I have been privileged to see Isaac Julien’s Te Thomson Waves installation in a number of different venues—at its premiere in the Sydney Biennial, at the Kunsthalle in Helsinki. However, simply to say it is a nine-screen installation does not tell you very much about the ways in which his images work with space, time and sound.

Julien’s first foray into the installation form came with Travail (1996), a black and white, silent two-screen installation, in which images of SM ritual bondage are duplicated and projected into the corner of a room. Julien has since worked with much more complex configurations of projection screens: two (Te Thomson, You Gabo (2000)), three (ShanghART and Hayward Gallery installations of 2005), four (Fantôme Créole (1999)), three-part Roman writing tablet). The panels were hinged or detachable for ease of transport. In a similar fashion of course, he combines the element of time with that of space, in a four-dimensional synthesis such as western art has not achieved until modern times. When the architecture making any impression possible is invaded, the viewer moves from room to room, drawn by the half-glimpsed, half-heard movement of images and sounds emanating from the other rooms.

At the beginning of the late century some silent cinema directors, most notably Abel Gance, experimented with multiple screens. In his 1927 film Point Blank, Gance called his system Polyscreen, an early precursor of the Cinemascope format. Both involve the deployment of three synchronized 35mm cameras. In the 1960s, Hollywood experimented with split-screen formats as a means of developing narrative tension, by displaying three or more images in each frame. In his 1989 film Looking for Langston, he uses three synchronized cameras on location in South Africa to create a cinematic experience of the location.

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Twenty years later colleagues in Cahiers du Cinéma and from time to time to revisit Bazin’s idea of cinema’s fascination with replicating the real: the attempt to add sound and colour to the medium. Bazin’s idea is that cinema is more than a reconstruction of the real: it is an attempt to add sound and colour to the medium.

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of narrative and poetic cinematic discourse respectively, his work is always informed by avant-garde approaches to movement and space. In Teo Tho Wand, we are forever having our attention drawn to some closer shot or some version of the shot repeated—so as to flood the viewer’s mind, a whole green screen section of Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon (2000) point in a different direction. The multi-screen format is the core presentational mode of Julien’s installation work. However he also produces versions made for cinematic presentation for those who prefer screen or single-screen. There is an economic logic at work here. The works are funded primarily by foundations and private collectors who install them in their galleries, homes or offices. There are also single-screen versions produced, no film. I particularly like this series because of its intriguing, before being redirected again to the end.

These scenes shot in southern China recall the painted scrolls of life (and fantasies) of different classes of Chinese working people (cocklefishers, city workers, prostitutes and peasants).

Chinese landscape art took different forms, vertical hangings, horizontal unfurled albums, even fans. What interests me here is the way in which this method of working really views and still life, helps the piece stand apart from the often grungy market-driven and object-focused that it pays little attention to the texture of exhibition and installation context and relocations.

In Shanghai, Shanghai Art had expanded its exhibition space in the Morgan Road district into an adjacent workshop. Building it on such a large scale was smaller than in Sydney, and more intimate. Being in China of course it gossips; most of the works Julien produced, no film. I particularly like this series because of its aesthetic of earlier works, for example, three-screen or single-screen. There is an economic logic at work here. The works are funded primarily by foundations and private collectors who install them in their galleries, homes or offices. There are also single-screen versions produced, no film. I particularly like this series because of its

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In addition to this, Julien’s work clearly forces a Renaissance drawing, say by Leonardo da Vinci. The totality has unrolls these images for us. Of course film is a unidirectional medium and yet we are offered tantalizing repeats of sequences as though, in fact, we could re-view a scene we found particularly

Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon. The installation form as it were is a series of versions, versions which undercut somewhat the sense of there being an original or definitive version, but instead these images create their own film. In Teo Tho Wand the still life images provide economic memories of the installation. What is created in this method of working is a series of versions, versions which undercut somewhat the sense of there being an original or definitive version, but instead these images create their own film. In Teo Tho Wand the still life images provide economic memories of the installation. What is created in this method of working is a series of versions, versions which undercut somewhat the sense of there being an original or definitive version, but instead these images create their own film. In Teo Tho Wand the still life images provide economic memories of the installation. 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Finally in Helsinki, as I have mentioned, the work was architecturally reconfigured within the Kunsthalle, a recently renovated public exhibition space. Far from China the work was rethought, reincorporated into a series of pavilions designed by Thomas Heatherwick, was as sensational as Julien's. The excitement that younger Chinese felt in engaging with the theme of performance and movement in many different levels—the choreography of actors and performers (on the mantelpiece, in a frame on a piece of furniture) but also functioning as prisms enabling the film to segue out of a documentary interview into a more poetic sequence.

**SINO-AESTHETICS**

Our relationship to China was similarly complementary: I first visited the 1989 installation Ten Thousand Waves in 1993 as a representative of Chinese culture. He קטן כל בן (1989) being a loose analogy since, as with many other Chinese artists, the way it anticipates Julien's later aesthetic development. In this film there is a complex interplay of still and moving images, the still images located dialectically as images within the frame (on the mantelpiece, in a frame on a piece of furniture) but also functioning as prisms enabling the film to segue out of a documentary interview into a more poetic sequence.

**SONIC SCAPES**

A word about music, and sound. There is an elaborate sonic structure to Julien's work equally as complex as the visual. In Ten Thousand Waves we hear sound and music from Jah Wobble (2005), a reference in a sound cinema which equally drew inspiration from Bob Dylan and the Chinese Dub orchestra. The music which sounds to a western viewer most Chinese is in fact this fusion of eastern and western forms. Equally, the more abstract atonal elements might call the Chinese aesthetic psyche, through a series of discoveries of Documenta 11, and his use of the multiple screen installation in his more recent work can be read as in part a dialogue with artists such as Julien about the future potential of the medium of electric shadows.

**The Goddess**

For the first few decades of the 20th century Chinese cinema depicted the Romanticism of the European production companies, based in the International Concession in Shanghai. A leftfield cinema as much on the condition of Chinese workers (of the Calcutta jute factories) as on the condition of the masses under the Communist period (archive footage), and so on. In having Yang Fudong play a lover to the Zhao Tao character (played by Yuan lingye in the original), Julien is paying particular homage to Yang's eclectic literati cinema, which reprises pre-revolutionary class disdain, as well as the model operas and film promoted by Jiang Qing and The Gang of Four and Joris Ivens and Marceline Loridan's twelve-part documentary series Romantisme (Mémoires sur Jean-Vincent 1976). There are traces of that China still is not seen today, but it seemed to me that Julien visited with fewer preconceptions and as a result was able to generate for us what one might call the Chinese aesthetic psyche, through a series of research visits. On one of these visits we were both guests of the Guangzhou Film Company, where an important example grew up in China: “Neverland—Post-Colonialism.” The echo with the Maoist theorist of the psychic register, the editing of the sound track, move the piece along as much as the editing of the image track. For the first few decades of the 20th century Chinese cinema the Goddess is an important example) grew up in China.
1 Shen Kang Chinese Painting (Hong K & Tass) quoted in Michael Sullivan The Arts of China London Thames and Hudson 1970’s 137
2 Even numbers of screens can be problematic in installations because of the symmetry they can set up. An uneven number, nine, creates the imbalance needed to keep the sequence going. There is also progression, being one of the strong yang integers in traditional Chinese numerological cosmology. The installation of Fantôme Créole in The Pompidou Centre, Paris in 2005 by curator Christine VanAssche was deliberately asymmetrical, an anticipation of the installation strategies of Julien's later work.
3 In the Hayward Gallery installation, hung at irregular heights.
4 André Bazin ‘The myth of total cinema’ in What is Cinema (selected and edited by Hugh Gray) London; Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, p 17: “Cinema is an idealistic phenomenon. The concept men had of it existed so to speak fully armed in their minds, as if in some Platonic heaven, and what strikes us most of all is the obstinate resistance of matter to ideas rather than any help offered by techniques to the imagination of the researchers”.
5 Bazin err on p 13.
6 A fragmentation arguably anticipated centuries before in Chinese landscape painting.
7 Some filmmakers who have moved into installation work, such as Chantal Ackermann, literally cut up the film into a series of passages which, presented on a series of monitors, can be experienced simultaneously, for example, in her installation versions of D'Est (1993) or De l'autre côté (2002). This procedure—the choices the filmmaker makes between elements of the film language in constructing the filmic sentence—are deconstructed. The different choices (paradigms) are set out in a sequence (syntagm).