproduction as integral parts of the creative process.

Related Programming

Symposium

Saturday, May 18, 2019 | All-day

Bing Theater | Free

On the occasion of the exhibition, and in collaboration with the University of California, Santa Cruz, LACMA presents a weekend symposium looking at Julien's oeuvre. LACMA will host screenings, talks, and panel discussions with historians,

scholars, and artists responding to four additional important films by Julien. The symposium will explore a variety of perspectives on these topics and others in Julien's work, and ways to understand his practice in the contexts of contemporary art, cinema, and theory. Speakers include: Christopher Connery, University of California, Santa Cruz; Charles Gaines, California Institute of the Arts; Jennifer González, University of California, Santa Cruz; Shelleen Greene, University of California, Los Angeles; Isaac Julien, University of California, Santa Cruz; Naima J. Keith, LACMA; Christine Y. Kim, LACMA; Mark Nash, University of California, Santa Cruz; B. Ruby Rich, University of California, Santa Cruz; Jeffrey Stewart, University of California, Santa Barbara; Sarah Thornton, independent scholar. Educational programming in collaboration with the University of California, Santa Cruz.

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Credit: This installation was organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

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About LACMA

Located on the Pacific Rim, LACMA is the largest art museum in the western United States, with a collection of nearly 140,000 objects that illuminate 6,000 years of artistic expression across the globe. Committed to showcasing a multitude of art histories, LACMA exhibits and interprets works of art from new and unexpected points of view that are informed by the region's rich cultural heritage and diverse population. LACMA's spirit of experimentation is reflected in its work with artists, technologists, and thought leaders as well as in its regional, national, and global partnerships to share collections and programs, create pioneering initiatives, and engage new audiences.

Location: 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA, 90036. lacma.org

Images caption:

Isaac Julien, *Playtime*, 2013, double projection on single screen high definition video installation with 7.1 surround sound, 38'16", Los Angeles County Museum of art, gift of Sheridan Brown, installation view, Metro Pictures, New York, 2013© Isaac Julien, photo courtesy the artist and Metro Pictures, New York, photograph: Genevieve Hanson

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