



MILWAUKEE ART MUSEUM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Press contacts:

Kristin Settle
414/224-3246
Kristin.Settle@mam.org

Vicki Scharfberg
414/224-3243
Vicki.Scharfberg@mam.org



Museum acquires major work by Isaac Julien

Contemporary video installation presented sequentially for the first time as part of Museum's Currents series

Milwaukee, Wis. – The Milwaukee Art Museum has acquired a video work by London-based Contemporary artist Isaac Julien. *Western Union: Small Boats* (2007) juxtaposes the grandeur of the Sicilian Palazzo Gangi (made famous by Luchino Visconti's 1963 cinematic masterpiece *The Leopard*) with present-day sea voyages from Africa to the Mediterranean.

Western Union: Small Boats is part of Julien's "Expeditions" trilogy, now on view as part of the Museum's *Currents* series, which highlights the work of Contemporary artists.

As with all the works in "Expeditions," *Western Union* is presented on three separated projection screens, physically indicating the fragmented narratives of the work.

"We are delighted to have acquired *Western Union: Small Boats* into our permanent collection and are honored to be the first to present these three works sequentially," said Brady Roberts, chief curator for the Milwaukee Art Museum. "Julien's masterful filmmaking and control of the installation environment create an experience that combines the formality of a gallery with an enveloping cinema theater."

As part of *Currents*, the "Expeditions" trilogy (*True North*, *Fantôme Afrique*, *Western Union: Small Boats*) is being presented together, sequentially, for the first time.

True North (2004) is a meditative work loosely inspired by the story of the African American explorer Matthew Henson, who accompanied Robert Peary as one of the first people to reach the North Pole. *Fantôme Afrique* (2005) punctuates a tour through urban Ouagadougou, the center for cinema in Africa, and the arid spaces of rural Burkina Faso, with archival footage from early colonial expeditions and key moments in African history.

"His multi-screen installations display rich narrative imageries of architecture and landscapes that reference issues in global politics, race, and migration," said Roberts. "Isaac Julien's video installations combine mesmerizing images linked across screens with compelling audio tracks that are immediately engaging yet conceptually layered."

Isaac Julien (b. 1960) first came to prominence with his dramatic documentary *Looking for Langston* (1989), in which he explored the life of poet Langston Hughes during the Harlem Renaissance as a parallel to his own identity as a gay black artist.

Isaac Julien's "Expeditions" will be on view March 24, 2012 through February 17, 2013 in the Contemporary Galleries at the Milwaukee Art Museum.

The acquisition of Western Union: Small Boats is funded by the Contemporary Art Society, the Ralph and Cora Oberndorfer Family Trust, and by exchange. Programming for this exhibition is generously sponsored by the Greater Milwaukee Foundation's Johnson and Pabst LGBT Humanity Fund, the Contemporary Art Society, and the African American Art Alliance.

ABOUT THE MILWAUKEE ART MUSEUM

The Milwaukee Art Museum's far-reaching holdings include more than 30,000 works spanning antiquity to the present day. With a history dating back to 1888, the Museum houses a collection with strengths in 19th- and 20th-century American and European art, contemporary art, American decorative arts, and folk and self-taught art. The Museum includes the Santiago Calatrava-designed Quadracci Pavilion, named by *Time* magazine as "Best Design of 2001." For more information, please visit www.mam.org.

###

Image: Isaac Julien, *Cast No Shadow* (*Western Union: Small Boats Series No. 1*), 2007. Courtesy of Isaac Julien, Metro Pictures, New York.