

ArtReview

Isaac Julien: "Power 100: Most influential people in 2023 in the contemporary artworld"

Art Review

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Photo: Thierry Bal

5



Isaac Julien

Artist - Artist whose ambitious film-installations offer constellationlike portraits of historic Black figures

5 in 2023

← Prev
≡ Full list
→ Next

5

52

2023 2022 2021 2020 2019 2018 2017 2016 2015 2014 2013 2012 2011 2010 2009 2008 2007 2006 2005

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It's an anomaly that the British government recognised Julien's contribution to art before the country's museums did. After receiving a knighthood last year, the filmmaker, with his elegiac meditations on race, sexuality and history, is only this year getting his first institutional retrospective. *What Freedom Is to Me*, at London's Tate Britain, also featured the European debut of *Once Again... (Statues Never Die)*, his 2022 film that returned to the subject of the Harlem Renaissance, a work which featured in the Sharjah Biennial too this year. The glamour and radicalism of 1920s African-American culture is an enduring interest for Julien, whose film *Looking for Langston* (1989) made his name – a work now presented in its own permanent pavilion at Brazil's Inhotim sculpture park. Other solo ventures include his homage to Brazilian architect Lina Bo Bardi, *Lina Bo Bardi – A Marvellous Entanglement* (2019), at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and *Playtime* (2013), installed at Palais Populaire, Berlin. *Lessons of the Hour* (2019), which recounts the legacy of abolitionist Frederick Douglass, was acquired by the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery and American Art Museum.

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