



FORT MASON CENTER
FOR ARTS & CULTURE

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**Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture Presents Isaac Julien's *Playtime*
In Partnership with the Kramlich Collection and the San Francisco Art Institute**



December 1, 2017 – February 11, 2018

SAN FRANCISCO — Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture (FMCAC) is pleased to announce *Playtime*, an ambitious exhibition of three recent video installations by award-winning British artist Isaac Julien exploring the wide-ranging effects of how information, labor, and capital circulate in our global, networked societies. *Playtime* is presented in partnership with the Kramlich Collection and the San Francisco Art Institute. The exhibition will be free and open to the public from December 1, 2017 through February 11, 2018.

The exhibition presents the U.S. premiere of Julien's seven-screen installation, *Playtime* (2014), featuring a cast of international film stars, including James Franco, Maggie Cheung, and Mercedes Cabral. *KAPITAL* (2013), a two-screen companion piece to *Playtime*, documents the public discussion, "Choreographing Capital", held at London's Hayward Gallery between the artist, social theorist David Harvey, and an audience of academic luminaries such as the late Stuart Hall, Irit Rogoff, and Paul Gilroy.

In addition to *Playtime* and *KAPITAL*, a third artwork by Julien will inaugurate the San Francisco Art Institute's newly constructed Gray Box media gallery at FMCAC—*Better Life (Ten Thousand Waves)* (2010)—the cinematic cut of Julien's monumental installation *Ten Thousand Waves*,

filmed on location in mainland China. Occupying three separate galleries on the FMCAC campus, all three works have been generously loaned from the Kramlich Collection.

The presentation of these highly acclaimed works by Isaac Julien in San Francisco provides a unique opportunity to engage a wide audience from the Bay Area's diverse local communities and to address salient political, cultural, and social issues that affect us all, but in vastly different ways. Julien's visually stunning, multi-perspectival installations chronicle compelling stories of financiers and migrant laborers, art world players and domestic workers that resonate poignantly with both the prosperity and inequality arising from the innovations of the high-tech economic sector.

"With the Bay Area in the midst of a historic financial boom once again, *Playtime* examines the effects of capitalism on people's everyday lives," says FMCAC Executive Director, Rich Hillis. "Julien's epic visual installations masterfully intertwine advanced economic theories with intimate narratives about living in modern urban society."

Playtime, 2014 (67 min.)

A post-2008 spin on Jacques Tati's 1967 film of the same name, *Playtime* unfolds across three capital cities—London, Reykjavik and Dubai—that have been extensively reshaped by the recent volatilities in the global financial system. *Playtime*'s cosmopolitan spectacle, presented in a kaleidoscopic montage across seven large screens, interconnects the lives of its archetypical characters—hedge fund managers and art world players in London; a photographer in Reykjavik; and a Filipina houseworker in Dubai—each of whom is based on a real-life individual directly affected by the market collapse. Julien visualizes the potential of capital to both create social mobility and produce obstacles to it, foregrounding the way each character inhabits and traverses the sweeping high-tech cityscapes, contemporary architecture, and sublime natural landscapes of these worldly locales.

On view in Gallery 308.

KAPITAL, 2013 (31 min.)

As part of his preparatory research for *Playtime*, in 2012 Julien produced a public talk at the Hayward Gallery in London, in which the artist addressed the problem of representing the invisible flows and relations of capital with world-renowned Marx scholar, David Harvey. "It's a bit like gravity," Harvey explains, "it's a very powerful force; it's a relationship which makes things happen... you can really only intuit that capital exists by its effects." Deftly editing the rich and insightful conversation that follows with a fast-paced montage of telling moments from film and media history, Julien and his audience of invited scholars illuminate many of the driving forces and felt repercussions of 21st century capitalism. During *KAPITAL*'s creation process Julien described, "As I cannot film the thing itself, capital, I hope to film its shadow: its effects, its movements and the social relations it creates." *KAPITAL* went on to be prominently featured at the 2015 Venice Biennale and has complimented *Playtime* at many other venues world-wide.

On view in the FMCAC Visitor Center.

Better Life (Ten Thousand Waves), 2010 (51 min.)

A nighttime coast guard emergency call and rescue helicopter footage from the 2004 Morecambe Bay tragedy, in which 22 Chinese cockle pickers perished in the rising tide off the Northwest coast of England, sets the scene for Isaac Julien's poetic meditation on what drives people to search for a "better life". Over four years, Julien researched contemporary and historic Chinese culture and collaborated with many of China's leading creative talents, including film stars Maggie Cheung and Zhao Tao, poet Wang Ping, and media artist Yang Fudong. Filmed in both contemporary and historic Shanghai, and in the breathtaking subtropical mountains of

Guangxi province, the visually luscious video interweaves contemporary struggles of daily life with ancient mythology and historical artistic forms. A central figure is the ancient Goddess Mazu, protector of seafarers—a powerful deity in the legends of Fujian, the native home of the lost cockle pickers. In *Better Life* Mazu bears witness to the contemporary tragedy of Morecambe Bay through parallel stories of wandering fishermen in the 15th century Ming period and the making of the film *The Goddess* (1934) in modern Shanghai.

On view in the Gray Box Gallery, San Francisco Art Institute Fort Mason Campus.

Exhibition Organization

Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture presents Isaac Julien's *Playtime* in partnership with the Kramlich Collection and the San Francisco Art Institute.

Playtime will be accompanied by parallel public talks with the artist, and educational programming at UC Berkeley, SFAI, Mills College, and UC Santa Cruz.

About Isaac Julien

Born in 1960, Isaac Julien is an internationally acclaimed artist and filmmaker based in London. Julien graduated from Central Saint Martin's School of Art in London in 1985, and has been making films and producing film installations for more than 20 years. He came to prominence with his 1989 film *Looking for Langston*, a cinematically lush, poetic exploration of Langston Hughes and the Harlem Renaissance. Informed by his film background, Julien's gallery installations produce complex narratives that reflect critical thinking about race, globalization, and the politics of representation.

Julien's solo exhibitions and presentations include Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (Zeitz MOCAA), Cape Town (2017); Victoria Miro Gallery, London (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); The Bass Museum, Miami (2010); Museum Brandhorst, Munich (2009); Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (2005); Centre Pompidou, Paris (2005) and Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2005). His latest work, *Stones Against Diamonds*, was shown in 2015 as part of the Rolls-Royce Art Programme at the Venice Biennale, at Art Basel and Art Basel Miami Beach.

Julien participated in the 57th Venice Biennale in 2017, at the inaugural Diaspora Pavilion with *Western Union: Small Boats*. Previously, he presented *Das Kapital Oratorio* in the 56th edition of the Venice Biennale, curated by Okwui Enwezor, in 2015. 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).

Julien's work is held in collections that include: Tate, London; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; 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; Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris; the LUMA Foundation, Arles; the Kramlich Collection; the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art (Zeitz MOCAA), Cape Town. In 2016, the Towner Art Gallery Collection, Eastbourne, UK, acquired *Ten Thousand Waves* (2010) as part of the Art Fund's moving image program.

About Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture (FMCAC)

A decommissioned military installation converted into a nonprofit cultural center in 1977, FMCAC has long been host to a lively mix of arts, educational, and cultural programming. Each year FMCAC provides more than \$2 million in support to local arts organizations, enabling groups to produce diverse and innovative artworks at the historic waterfront campus. With a four-decade history as an arts and culture destination, FMCAC is now focused on reinvigorating its programming and amenities to better engage the evolving and dynamic Bay Area creative community. Central to this new vision is the commissioning and presentation of adventurous and unconventional artworks best realized in nontraditional or historic settings. Visit fortmason.org for more information.

About the San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI)

Founded in 1871, SFAI is one of the country's oldest and most prestigious institutions of higher education in the practice and study of contemporary art. Committed to educating artists who will shape the future of art, culture, and society, SFAI fosters creativity and original thinking in an open, experimental, and interdisciplinary context. Recently opened, SFAI's new Fort Mason Campus includes the school's graduate artist studios and multiple gallery spaces, all located on Pier 2 at Fort Mason Center for Arts and Culture. Visit sfai.edu for more information.

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Image Credit:

Isaac Julien, EMERALD CITY/CAPITAL (Playtime), 2013; Endura Ultra Photograph: courtesy Isaac Julien and Victoria Miro, London

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