

**JOHN AKOMFRAH:
Purple**

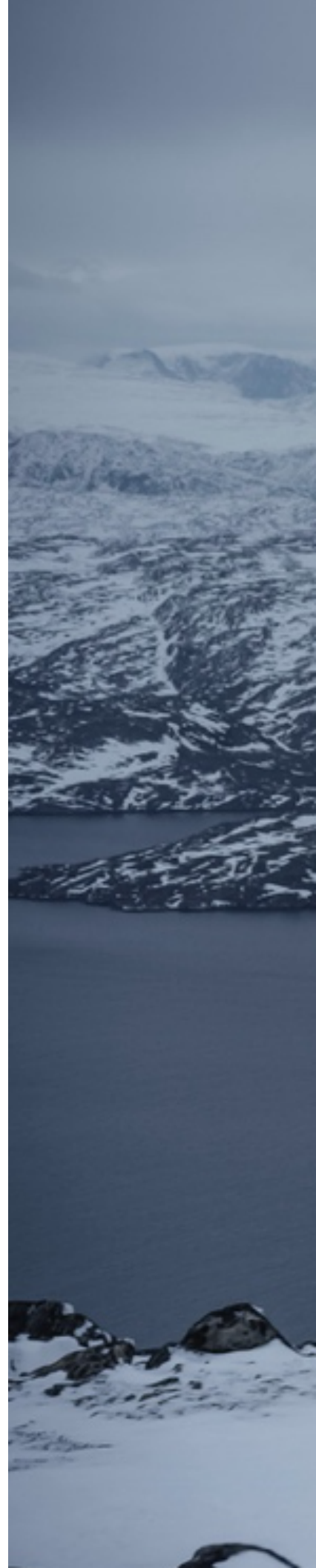
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ACCESSIBILITY BROCHURE

Sound and Visual Descriptions

HIRSHHORN

 Smithsonian



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EXHIBITION ENTRANCE

Visual Description:

The entrance of *Purple* features a title wall painted from floor to ceiling in a deep, eggplant purple. At the center of the wall to the left of an open doorway, large white text reads:

JOHN AKOMFRAH

Purple

Wall Text:

One of Britain's leading filmmakers, John Akomfrah RA (b. 1957) deftly weaves historical and original footage into evocative video works. *Purple* (2017), his largest installation to date, paints a riveting portrait of our planet in the era of climate change. Across six screens, Akomfrah tells the story of the Anthropocene, the present geological age, in which humans have massively reshaped the environment. The artist shot footage in Alaska, French Polynesia, Greenland, and other ecologically fragile locations, capturing anonymous figures posed in striking landscapes. He intercut these meditative scenes with archival images of oil rigs, coal mines, and polluted lakes as well as factory labor, political movements, and human birth and death. The video's nonlinear structure and resonant soundtrack—which blends historical recordings, original music, and spoken word—evoke the interconnectedness of humans and the natural world.

Akomfrah, who is of Ghanaian heritage, chose to blanket the galleries in purple, a color of mourning in Ghana. The deep hue lends the exhibition a somber mood and reminds us of the losses wrought by global warming. At the gallery entrance, hundreds of plastic bottles loom overhead in an organic formation that conjures, in Akomfrah's words, a "toxic cloud." The bottles were reused from a previous installation at the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston.

Carbon emissions for this exhibition have been calculated and balanced by an anonymous donation to strategic climate funds. Programming throughout the run of the show will address ecological concerns in the Washington, DC, region. For more information, see hirshhorn.si.edu/akomfrah.

Curated by Marina Isgro, Associate Curator of Media and Performance Art

John Akomfrah: Purple has been made possible with generous support from Mr. and Mrs. David G. Johnson. Additional funding has been provided by the Hirshhorn International Council and Hirshhorn Collectors' Council.

Purple was commissioned by the Barbican, London, and co-commissioned by Bildmuseet Umeå, Sweden; TBA21—Academy; the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston; Museu Coleção Berardo, Lisbon; and Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow.

John Akomfrah: Purple has been made possible with support from the Hirshhorn International Council and Hirshhorn Collectors' Council.

About the Hirshhorn Collection

Founded in 1966 with a landmark gift of art from Joseph H. Hirshhorn, the Museum's collection has expanded significantly from its original focus on paintings and sculptures to include time-based media works in film, video, installation, and performance. The Hirshhorn made an early commitment to exhibiting and collecting time-based media—and it has become a hallmark of the Museum's partnership with living artists. In 2005, the Hirshhorn inaugurated Black Box, a space dedicated to moving-image artwork, and the Museum also has organized major exhibitions dedicated to time-based media, including Doug Aitken's *SONG 1* (2012), a 360-degree projection wrapping the entirety of the Hirshhorn's exterior façade. In addition, the Museum has partnered with colleagues at the Smithsonian and beyond to develop best practices in the preservation of time-based media. John Akomfrah's *Purple* was recently acquired by the Hirshhorn in partnership with the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston.

About the Artist

John Akomfrah RA is a London-based artist and filmmaker who is recognized internationally for his expansive and groundbreaking practice, which often juxtaposes disparate images, nonlinear narratives, and multiple viewpoints to highlight both the disjointed nature of existence and the unexpected connections found within it. He was a founding member of the Black Audio Film Collective (1982–1998), an influential experimental group whose work examined diasporic African experiences. In 1997, Akomfrah, along with David Lawson and Lina Gopaul, established Smoking Dogs Films, which focuses on sharing narratives of marginalized communities with audiences across multiple platforms. Akomfrah's work has been exhibited in one-artist and group exhibitions and film festivals around the world.

Visit hi.si.edu and scan this image with your phone camera to hear from John Akomfrah. John Akomfrah at his London studio, 2016. © Smoking Dogs Films; Courtesy Smoking Dogs Films and Lisson Gallery. Photography by Jack Hems.

For sound and visual descriptions of the work on view, as well as full exhibition text, please visit hirshhorn.si.edu/purpleaccess

No device? Limited print and Braille versions are available for reference at the welcome desk in the lobby.

GALLERY 1

Visual Description:

In a rectangular gallery with deep purple walls, a large cloud-shaped sculpture hangs from the ceiling. The cloud is made from nearly 1,000 off-white, plastic containers—empty except for traces of a brownish liquid—that are grouped closely together in an organic formation. Lights placed within the sculpture produce areas of diffuse light and shadow.

GALLERY 2

John Akomfrah RA (b. 1957)

Purple

2017

Six-channel video installation; color; sound; 62 min.

Collections of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, with funds provided by the Joseph H. Hirshhorn Purchase Fund, 2021; and Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston, with funds provided through the generosity of the Acquisitions Circle and Erica Gervais Pappendick and Ted Pappendick, 2021 (2021.013). © Smoking Dogs Films. Courtesy of Smoking Dogs Films and Lisson Gallery

Visual Description:

The artwork is a video installation on six large screens presented side-by-side within a curved gallery wall. At times, identical images appear on each screen; at other times, different images appear side by side. The images feature people, nature, and industry across the world. Some have a contemporary appearance and others, in color or black-and-white, appear to be from the 1950s and '60s. The gallery walls and furnishings are purple, and purple carpet covers the floor.

At the start of the video, all six screens display a solid purple color. Then a series of images, lightly tinted in purple, appear. The images include power lines in a rural landscape, a rolling brook, and a factory in the fog. In several of these images, a woman dressed in a white hooded jacket—which looks similar to a hazmat suit—stands motionless, looking into the distance. The screens fade back to purple, with the two central screens displaying the word “Purple” in white text. Images of printed photographs of children immersed in a rocky stream alternate with scenes of power lines.

Across the central screens, the background changes to purple and displays the words “The First Movement.” The remaining screens show pregnant women in urban and rural settings around the world. Next, the central screens display the words “The Gift of Deep Waters.” Footage shows people speaking on telephones, women giving

birth, children playing, boats in water, and people dancing. There are also scenes of a young boy standing motionless under large power lines in a lush green landscape, and another figure in a white jacket in a similar pose on an ocean shore.

The central screens display the words “O Earth What Changes Hast Thou Seen!” A person walks across a snowy landscape. The following images show people dancing, walking through congested streets, taking public transportation, working in factory assembly lines, and working in an office typing pool. Again, several scenes feature solitary figures in white jackets in various outdoor settings.

The central screens fade to purple and display the words “Into the Petrified Waters.” Calm waterways are juxtaposed with polluted rivers and oceans. Men work in a welding factory and people work to clean polluted waters. Solitary, white-jacketed figures are seen standing on a pier; standing in a mountainous landscape; and sitting on a partly submerged tire in a waterway. Printed photographs are submerged in flowing water.

Several screens fade to purple, and the words “The Second Movement” appear. Images depict smoke-filled factories, streetlights at nighttime, people riding bicycles, a white-jacketed figure in a snowy landscape, and train travel. Three screens display the words “The Toxic Body and a Story of Love.” Additional images of train travel appear alongside sled dogs and snowy mountains, people singing, and people dancing and walking on beaches. In several scenes that appear to be drawn from a film, an ill woman lies in bed, speaking with a younger man. Water flows over printed photographs.

The words “The Winter of Our Discontent” appear on the central screens. A man in a white jacket stands in a field under dark clouds. Images include a Scandinavian sea town; factories with billowing smoke; a woman carrying a jug on her head; people waiting in lines for food; political marches and parades, including one in which a sign reads “Long Live Nehru” and another in which Mao Zedong waves to a crowd; city traffic in a blizzard; a man being hypnotized; women modeling and having their hair styled; soldiers at war; Grace Kelly at her wedding; and a white-jacketed figure in a tropical landscape.

Fading to purple, the central screens display the words “The Third Movement.” Images include scenes of cars being tested with crash dummies, along scenes of

forests and waterways. Next, the words “The Liquid Spirit of Things” appears. A car assembly line is shown alongside congested highways and nature scenes.

Four of the screens fade to purple and the words “Unforgiving Waters and the Vengeful Memory” appear. Calm waters are juxtaposed with planes releasing bombs on the landscape, producing billowing mushroom clouds. Pouring rain falls on black and white photographs of soldiers in trenches and other scenes. A white-jacketed figure stands in a mountain lake. Schools of fish are shown alongside ocean liners spilling oil.

The words “The Fourth Movement” appear on the central screen. A white-jacketed man stands in a field with electrical towers; another stands in a snowy landscape. Men are shown working in mines. The words “The Alien in the Body” appear. Men are examined by doctors; a doctor points to a lung darkened by coal dust. Scenes of animal experimentation are shown alongside sled dogs barking. A group of people sit at a long conference table in front of a map of Alaska. Protesters march with signs reading “Native Land Robbery” and other slogans. Swarms of insects fly, while airplanes and tractors spray chemicals on crops. A newspaper’s front page reads, “The Oil Sale Pumps History into Our State.” Factory-farmed cows, chickens, and pigs are shown alongside people eating meat. A newspaper headline reads, “We are being slowly poisoned.”

The two middle screens fade to purple and display the words “The Vitality of Things.” People and cars move through blizzards and strong winds. Storms rage through landscapes, destroying trees and buildings. Images show people playing music and assembling bicycles in a factory. Water rushes over color photographs.

Three screens fade to purple and display the words “The Fifth Movement.” A white-jacketed figure stands on a cloudy beach. A man walks in a plastic tunnel across a body of water. People lie in hospital beds and elderly women walk with nurses. Men are pulled out of a mine shaft. White-jacketed figures stand in landscapes and photographs are covered by flowing water. A man embraces a woman dying in bed. Men carry a casket through a crowd, and a man wipes away tears. A white-jacketed figure stands in a cemetery beside a stone church and a field of lavender. Dancers dressed in black perform in a studio. Children run across a field, dance, and play games. All six screens fade to purple and the final credits roll.

Transcript:

The following transcript records the spoken and sung sections of *John Akomfrah: Purple*. Detailed, synchronized sound descriptions can be found in the kiosk inside the gallery or following this transcript.

00:04:27–00:04:32

–[Woman] One, two, three, and up. And sway. And ... [continues, indiscernible]

00:11:18–00:11:23

♪ From the tale of the children of the troubled world
The tale of the search and the long journey
Each one awaits the word of comfort,
The simple gesture of recognition
From those who once made the same journey ♪

00:12:48–00:13:12

♪ Oh the one that will always (indiscernible)
Are the sound of a voice in the (indiscernible)
Are somebody (indiscernible) returning ♪

00:13:28–00:13:45

–[Woman] ...certainly down in the village, in a much prettier condition than it is at the moment,
with all this flying around.
–[Man] And would you, yourself, stop using detergents?
–[Woman] Well, uh, I don't know about that. It's rather an awkward question.

00:14:55–00:15:17

–[Man] This is how a lake finally dies. Because the water is so clear, the moss rolls right across the lake bottom like a carpet. It stifles all other plants. Tree branches can't rot. There's no bacteria. They're petrified.

00:18:55–00:20:40

–[Woman][Intermittent singing, indiscernible]

00:21:12–00:22:22

–[Boy][Singing, indiscernible]

00:21:40–00:21:49

–[Man] Well, if I had to die, I'd die. I'd will to die.

–[Woman] You think you can die just when you like?

00:23:30–00:24:31

–[Jawaharlal Nehru] Long years ago, we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. A moment comes, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. Before the birth of freedom, we have endured all the pains of labor, and our hearts are heavy with the memory of this sorrow. Some of those pains continue even now. Nevertheless, the past is over, and it is the future that beckons to us now. It means the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity.

00:25:40–00:25:43

–[Man] ... Your whole body relaxing and letting go, and your eyes becoming very heavy, and just letting go completely. And keeping your eyes on that spot, looking at it very intently, let your body begin to relax. And you relax, and your eyes begin to get tired. Your whole body relaxing and letting go. Your eyes becoming very heavy, and just letting go completely.

00:27:25–00:27:45

–[Jawaharlal Nehru] The achievement we celebrate today is but a step, an opening of opportunity to the greater triumphs and achievements that await us. Are we brave enough and wise enough to grasp this opportunity and accept the challenge of the future?

00:28:03–00:29:46

–[Man] I'd like you to open your eyes. In a very few minutes, I'm going to ask you to open your eyes and the only thing is, there will be a box there in front of you with a place to put your head. I'd like you to open your eyes, and the only thing is, there will be a box there in front of you with a place to put your head. There will be a box there in front of you with a place to put your head. The box is right in front of you. And you can move yourself up to it, so that your head will go right into that opening. Let your body begin to relax. You begin to relax and your eyes begin to get tired, begin to get tired and have to close. Your whole body relaxing and letting go. Your eyes ...

00:35:53–00:36:53

(Billie Holiday's "If You Were Mine")

♪ If you were mine, I could
be a ruler of kings
And if you were mine,

I could do such wonderful things
I'd say to the stars,
"Stop where you are,
Light up my lover's way,"
And every star above you would obey
Say, if you were mine
I would live for your love alone ♪
[Continues, overlapping]

00:37:07–00:37:35

- [Man] Sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide from our power stations, factories, and motor vehicles have continued to belch into the atmosphere, where they can travel enormous distances. In the sky, those gases are partially converted into sulfuric and nitric acids. Whenever that airstream hits high ground, those acids wash out in the rainfall. Acid rain flushes valuable nutrients out of the soil, then poisons the water.

00:37:42–00:37:46

♪ It rains, it pours,
it rains so hard,
It rains so hard, all day ♪

00:40:09–00:41:06

–[Man][Singing, indiscernible]

00:42:09–00:42:11

–[Man] This is a thin section of an actual lung from a coal miner. The black spots are collections of coal dust, which the man has breathed in doing his work.

00:42:36–00:43:29

–[Man][Singing, indiscernible]

00:44:39–00:46:47

–[Man] Good evening, my fellow Alaskans. There is excitement in the air now, excitement because we are on the eve of the greatest day our state has ever known.

–[Man] There's been an Alaska corporation in Anchorage.

–[Man] Amount, total amount of bid, \$14,566.40, a per-acre total of \$5.69.

–[Man] Total bid, \$47,150,080. Phillips Petroleum, Mobile, Standard of California, total bonus bid, \$72 million, 100--

[crowd chattering, applause]

–[Man] Alaska will be a utopia. No taxes, new schools, new hospitals, a new railway, a new city, perhaps a handout to every man, woman, and child.

00:51:48–00:52:03

–[Singing, indiscernible]

00:54:52–00:55:01

♪ Oh, that's the place

where I love to be

Oh, there's the wonders that I see ♪

[continues, indiscernibly]

00:55:39–00:55:41

–[Man] Oh, my love. My love, my love, my love, my love, my love. Oh, my love. Oh, my love. Oh, my love.

00:58:52–00:59:04

–[Woman] Down, together, one, two, three.

Down, together, now shake hands.

Again: down, together, right hand ...

Full Sound Description

00:00:01,432 --> 00:00:04,182
(water burbling)

00:00:18,581 --> 00:00:23,581
(gentle, quiet music)
(water burbling)

00:00:52,804 --> 00:00:57,804
(whimsical, playful music)
(water burbling)

00:01:07,001 --> 00:01:12,001
(distorted, playful music)
(water burbling)

00:01:23,676 --> 00:01:28,676
(water burbling)
(gentle, playful music)

00:01:39,526 --> 00:01:44,526
(thunder rumbles)
(distorted, playful music)

00:01:50,225 --> 00:01:55,225
(rhythmic beating)
(distorted, playful music)

00:02:04,892 --> 00:02:09,892
(distorted, playful music)
(water burbling, phone ringing)

00:02:18,526 --> 00:02:23,526
(baby crying)
(distorted, unsettling music)

00:02:35,999 --> 00:02:39,666
(dramatic, whimsical music)

00:02:44,383 --> 00:02:49,383
- [Child] (vocalizing, indiscernible)
(whimsical, upbeat music)

00:03:18,962 --> 00:03:23,962
(crowd shouting)
(upbeat, dramatic music)

00:03:33,063 --> 00:03:38,063
(seagulls squawk)
(upbeat, dramatic music)

00:04:01,642 --> 00:04:06,642
(children playing)
(upbeat, whimsical music)

00:04:07,475 --> 00:04:12,475
(waves crashing)
(upbeat, whimsical music)

00:04:27,691 --> 00:04:32,691
- [Woman] Three, four, and up. And sway. And...
(upbeat, whimsical music)

00:04:42,688 --> 00:04:47,688
(birds squawking) (upbeat, whimsical music)

00:04:49,355 --> 00:04:54,355
(birds squawking)
(dramatic, distorted music)

00:05:02,375 --> 00:05:07,375
(bells ringing)
(dramatic, distorted music)

00:05:07,588 --> 00:05:12,588
(bells ringing)
(wind hissing)

00:05:26,850 --> 00:05:31,850
(bells ringing)
(ship horn blasting)

00:05:41,465 --> 00:05:45,215
(dramatic, orchestral music)

00:07:36,282 --> 00:07:41,282
(wind hissing)
(dramatic, orchestral music)

00:07:58,373 --> 00:08:03,373
(wind hissing)
(static whispering)

00:08:17,202 --> 00:08:22,202
(eerie, unsettling music)
(static whispering)

00:08:26,590 --> 00:08:31,590
(clattering wood)
(upbeat, distorted music)

00:08:39,205 --> 00:08:44,205
(upbeat, celebratory music)
(wooden shoes tapping)

00:08:50,056 --> 00:08:55,056
(bells ringing)
(eerie, unsettling music)

00:08:57,791 --> 00:09:02,791
(bells ringing)
(train clattering)

00:09:06,013 --> 00:09:11,013
(wind hissing)
(train clattering)

00:09:16,201 --> 00:09:19,701
(eerie, unsettling music)

00:09:24,201 --> 00:09:29,201
(bell ringing)
(eerie, unsettling music)

00:09:33,986 --> 00:09:38,986
(clattering keyboards)
(quiet, distorted music)

00:09:54,133 --> 00:09:59,133
(bell ringing)
(pattering footsteps)

00:10:02,048 --> 00:10:06,715
(swishing)
(clattering)

00:10:50,444 --> 00:10:55,444
(deep percussion booms)
(water burbling)

00:10:55,522 --> 00:11:00,522
(quiet, distorted music)
(water burbling)

00:11:11,896 --> 00:11:16,896
(seagulls squawk)
(water burbling)

00:11:18,277 --> 00:11:23,277
♪ From the tale of the children of the troubled world ♪

00:11:26,074 --> 00:11:31,074
♪ The tale of the search and the long journey ♪

00:11:35,471 --> 00:11:40,471
♪ Each one awaits the word of comfort ♪

00:11:42,714 --> 00:11:47,714
♪ The simple gesture of recognition ♪

00:11:49,251 --> 00:11:54,251
♪ From those who once made the same journey ♪

00:11:56,986 --> 00:11:59,653
(water hissing)

00:12:01,648 --> 00:12:04,648
(machinery hissing)

00:12:15,719 --> 00:12:20,719
(echoing booming)
(clanking)

00:12:39,341 --> 00:12:44,341
(water burbling)
(quiet, eerie music)

00:12:48,314 --> 00:12:52,481
♪ Oh the one that will always (indiscernible) ♪

00:13:00,923 --> 00:13:05,923
♪ Are the sound of a voice in the (indiscernible) ♪

00:13:07,035 --> 00:13:12,035
♪ Are somebody (indiscernible) returning ♪

00:13:14,335 --> 00:13:18,085
- [Man] (singing, indiscernible)

00:13:23,177 --> 00:13:25,927
(water burbling)

00:13:28,935 --> 00:13:30,035
- [Woman] Certainly down in the village,

00:13:30,035 --> 00:13:31,710
in a much prettier condition than it is at the moment,

00:13:31,710 --> 00:13:33,513
with all this flying around.

00:13:34,380 --> 00:13:37,130

- [Man] And would you, yourself, stop using detergents?

00:13:39,673 --> 00:13:42,328

- [Woman] Well, uh, I don't know about that.

00:13:42,328 --> 00:13:45,155

It's rather an awkward question.

00:13:45,155 --> 00:13:50,155

(water burbling)

(thunder rumbling)

00:13:52,599 --> 00:13:57,599

(bells ringing)

(water burbling)

00:14:17,629 --> 00:14:22,629

(sprinkler hissing)

(clanking metal)

00:14:47,050 --> 00:14:52,050

(bell rings) (clanking metal)

00:14:55,276 --> 00:14:57,276

- [Man] This is how a lake finally dies.

00:14:58,676 --> 00:15:02,280

(eerie, unsettling music)

00:15:02,280 --> 00:15:04,200

Because the water is so clear,

00:15:04,200 --> 00:15:07,100

the moss rolls right across the lake bottom like a carpet.

00:15:08,310 --> 00:15:10,053

It stifles all other plants.

00:15:13,230 --> 00:15:14,790

Tree branches can't rot.

00:15:14,790 --> 00:15:16,500

There's no bacteria.

00:15:16,500 --> 00:15:17,493

They're petrified.

00:15:18,636 --> 00:15:21,303

(water hissing)

00:15:24,769 --> 00:15:29,769

(singing, indiscernible)

(water hissing)

00:16:29,123 --> 00:16:31,790

(water hissing)

00:16:37,304 --> 00:16:42,304

(train whistle shrieks)

(water burbling)

00:16:44,705 --> 00:16:49,705

(water burbling)

(quiet, gentle music)

00:17:02,290 --> 00:17:07,290
(echoing train hissing)
(quiet, gentle music)

00:17:23,449 --> 00:17:27,532
- [Man] (singing, indiscernible)

00:17:40,804 --> 00:17:44,221
(quiet, distorted music)

00:18:09,759 --> 00:18:14,759
(train rhythmically chugging)
(whistle shrieks)

00:18:55,775 --> 00:19:00,775
- [Woman] (intermittent singing, indiscernible)

00:19:20,444 --> 00:19:25,444
(wind hissing)
(train clattering)

00:19:28,359 --> 00:19:33,359
- [Woman] (intermittent singing, indiscernible)
(train clattering)

00:19:47,227 --> 00:19:51,910
(quiet, gentle music)
(wind hissing)

00:19:51,910 --> 00:19:56,910
(bells ringing)
(quiet, distorted music)

00:20:01,969 --> 00:20:06,969

- [Woman] (intermittent singing, indiscernible)
(quiet, distorted music)

00:20:14,936 --> 00:20:19,936

(train chugging)

- [Woman] (intermittent singing, indiscernible)

00:20:30,315 --> 00:20:35,315

- [Woman] (intermittent singing, indiscernible)
(gentle, distorted music)

00:20:36,096 --> 00:20:39,763

(cheerful, distorted music)

00:20:50,965 --> 00:20:54,132

(gentle, eerie music)

00:21:04,233 --> 00:21:09,233

(water burbling)

(gentle, eerie music)

00:21:12,415 --> 00:21:17,415

- [Boy] (singing, indiscernible)

(gentle, eerie music)

00:21:40,735 --> 00:21:45,068

- [Man] Well, if I had to die, I'd die, I'd will to die.

00:21:46,162 --> 00:21:49,000

- [Woman] You think you can die just when you like?

00:21:49,000 --> 00:21:54,000
- [Child] (singing, indiscernible)
(eerie music)

00:22:13,392 --> 00:22:18,392
(water hissing)
- [Child] (singing, indiscernible)

00:22:22,939 --> 00:22:27,939
(water burbling)
(quiet, eerie music)

00:22:32,666 --> 00:22:37,666
(steam hissing)
(quiet, eerie music)

00:22:41,602 --> 00:22:46,602
(water burbling)
(quiet, eerie music)

00:22:57,841 --> 00:23:01,841
(Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata" on piano)

00:23:14,234 --> 00:23:19,234
(water burbling)
(Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata" on piano)

00:23:30,671 --> 00:23:34,787
- [Jawaharlal Nehru] Long years ago, we made a tryst with destiny

00:23:35,813 --> 00:23:40,396
and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge,

00:23:41,990 --> 00:23:46,573
not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially.

00:23:49,266 --> 00:23:54,266
A moment comes, when we step out from the old to the new,

00:23:54,684 --> 00:23:58,595
when an age ends and when the soul of a nation,

00:23:58,595 --> 00:24:01,345
long suppressed, finds utterance.

00:24:02,937 --> 00:24:04,867
Before the birth of freedom,

00:24:04,867 --> 00:24:08,055
we have endured all the pains of labor

00:24:08,055 --> 00:24:13,055
and our hearts are heavy with the memory of this sorrow.

00:24:13,166 --> 00:24:16,665
Some of those pains continue even now.

00:24:16,665 --> 00:24:19,063
Nevertheless, the past is over

00:24:19,063 --> 00:24:24,063
and it is the future that beckons to us now.

00:24:24,128 --> 00:24:28,586

It means the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease

00:24:28,586 --> 00:24:31,094

and inequality of opportunity.

00:24:31,094 --> 00:24:33,855

(Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata" on piano)

00:24:33,855 --> 00:24:38,201

(gentle piano music)

(wind hissing)

00:24:38,201 --> 00:24:43,201

(crowd cheering)

(applauding)

00:24:46,147 --> 00:24:51,147

(upbeat, joyful music)

(clattering)

00:25:02,926 --> 00:25:07,926

(quiet, distorted music)

(hissing steam)

00:25:18,652 --> 00:25:23,652

(people chattering)

(quiet, distorted music)

00:25:25,873 --> 00:25:28,956

(clock ticking)

(quiet, distorted music)

00:25:28,956 --> 00:25:33,956
(alarm ringing)
(quiet, distorted music)

00:25:34,087 --> 00:25:39,087
(steam hissing)
(quiet, distorted music)

00:25:40,316 --> 00:25:43,354
- [Man] Your whole body relaxing and letting go,

00:25:43,354 --> 00:25:47,521
and your eyes becoming very heavy, and just letting go completely.

00:25:49,243 --> 00:25:50,961
And keeping your eyes on that spot,

00:25:50,961 --> 00:25:53,294
looking at it very intently,

00:25:54,769 --> 00:25:57,186
let your body begin to relax.

00:25:58,874 --> 00:26:02,541
And you relax, and your eyes begin to get tired.

00:26:03,676 --> 00:26:06,825
Your whole body relaxing and letting go.

00:26:06,825 --> 00:26:10,242
(quiet, distorted music)

00:26:14,446 --> 00:26:19,446

Your eyes becoming very heavy and just letting go completely.

00:26:20,082 --> 00:26:23,915

(distorted, disjointed music)

00:26:48,424 --> 00:26:53,424

(sirens wailing)

(distorted, disjointed music)

00:27:25,325 --> 00:27:28,198

- [Jawaharlal Nehru] The achievement we celebrate today

00:27:28,198 --> 00:27:31,531

is but a step, an opening of opportunity

00:27:32,475 --> 00:27:37,475

to the greater triumphs and achievements that await us.

00:27:37,691 --> 00:27:40,571

Are we brave enough and wise enough

00:27:40,571 --> 00:27:42,630

to grasp this opportunity

00:27:42,630 --> 00:27:45,617

and accept the challenge of the future?

00:27:45,617 --> 00:27:50,617

(bell ringing) (quiet, gentle music)

00:28:03,347 --> 00:28:05,432

- [Man] I'd like you to open your eyes.

00:28:05,432 --> 00:28:08,340

In a very few minutes, I'm going to ask you to open your eyes

00:28:08,340 --> 00:28:09,173

and the only thing is,

00:28:09,173 --> 00:28:10,950

there will be a box there in front of you

00:28:10,950 --> 00:28:12,450

with a place to put your head.

00:28:13,420 --> 00:28:16,337

(explosion blasts)

00:28:18,134 --> 00:28:22,551

(chugging) (hissing)

00:28:25,675 --> 00:28:28,258

I'd like you to open your eyes,

00:28:29,366 --> 00:28:30,199

and the only thing is,

00:28:30,199 --> 00:28:31,410

there will be a box there in front of you

00:28:31,410 --> 00:28:33,063
with a place to put your head.

00:28:37,410 --> 00:28:39,033
There will be a box there in front of you

00:28:39,033 --> 00:28:40,743
with a place to put your head.

00:28:43,413 --> 00:28:47,830
(chugging) (hissing)

00:28:49,846 --> 00:28:52,596
The box is right in front of you.

00:28:55,265 --> 00:28:59,168
And you can move yourself up to it,

00:28:59,168 --> 00:29:03,060
so that your head will go right into that opening.

00:29:03,060 --> 00:29:07,477
(chugging)
(hissing)

00:29:22,597 --> 00:29:27,597
(gentle, eerie music)
(chugging)

00:29:35,091 --> 00:29:36,541
Let your body begin to relax.

00:29:38,216 --> 00:29:40,616

You begin to relax and your eyes begin to get tired,

00:29:41,858 --> 00:29:44,738

begin to get tired and have to close.

00:29:44,738 --> 00:29:46,813

Your whole body relaxing and letting go. Your eyes...

00:29:49,220 --> 00:29:52,387

(gentle piano music)

00:29:56,047 --> 00:30:01,047

(traffic hums)

(gentle piano music)

00:30:04,410 --> 00:30:09,410

(water burbles)

(gentle piano music)

00:30:21,222 --> 00:30:24,472

(clattering machinery)

00:30:27,963 --> 00:30:32,963

(water burbling) (gentle piano music)

00:30:40,765 --> 00:30:45,765

(clattering machinery) (water burbling)

00:30:51,408 --> 00:30:56,408

(clattering machinery)

(gentle piano music)

00:31:01,439 --> 00:31:03,677
(birds chirp)

00:31:03,677 --> 00:31:08,677
(whooshing engine)
(gentle piano music)

00:31:11,689 --> 00:31:16,689
(hissing steam)
(crashing metal)

00:31:23,743 --> 00:31:28,743
(rumbling engines)
(gentle piano music)

00:31:34,203 --> 00:31:39,203
(crashing metal)
(gentle piano music)

00:32:06,260 --> 00:32:11,260
(birds chirping)
(gentle piano music)

00:32:15,141 --> 00:32:20,141
(bubbling water)
(whirring machinery)

00:32:22,736 --> 00:32:27,736
(clattering machinery)
(whirring)

00:32:48,175 --> 00:32:53,175
(rumbling traffic)
(quiet, gentle music)

00:33:28,492 --> 00:33:33,492
(horns honking)
(rumbling traffic)

00:33:50,757 --> 00:33:55,757
(water burbling)
(gentle piano music)

00:34:20,107 --> 00:34:25,107
(rhythmic beeping)
(gentle piano music)

00:34:33,030 --> 00:34:38,030
(explosions blasting)
(gentle piano music)

00:34:52,677 --> 00:34:55,844
(gentle piano music)

00:35:02,504 --> 00:35:07,504
(rumbling)
(gentle piano music)

00:35:13,021 --> 00:35:18,021
(rain hissing, trickling)
(gentle piano music)

00:35:24,104 --> 00:35:29,104
(water trickling)
(gentle, quiet music)

00:35:39,062 --> 00:35:44,062
(thunder rumbles) (quiet, cheery music)

00:35:53,046 --> 00:35:58,046
(water burbling)
(Billie Holiday's "If You Were Mine")

00:36:10,450 --> 00:36:15,450
♪ If you were mine, I could be a ruler of kings ♪

00:36:18,574 --> 00:36:23,574
♪ And if you were mine, I could do such wonderful things ♪

00:36:27,284 --> 00:36:32,117
♪ I'd say to the stars, Stop where you are, ♪

00:36:33,535 --> 00:36:36,785
♪ Light up my lover's way" ♪

00:36:37,676 --> 00:36:42,676
♪ And every star above you would obey ♪

00:36:44,311 --> 00:36:49,311
♪ Say, if you were mine ♪

00:36:49,569 --> 00:36:53,819
♪ I would live for your love alone ♪

00:36:55,734 --> 00:37:00,734
(Billie Holiday continues, overlapping)
- [Woman] (shouting, indiscernible)

00:37:07,349 --> 00:37:08,760
- [Man] Sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide

00:37:08,760 --> 00:37:11,850
from our power stations, factories, and motor vehicles

00:37:11,850 --> 00:37:13,920
have continued to belch
into the atmosphere

00:37:13,920 --> 00:37:17,040
where they can travel enormous distances.

00:37:17,040 --> 00:37:19,950
In the sky, those gases are partially converted

00:37:19,950 --> 00:37:22,173
into sulfuric and nitric acids.

00:37:23,370 --> 00:37:25,680
Whenever that airstream hits high ground,

00:37:25,680 --> 00:37:27,903
those acids wash out in the rainfall.

00:37:29,730 --> 00:37:33,717
Acid rain flushes valuable nutrients out of the soil,

00:37:33,717 --> 00:37:35,253
then poisons the water.

00:37:37,025 --> 00:37:42,025
(water hissing) (trickling)

00:37:42,966 --> 00:37:46,924

♪ It rains, it pours, it rains so hard ♪

00:37:46,924 --> 00:37:51,028

♪ It rains so hard, all day ♪

00:37:51,028 --> 00:37:56,028

(lyrics indiscernible)

(chaotic chattering)

00:38:15,507 --> 00:38:19,340

(distorted, unsettling music)

00:38:40,059 --> 00:38:45,059

(water burbling)

(distorted, unsettling music)

00:39:36,071 --> 00:39:41,071

(water splashes)

(distorted, unsettling music)

00:39:56,321 --> 00:40:01,321

(water gurgling)

(distorted, unsettling music)

00:40:09,417 --> 00:40:14,417

- [Man] (singing, indiscernible)

(liquid gurgling)

00:40:16,522 --> 00:40:21,522

- [Man] (singing, indiscernible)

(gentle, quiet music)

00:40:59,435 --> 00:41:04,435
(clattering machinery)
- [Man] (singing, indiscernible)

00:41:07,115 --> 00:41:12,115
(clattering machinery)
(gentle, quiet music)

00:41:27,781 --> 00:41:32,781
(seagulls squawking)
(gentle, quiet music)

00:41:57,526 --> 00:42:02,526
(clicking control)
(gentle, quiet music)

00:42:04,353 --> 00:42:09,353
(buzzing machinery)
(gentle, quiet music)

00:42:09,617 --> 00:42:11,805
- [Man] This is a thin section

00:42:11,805 --> 00:42:14,722
of an actual lung from a coal miner.

00:42:15,801 --> 00:42:18,060
The black spots are collections of coal dust,

00:42:20,443 --> 00:42:23,449
Which the man has breathed in doing his work.

00:42:23,449 --> 00:42:28,449
(hissing)
(gentle, quiet music)

00:42:34,287 --> 00:42:36,783
(birds squawk)

00:42:36,783 --> 00:42:41,783
- [Man] (singing, indiscernible)
(birds squawk)

00:42:44,879 --> 00:42:49,879
- [Man] (singing, indiscernible)
(gentle piano music)

00:43:14,277 --> 00:43:19,277
(wolf howls)
- [Man] (singing, indiscernible)

00:43:24,169 --> 00:43:29,169
(animals chatter)
(gentle piano music)

00:43:35,051 --> 00:43:40,051
(dog barking)
(gentle piano music)

00:43:53,421 --> 00:43:58,421
(distorted, disjointed music)
(dogs barking)

00:44:03,053 --> 00:44:08,053
(disjointed, distorted music)
(animals chattering)

00:44:23,862 --> 00:44:28,862
(water burbling) (quiet, somber music)

00:44:39,179 --> 00:44:41,664
- [Man] Good evening, my fellow Alaskans.

00:44:41,664 --> 00:44:43,020
There is excitement in the air now,

00:44:43,020 --> 00:44:45,030
excitement because we are on the eve

00:44:45,030 --> 00:44:47,943
of the greatest day our state has ever known.

00:44:49,503 --> 00:44:53,003
(quiet, unsettling music)

00:45:02,590 --> 00:45:07,590
(rattling airplane)
(quiet, unsettling music)

00:45:08,320 --> 00:45:13,227
There's been an Alaska corporation in Anchorage.
(quiet music)

00:45:13,227 --> 00:45:17,310
- [Man] Amount, total amount of bid, \$14,566.40,

00:45:19,920 --> 00:45:21,393
a per acre total of \$5.69.

00:45:24,726 --> 00:45:28,143
(gentle, dramatic music)

00:45:45,750 --> 00:45:47,473
Total bid, \$47,150,080.

00:45:52,074 --> 00:45:53,610
(people chatter)

00:45:53,610 --> 00:45:57,630
Phillips Petroleum, Mobile, Standard of California,

00:45:57,630 --> 00:46:01,128
total bonus bid, \$72 million, 100--

00:46:01,128 --> 00:46:06,128
(crowd chattering loudly)
(applauding)

00:46:11,135 --> 00:46:14,552
(gentle, dramatic music)

00:46:19,856 --> 00:46:24,856
(bees buzzing)
(gentle, dramatic music)

00:46:28,827 --> 00:46:32,744
(disjointed, unsettling music)

00:46:37,980 --> 00:46:39,960
- [Man] Alaska will be a utopia,

00:46:39,960 --> 00:46:42,690
no taxes, new schools, new hospitals,

00:46:42,690 --> 00:46:45,090
a new railway, a new city,

00:46:45,090 --> 00:46:47,993
perhaps a handout to every man, woman and child.

00:46:49,851 --> 00:46:54,851
(machinery clanking)
(gentle, unsettling music)

00:47:03,019 --> 00:47:08,019
(chickens chattering)
(gentle, dramatic music)

00:47:33,626 --> 00:47:38,626
(pigs grunting)
(gentle, dramatic music)

00:48:03,314 --> 00:48:08,314
(helicopter whirring)
(gentle, unsettling music)

00:48:16,446 --> 00:48:21,446
(fire roaring)
(gentle, unsettling music)

00:48:25,479 --> 00:48:28,479
(airplane rumbling)

00:48:33,020 --> 00:48:35,937
(explosion blasts)

00:48:39,347 --> 00:48:42,847
(unsettling, quiet music)

00:48:59,502 --> 00:49:04,502
(water burbling)
(unsettling, quiet music)

00:49:28,483 --> 00:49:33,483
(wind whistling)
(quiet, unsettling music)

00:50:06,145 --> 00:50:10,107
(horns honking)
(quiet, unsettling music)

00:50:10,107 --> 00:50:15,107
(woman screams)
(quiet, unsettling music)

00:50:19,247 --> 00:50:24,247
(machinery clanking)
(quiet, dramatic music)

00:50:38,741 --> 00:50:43,741
(upbeat, nostalgic music)
(clanking machinery)

00:51:04,657 --> 00:51:08,324
(dramatic, nostalgic music)

00:51:28,073 --> 00:51:33,073
(wind hissing)
(quiet, gentle music)

00:51:47,907 --> 00:51:52,907
(wind hissing)
- [Men] (singing, indiscernible)

00:52:06,395 --> 00:52:11,395
(wind hissing) (gentle piano music)

00:52:26,245 --> 00:52:31,245
(rattling machinery)
(gentle piano music)

00:52:43,185 --> 00:52:48,185
(ship horn wails)
(hissing wind)

00:52:49,414 --> 00:52:54,414
(wind hissing)
(gentle piano music)

00:53:09,126 --> 00:53:14,126
(water sloshing)
(gentle piano music)

00:53:25,086 --> 00:53:30,086
(clattering machinery)
(gentle piano music)

00:54:26,222 --> 00:54:31,222
(water burbling) (gentle piano music)

00:54:31,640 --> 00:54:36,640
(siren wailing) (gentle piano music)

00:54:46,364 --> 00:54:50,228
(hissing air)
(gentle piano music)

00:54:50,228 --> 00:54:52,987
(cheerful band music) (gentle piano music)

00:54:52,987 --> 00:54:57,351
♪ Oh, that's the place where I love to be ♪

00:54:57,351 --> 00:55:01,851
♪ Oh there's the wonders that I see ♪

00:55:01,851 --> 00:55:06,851
(continues, indiscernibly)
(music fades)

00:55:13,732 --> 00:55:16,899
(somber, quiet music)

00:55:39,567 --> 00:55:41,914
- [Man] Oh, my love.

00:55:41,914 --> 00:55:45,831
My love, my love, my love, my love. Oh, my love.

00:55:49,288 --> 00:55:50,205
Oh, my love.

00:55:51,653 --> 00:55:55,675
Oh, my love.
(somber, quiet music)

00:55:55,675 --> 00:56:00,675
(gongs ringing)
(somber, quiet music)

00:56:11,010 --> 00:56:16,010
(clock tower chiming)
(somber, quiet music)

00:56:35,289 --> 00:56:40,289
(gongs ringing)
(somber, quiet music)

00:56:42,946 --> 00:56:47,946
(clattering) (gongs ringing)

00:56:54,369 --> 00:56:58,286
(melancholy orchestral music)

00:57:36,242 --> 00:57:41,242
(gongs ringing)
(melancholy orchestral music)

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00:58:00,952 --> 00:58:05,952
(clattering)
(melancholy orchestral music)

00:58:20,806 --> 00:58:25,806
(children playing)
(melancholy orchestral music)

00:58:37,200 --> 00:58:41,950
(hissing) (bell ringing)

00:58:49,692 --> 00:58:52,284
(children playing)
(bells ringing)

00:58:52,284 --> 00:58:55,346
- Down, together, one, two, three.

00:58:55,346 --> 00:58:59,390
Down, together, now shake hands.

00:58:59,390 --> 00:59:04,390
Again, down, together, right hand... (voice drowned out)

00:59:04,762 --> 00:59:08,679
(melancholy orchestral music)

00:59:29,344 --> 00:59:32,594
(somber, gentle music)

01:01:25,574 --> 01:01:28,824
(wind quietly hissing)

Image credit:

John Akomfrah RA

Purple (detail)

2017

Six-channel video installation; color; sound; 62 min.

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