

**FAD**

"Tate Britain to Present UK's First-Ever Survey Exhibition of Sir Isaac Julien"

By Mark Westall

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Portrait of Sir Isaac Julien Photo © Theiry Bal

[Tate Britain](#) to present the UK's first-ever survey exhibition celebrating the influential work of British artist and filmmaker Sir Isaac Julien (b. London, 1960). One of the leading artists working today, [Isaac Julien](#) is internationally acclaimed for his compelling lyrical films and video art installations. This ambitious solo show will chart the development of his pioneering work in film and video over four decades from the 1980s through to the present day, revealing a career that remains as fiercely experimental and politically charged as it was forty years ago.

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Isaac Julien, *The Lady of the Lake (Lessons of the Hour)*, 2019. Framed photograph on gloss inkjet paper mounted on aluminum. 160 x 213.3 cm 63 x 84 in. Edition of 6 plus 1 artist's proof. © Sir Isaac Julien Courtesy the artist and Victoria Miro

The exhibition will present a selection of key works from Julien's ground-breaking early films and immersive three-screen videos made for the gallery setting, to the kaleidoscopic, sculptural multi-screen installations for which he is renowned today. Together, they explore how Julien breaks down barriers between different artistic disciplines by drawing from film, dance, photography, music, theatre, painting and sculpture.

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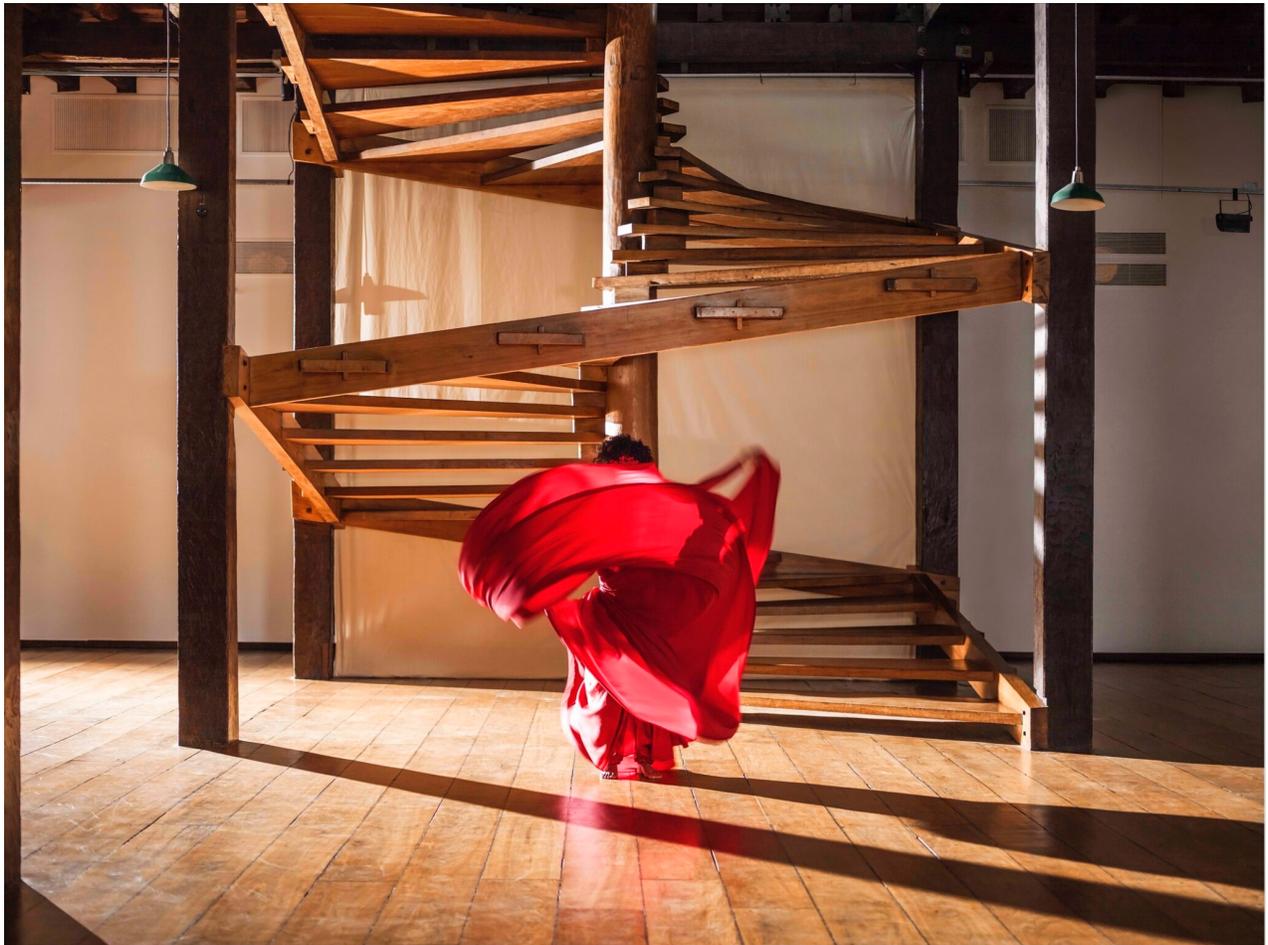


Installation view, *Lessons of the Hour* – Frederick Douglass, Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester, 2019.  
Photo: Andy Olenick/Fotowerks Ltd. © Isaac Julien Courtesy the artist and Victoria Miro

The show will open with Julien's earliest experiments in moving image, produced in the context of the Sankofa Film and Video Collective. Founded by Julien in the summer of 1983 together with Martina Attille, Maureen Blackwood, Robert Cruz and Nadine Marsh-Edwards, this group of London art students from across the African, Asian and Caribbean diaspora played a vital role in the establishment of Black independent cinema in Britain. Four works from this period will be brought together at Tate Britain, including Julien's first film, *Who Killed Colin Roach?* (1983) – conceived as a response to the unrest following the death of a young man at the entrance to a police station, *Territories* (1984), which focuses on the Black British experience in the early 80s, and *This is Not An AIDS Advertisement* (1987), an important work of LGBTQIA+ history that continues to resonate powerfully today. The artist's pivotal film exploring Black, queer desire – *Looking for Langston* (1989) – will also feature, bringing together poetry and image to look at the private world of the Black artists and writers who were part of the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s.

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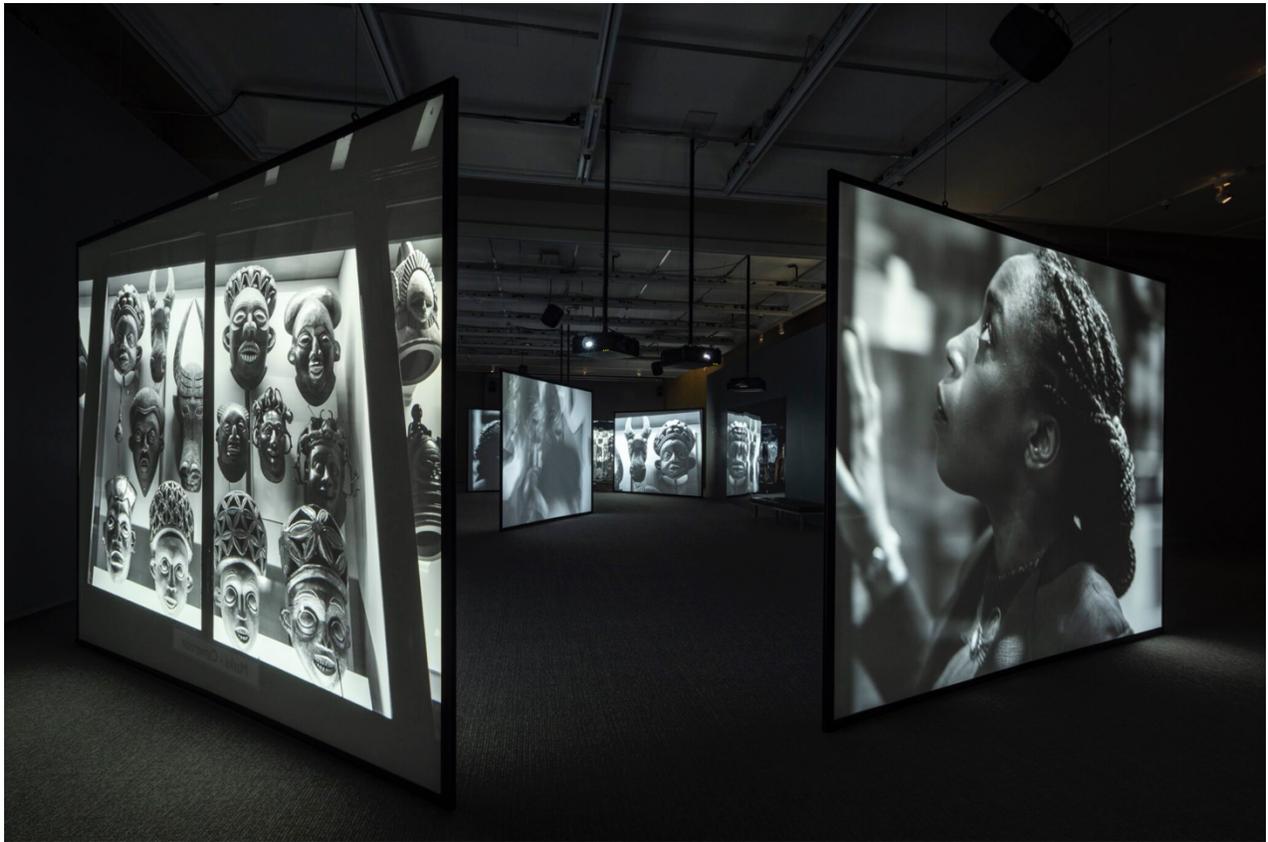


Installation view, *Lessons of the Hour* - Frederick Douglass, Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester, 2019.  
Photo: Andy Olenick/Fotowerks Ltd. © Isaac Julien Courtesy the artist and Victoria Miro

Julien's use of dance to articulate the movement of peoples across different continents, times and spaces, is reflected in the pioneering three-screen film installation *Western Union: Small Boats* (2007) and the spectacular *Lina Bo Bardi - A Marvellous Entanglement* (2019). In *Western Union*, a series of vignettes choreographed by the internationally renowned Russell Maliphant create a poetic reflection on African migration histories and the effects of trauma on people, buildings and monuments. *A Marvellous Entanglement* meanwhile features a stunning performance from Balé Folclórico da Bahia filmed at the Museum of Modern Art of Bahia in Brazil, meditating on the legacy of visionary modernist architect and designer Lina Bo Bardi (1914-1992).

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For the first time in Europe, the exhibition will premiere the artist's latest film, *Once Again...(Statues Never Die)* (2022), which explores the relationship between US collector Albert C. Barnes and the famed philosopher and cultural critic Alain Locke, known as the 'Father of the Harlem Renaissance'. The film examines their storied relationship, its mutually formative critical dialogue, and its significant impact on their work as educators and activists on behalf of various African American causes. The exhibition will also showcase Julien's critically acclaimed ten-screen film installation *Lessons of the Hour* (2019). A portrait of the life and times of the self-liberated freedom-fighter Frederick Douglass, this work can be seen to represent Julien's 40-year long commitment to cultural activism, the politics and poetics of image, and the moral and social influence of picture-making.

**Isaac Julien, [Tate Britain](#), 26th April–20th August**

*Isaac Julien* is curated by Isabella Maidment, Curator Contemporary British Art and Nathan Ladd, Assistant Curator, Contemporary British Art, Tate Britain, in close dialogue with the artist. Following its presentation at Tate Britain, the exhibition will tour to Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf and Bonnefanten Museum, Maastricht. The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue by Tate Publishing, including an engrossing selection of archive photos and essays by a wide range of contributors such as Homi Bhabha, Jack Halberstam, Nina Kellgren and Bradford Young, Mark Nash and Adam Finch, Caleb Azumah Nelson, Irit Rogof and Wole Soyinka.

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