

# TATE FILM

## REWIND: SANKOFA MAUREEN BLACKWOOD AND ISAAC JULIEN: THE PASSION OF REMEMBRANCE

Clore Auditorium, Tate Britain  
Monday 5 October 2015  
19.00–21.00



Corinne Skinner-Carter in *Dreaming Rivers* (1988), directed by Martina Attille. Film still courtesy the artist and Women Make Movies. Photo by Christine Parry



Maureen Blackwood and Isaac Julien. Still from *The Passion of Remembrance* 1986. 95 min. Courtesy Maureen Blackwood and Isaac Julien

Co-directed by Maureen Blackwood and Isaac Julien, this first full-length feature film by Sankofa Film and Video Collective (1986) offers a radical and necessary interrogation of 'post-colonial' identities. Set against the tremendous political and social upheaval of 1980s Britain, the screening will be contextualised by film curator Karen Alexander. Following the screening, Alexander will be joined by actor Anni Domingo, who plays the female lead.

### ARTIST FILM & VIDEO UPCOMING SCREENINGS IN THE CLORE AUDITORIUM:

**MARTINA ATTILLE: *DREAMING RIVERS***  
Monday 2 November 2015, 19.00–20.30

**MUSEUM PREMIERE: *FRANK***  
Thursday 10 December 2015, 19.00–21.00

**ZINA SARO-WIWA: *ALT-NOLLYWOOD***  
Monday 18 January 2016, 19.00–21.00

Artist Film & Video at Tate Britain is curated by Zoe Whitley, Curator and Jenny Lund, Assistant Curator, Contemporary British Art at Tate Britain. With thanks to the artists.

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## REWIND: SANKOFA

*Sankofa was a conversation, not a consensus.*  
– Isaac Julien, 2015

The visionary collective Sankofa Film and Video was established in 1983 by five aspiring filmmakers – Martina Attille, Maureen Blackwood, Robert Cruz, Isaac Julien and Nadine Marsh-Edwards. Their heterogenous viewpoints coalesced around new black subjectivities and introduced British audiences to New Queer Cinema, black feminist theory and the politics and poetics of self-representation. To achieve this, the collective engaged in lively debate and held public viewings and screenings in order to actively seek out feedback and points of view from different communities.

The name ‘Sankofa’ refers to a Ghanaian Adinkra symbol representing a bird with an egg on its back, signifying taking what’s valuable from the past and applying it to the future.

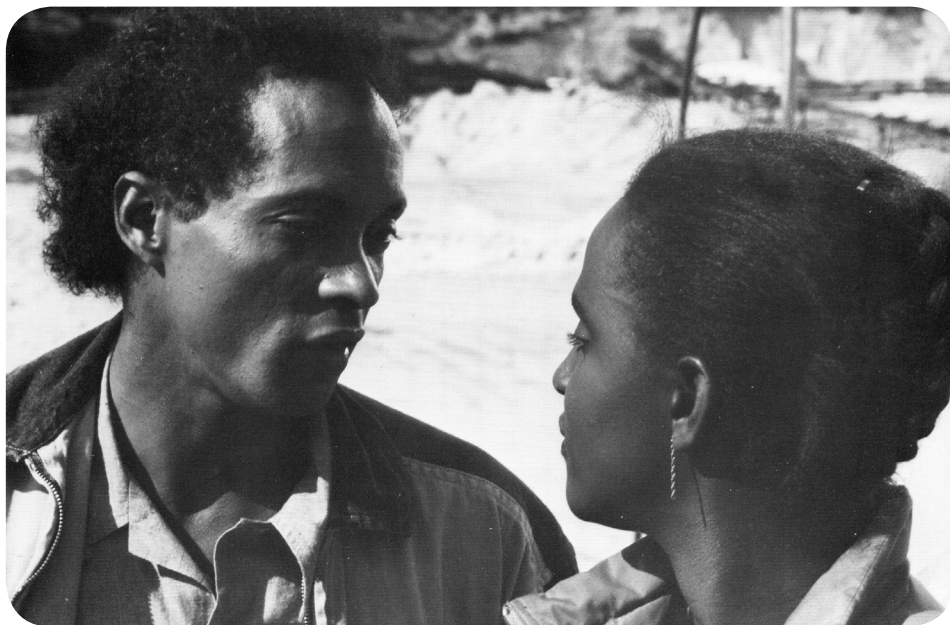
### THE PASSION OF REMEMBRANCE Maureen Blackwood & Isaac Julien, 1986, 16mm film, 95 min

Featuring: Anni Domingo, Joseph Charles and Antonia Thomas

Portraying the richness and variety of black experience in British society, *The Passion of Remembrance* simultaneously challenges conventional narrative forms and filmic genres. Combining fictional drama with allegorical monologues, documentary footage and scripted drama, the film addresses the complexities of race, sexuality, gender and intergenerational family dynamics. It premiered at the Edinburgh Film Festival in 1986 and had a 1987 theatrical release in London.

Interweaving two story lines, the film follows Maggie Baptiste (Antonia Thomas), a young British woman of West Indian parentage, who negotiates her personal and family experiences, juxtaposed with an intense debate raging between Woman (Anni Domingo) and Man (Joseph Charles) in an arid desert landscape as they navigate the polemics of the gender divide, political consciousness and community cohesion.

The contrast between contemporary Britain and the evocation of an unmapped philosophical territory are articulated in alternate palettes of warm and cool tones. Playing out the policing of bodies by way of physical suppression or psychological repression, *The Passion of Remembrance* pushes the idea of documentary fiction and the moving image document. Including a



redolent soundtrack by Tony Remy, the film features archive footage of trade union marches, the UK miners’ strike, Greenham Common Women’s Peace Camp, the Tottenham and Brixton riots, and the Newham Monitoring Project to end racially-motivated violence and police brutality. Sources of this material include Richard Heslop, Shadow Film and Video Collective, and Newsroom Film Collective. *The Passion of Remembrance* is testament to a once-thriving collaborative culture of British creative expression. Sankofa’s legacy endures.

#### ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS:

**Maureen (Mo) Blackwood**  
(born 1960, London, UK)

After completing a degree in Media Studies at the University of Westminster, Mo Blackwood became a founding member of Sankofa Film & Video Collective. During her time with Sankofa, Blackwood developed her talents in the areas of writing and direction on several films. She co-wrote/directed Sankofa’s first feature film *The Passion of Remembrance* (1986), before going on to write and direct a range of award winning films such as the fiction film *Perfect Image?* (1988), which won Best Film at the Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame in 1990, and the documentary *A Family Called Abrew* (1992), which won the Biography Section at the Black Independent Film and Screenplay Competition, Black Filmmakers Hall of Fame in 1993.

Blackwood also wrote and directed the multi-award winning British Screen/Channel Four short drama, *Home Away from Home* (1993), which was an official selection for Critics’ Week, Cannes Film Festival (1994) and Winner of Best European Short Film, Films des Femmes, France (1995). In 2003, Blackwood graduated from a

year-long intensive Film Council backed Script Development Executive Training Initiative. She then worked as a Script Development Executive for companies such as Forest Whitaker’s Spirit Dance UK. Blackwood has worked for a range of arts organisations as a writing mentor and has a special interest in up-and-coming playwrights and screenwriters.

Blackwood co-wrote the feature length screenplay *Shop of Dreams* for the Estonian production company, Exit Films, which was released in Estonia (2005) and has worked with the singer Des’ree for Sony Music. In 2005, she was selected to take part in a ten-day workshop with the Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami. Blackwood’s short film *Lift Stories* was one of four films selected by Channel Four to screen in the *3 Minute Wonders* slot (2005). In 2006, Blackwood was selected for Guiding Lights, a year-long industry backed initiative, which aimed to pair up-and-coming talent with established mentors in their specialist fields. Her mentor was the actor, writer and director Julian Fellowes. As a writer, Blackwood has written *Pieces of Freedom*, a feature length screenplay about the way we live in the twenty-first century, and *Meeting God*, an off-beat romantic comedy which examines love, sexual fluidity and friendship. She currently lives in the US and is writing a novel.

**Isaac Julien** (born 1960, London, UK)

Isaac Julien studied at Saint Martins School of Art from 1980 to 1984. His work draws from and comments on a range of disciplines and practices (film, dance, photography, music, theatre, painting, and sculpture) and unites them in dramatic audiovisual film installations, photographic works, and documentary films. Julien has won numerous prizes and awards including the Semaine de la Critique Prize at the Cannes Film Festival for *Young Soul Rebels* (1991), the Golden Gate Persistence

of Vision Award (2014), and the Kaino Award for Artistic Excellence (2015). He was nominated for the Turner Prize in 2001 for his works *The Long Road to Mazatlán* (1999), and *Vagabondia* (2000). His work has been included in Documenta 11 (2002), the 7th Gwangju Biennial (2008), and the Paris Triennial (2012). In addition, Julien has had various solo exhibitions at institutions such as the Art Institute of Chicago (2013), the MCA San Diego (2012), the Bass Museum, Miami (2010), and the Centre Pompidou, Paris (2005) among others. In the winter of 2013–14 his installation *Ten Thousand Waves* (2010) was on view at the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Isaac Julien’s recent exhibition at the De Pont Museum entitled *Riot* was a survey show spanning thirty years of his career. For the 56th Venice Biennale, Julien collaborated with curator Okwui Enwezor and directed a series of performances, readings and screenings based on Karl Marx’s *Das Kapital*, along with an installation of his work, *KAPITAL* (2013). His latest installation piece, *Stones Against Diamonds* (2015), was also premiered during the Biennale. Julien’s work is included in numerous museum collections including the Tate collection. In 2013, a monographic survey of his career to date, *Riot*, was published by MoMA, New York. Isaac Julien is currently Chair of Global Art at University of the Arts London.

## Karen Alexander

Karen Alexander is a writer, consultant and an independent curator of film and moving image. Until recently Alexander worked as Senior Tutor in the RCA’s Curating Contemporary Art department, where she was responsible for the practice-based MA pathway *Inspire*. Prior to that, she worked as a film curator and freelance consultant on film exhibition and distribution. She has contributed to several books on film including *British Cinema of the 90s* (London: British Film Institute, 1997), *Women and Film: Sight & Sound Reader* (London: British Film Institute 1999), *If Looks Could Kill* (London: Koenig Books and Fashion in Film Festival, 2008) and *Cinema Made in the Middle East and North Africa* (Utrecht, LM Publishers, 2015). From 1998–2006 she worked at the British Film Institute, with responsibility for the strategic marketing of BFI Distribution and Archive cinema releases. In 2015, Alexander was appointed Associate Fellow in Warwick University’s Film and Television Studies Department, based on their AHRC-funded Projection Project. She is currently a board member of the public art commissioning body, Artangel.

## Anni Domingo

Anni Domingo was born in the UK and grew up in Sierra Leone. She trained to be an actress and a teacher of speech and drama obtaining numerous degrees including an MA

in Creative Writing at Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge. Domingo has worked extensively as an actress in theatre, radio and films in the UK and abroad. In addition to *The Passion of Remembrance*, she has acted in the feature films *Outland* (1981) and *Wondrous Oblivion* (2003) and in television shows such *Kavanagh QC*, *Judge John Deed*, *Holby City*, *Casualty*, *The Wire* and *The Bill*. Domingo has also worked for BBC Radio and other radio stations as actress, writer, broadcaster, and interviewer.

Domingo currently runs the company Shakespeare Link, facilitating workshops on Shakespeare in schools, youth clubs and theatres. She teaches English and Drama in many Cambridgeshire schools and is a lecturer on Shakespeare and Creative Writing at INSEEC College in London. Domingo works regularly as director for WriteOn Theatre Company in Cambridge. She has written several workbooks on Shakespeare and her children’s plays have been performed in schools around the country. Her poem *Empty Cradle* was shortlisted in Slink Poetry Competition and published in the anthology *Secret and Silent Tears* and her short story *Empire Girl* has just been published in the *Words and Women Anthology One*. Domingo’s novel, *Breaking The Maafa Chain*, set in Africa, England and the US at the end of the slave trade has been shortlisted for the prestigious Lucy Cavendish College Fiction Prize.

LEFT: On the set of *The Passion of Remembrance* with Joseph Charles (Male Speaker), Anni Domingo (Female Speaker). Dirs. Maureen Blackwood and Isaac Julien as part of Sankofa Film and Video, 1986. 16mm, colour, sound, 95 min. Courtesy Isaac Julien Studio Archive  
RIGHT: Isaac Julien *Lost Boundaries* 2003. Still from Super8 film, colour, sound, 4 min. The still shows footage from the filming of *The Passion of Remembrance*. Dirs. Maureen Blackwood and Isaac Julien as part of Sankofa Film and Video, 1986. 16mm, colour, sound, 95 min. Courtesy Isaac Julien Studio Archive

