

METRO PICTURES

"1 Artiste, 1 Oeuvre: Isaac Julien, *Ten Thousand Waves*," *L'Officiel Art* (Spring 2016): 110-115.

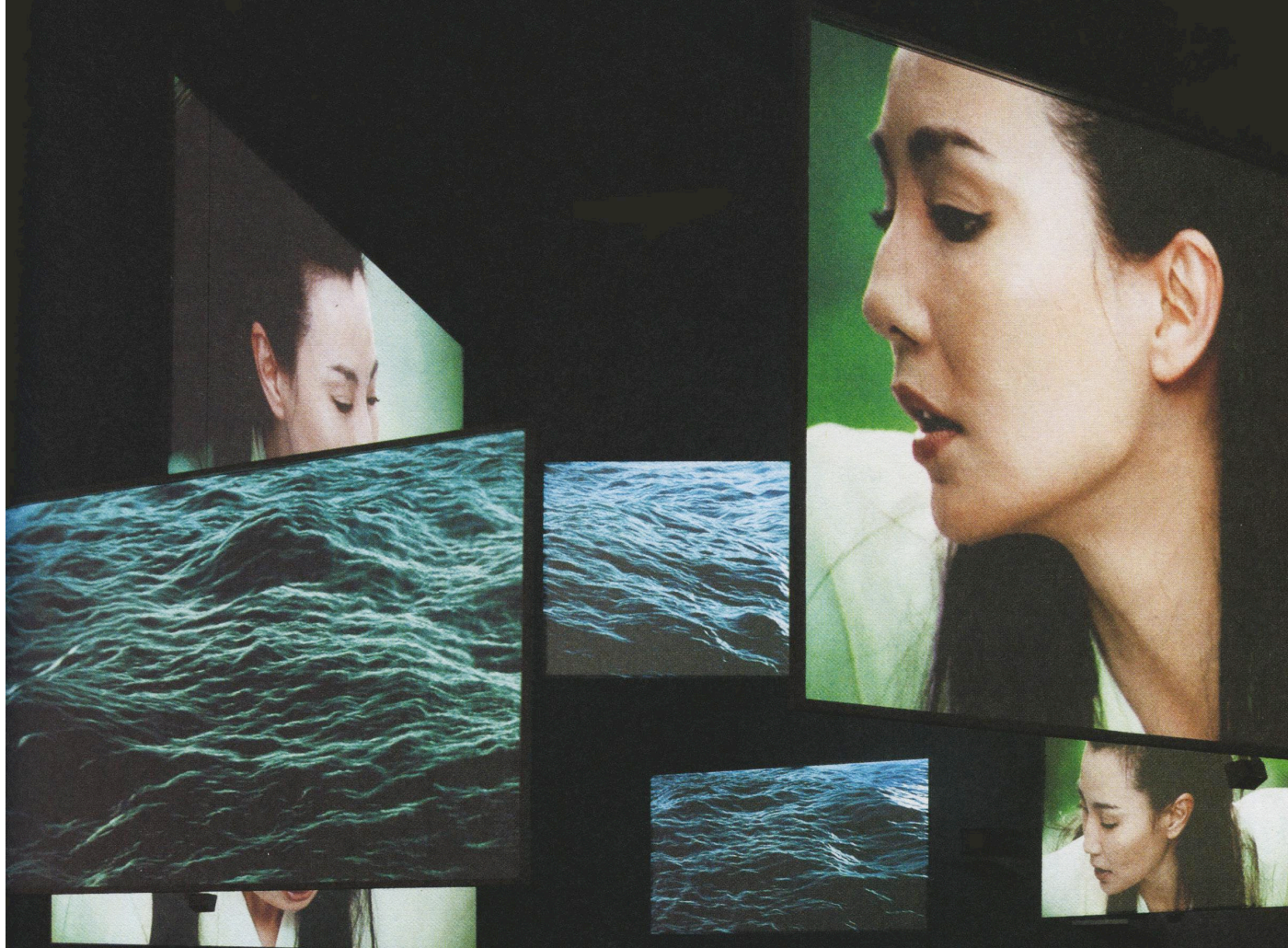
L'OFFICIEL^{PARIS}
Art

1 ARTISTE 1 ŒUVRE

ISAAC JULIEN

Ten Thousand Waves

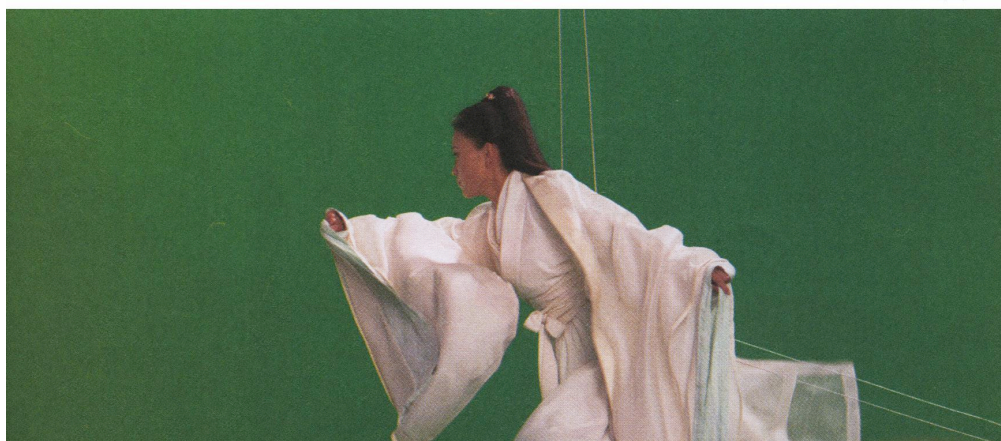




ISAAC JULIEN, *TEN THOUSAND WAVES*, 2010, INSTALLATION COMPOSÉE
DE 9 ÉCRANS, 49 MN 41, FILM 35 MM TRANSFÉRÉ SUR
SUPPORT HD, 9.2 SON SURROUND, VUE D'INSTALLATION, THE MUSEUM
OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK, 2013.



EN HAUT, ISAAC JULIEN, *MAIDEN OF SILENCE (TEN THOUSAND WAVES)*, 2010, PHOTOGRAPHIE SUR PAPIER ENDURA ULTRA, 180 X 240 X 7,5 CM ; CI-DESSUS, ISAAC JULIEN, *MAZU, SILENCE (TEN THOUSAND WAVES)*, 2010, PHOTOGRAPHIE SUR PAPIER ENDURA ULTRA, 180 X 239,8 X 7,5 CM ; CI-DESSOUS, EN BAS : ISAAC JULIEN, *GREEN SCREEN GODDESS, TRIPTYQUE (TEN THOUSAND WAVES)*, 2010, PHOTOGRAPHIE SUR PAPIER ENDURA ULTRA, TRIPTYQUE, 180 X 239,8 X 7,5 CM CHAQUE PANNEAU (DÉTAIL). PAGE DE DROITE : ISAAC JULIEN, *YISHAN ISLAND, DREAMING (TEN THOUSAND WAVES)*, 2010, PHOTOGRAPHIE SUR PAPIER ENDURA ULTRA, 180 X 239,8 X 7,5 CM.





EN HAUT, ISAAC JULIEN, *NO MOON SHINING (TEN THOUSAND WAVES SERIES)*, 2010, PHOTOGRAPHIE SUR PAPIER ENDURA ULTRA 180 X 240 CM. CI-DESSUS, ISAAC JULIEN, *BLUE GODDESS (TEN THOUSAND WAVES)*, 2010, PHOTOGRAPHIE SUR PAPIER ENDURA ULTRA. DIPTYQUE. 180 X 245.1 X 7.5 CM CHAQUE PANNEAU.

"As an artist, I am interested in how philosophy and political theory can contribute towards the understanding of culture and aesthetics, which in turn, plays an essential role in the creation of new forms of perception. In my recent production, I have explored the many possibilities uncovered by relations of time and space, of official history versus subjectivity. I have tried to disclose what being here and now means. How can we re-signify the tragedies that have inspired works as *Western Union Small Boats* or *Ten Thousand Waves*?"

When I came to prepare *Ten Thousand Waves* I had read a poem entitled '*Small Boats*' by Chinese poet Wang Ping to act as an anchor for some of the scenes. Jacqueline Hoang Nguyen, a Vietnamese- Canadian artist, helped me enormously—I asked her to research the myths of Mazu, a Chinese goddess who protects fishermen, and she helped me make the connection between the Fujianese diaspora and traditional Chinese culture. We were looking for something that would allegorize the Morecambe bay tragedy, and eventually, after reading many myths, Jacqueline found "The Tale of Yishan Island."

I knew that I wanted the work to be based across different times, and specifically that I wanted a section of it to be in the 1930s. One of the working titles of *Ten Thousand Waves* was *Better Life*; I wanted part of the work be about what a "better life" meant for people in the '30s, and then to contrast that with the search for a better life today, and how that ended in the tragedy of Morecambe bay. In our research into Chinese film history we discovered the silent Chinese classic *The Goddess* (1934), which is about a woman who's struggling for a better life, and who therefore works as a prostitute. Ruan Ling-yu, the actress who plays the role, was incredibly well-known in China in the '30s, and I immediately thought that Maggie Cheung would be ideal to play her—not only was she a modern-day equivalent but she had actually starred as Ruan in a 1992 biopic called *Center Stage*.

With works like '*Ten Thousand Waves*' or '*Western Union: small boats*,' I was trying to understand what drives people to cross continents and borders in search of a better life. Each time, the same answer kept coming up: capital. That is when Playtime was set in motion. But this time I wanted to address the subject head on, so to speak. I was interested in going directly to the source. I wanted to try to understand this great force, which drove so many of the themes that had preoccupied me before. When I want to understand something through my work, it's essential for me to try to picture it, whether it's China's present, past, and myths in *Ten Thousand Waves* or something more abstract, such as gay black desire in *Looking for Langston*. What does something look like when it can't be pictured—when invisibility is silent, so to speak?"