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Art Films at MoMA and Times Square

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Before New Year's revelers overtake Times Square, art lovers can have their own countdown to midnight. At 11:57 each night through Monday, an abbreviated version of Isaac Julien's film "Playtime" is being shown on electronic billboards and kiosks as part of the "Midnight Moment" art program presented by the Times Square Alliance and the Times Square Advertising Coalition. The full-length version of "Playtime" explores the international art market from the perspectives of five characters with varying levels of access and privilege. One is an auctioneer in London, another a worker in Dubai.

Mr. Julien's immersive, multiscreen film installation "Ten Thousand Waves" is playing in the atrium at the Museum of Modern Art. Its central narrative is a sad episode from recent history: the drowning of Chinese cockle pickers in a flood off the coast of England, in 2004. But it unfolds with fanciful digressions into 1930s Chinese cinema and ancient myths. In one memorable sequence, Maggie Cheung plays the 16th-century goddess Mazu, floating over the sea, as she guides a group of fishermen to safety. ("Midnight Moment: Isaac Julien"; timessquarenyc.org. "Isaac Julien: Ten Thousand Waves" runs through Feb. 17; moma.org.)

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