



# THE ART NEWSPAPER

"A brush with... Isaac Julien"

Hosted by Ben Luke; produced by Julia Michalska, Aimee Dawson and David Clack. With Henrietta Betnall and Kabir Jhala.

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Isaac Julien. Photo © Thierry Bal

In this episode of *A brush with...*, Isaac Julien talks to Ben Luke about his influences, from art to literature, music and film, and the cultural experiences that have shaped his life and work.

Julien's films and video installations are often swooningly beautiful, and always deeply engaged in diverse cultural histories, reflecting on, among other things, diaspora and Blackness, queer identity and the movement of people. His work actively involves other art forms, and is often produced from collaborations with choreographers and actors.

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Isaac Julien's *O que é um museu? / What is a Museum?* (2019) © Isaac Julien. Courtesy the artist and Victoria Miro

He responds repeatedly to the art, literature and cinema of the past, but is also pushing video installation into new territory, using multiple screens—sometimes as many as ten—to create fractured narratives which envelop the viewer, encouraging distinctive readings of the complex stories he tells, and constantly expanding the frames through which we see his subject matter.



Isaac Julien's *Pas de Deux No. 2 (Looking for Langston Vintage Series)* (1989/2016) © Isaac Julien. Courtesy the artist and Victoria Miro

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He discusses the epiphany of seeing Max Beckmann at the Whitechapel Gallery, his admiration for Peter Doig, Stan Douglas and Glenn Ligon, the influence of poets including Aimé Césaire and Derek Walcott, the architect Lina Bo Bardi, the cultural scene in London when he began his film-making journey in the 1980s, and discovering, in his archive, his student photographs of early 1980s protests against police brutality—images that he had forgotten he had even taken. Plus, he answers our familiar questions, including the ultimate one: what is art for?



*Paradise Omeros*, 2002. © Isaac Julien. Courtesy the artist and Victoria Miro

• [Isaac Julien: Lina Bo Bardi—A Marvellous Entanglement](#), Bechtler Museum of Modern Art, Charlotte, North Carolina, until 27 Feb 2022; *Territories* (1984) and *Paradise Omeros* (2002) feature in [Life Between Islands: Caribbean British Art 1950s-Now](#), Tate Britain, until 3 April; Two of Julien's portraits feature in [Black American Portraits](#) at Lacma, until 17 April; His film *Leopard* (2010) features in [Family: Visions of a Shared Humanity](#), Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, until 13 February; *Lessons of the Hour* (2020) is shown in [Social Work II](#), Gagosian Grosvenor Hill, London, until 18 December.

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