

For immediate release: September 7, 2011

Four Newly Commissioned Video Installations by Aziz + Cucher To Premiere at Indianapolis Museum in April 2012

Works in Aziz + Cucher's exhibition Some People investigate the ongoing conflict in the Middle East through digital animation, performance, sound, and video documentation

INDIANAPOLIS, IN, September 7, 2011 — The Indianapolis Museum of Art will premiere four newly commissioned video installations by the collaborative team of Anthony Aziz and Sammy Cucher in April 2012 that reflect the artists' complex relationship with the political conflict in the Middle East. Developed by the artists following extensive research and travel to the region, the works in the exhibition explore the longstanding conflict between Arabs and Jews through digital animation, performance, sound, and video documentation. Marking twenty years of collaboration for the artists, *Aziz + Cucher: Some People* will be on view from April 13, 2012, through October 21, 2012, in the McCormack Forefront Galleries.

Aziz + Cucher have been profoundly affected by outbreaks of conflict in the Middle East—the result of contested land ownership, extreme nationalist and religious ideologies, and historical prejudices. This personal connection to the region stems from their familial and cultural roots in the Middle East—Cucher's entire family recently emigrated to Israel and his nephews serve in the Israeli army, while Aziz has cousins and extended family scattered across Lebanon—as well as the conflict's broader impact on the world today. The artists have distilled their findings into four video installations titled *The Time of the Empress*, *In Some Country Under a Sun and Some Clouds*, *Report from the Front*, and *By Aporia, Pure and Simple*.

"Aziz + Cucher's work speaks to the most pressing issues of our time," said Maxwell L. Anderson, The Melvin & Bren Simon Director and CEO of the IMA. "These commissions mark the first time Aziz + Cucher's work has addressed the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, providing detailed personal insight into a challenging subject with global resonance."

"Through these works, Aziz + Cucher seek to create a poetic and emotional space that brings together ancient tribal attachments to land with the realities of living in a contemporary age of global terror," said Lisa Freiman, senior curator and chair of the IMA's Department of Contemporary Art.

Until this series of works, Aziz + Cucher had kept the violent engagements between Israel and its Arab neighbors outside the realm of their artistic practice. However, the increasing conflict in the region and its hopeless display of destructive power affected both of their psyches in unexpected ways. After witnessing first-hand the terror of 9/11 in New York, as well as the subsequent barrage of images of violence unleashed by the catastrophic war in Iraq, they began to understand the 2006 war in Lebanon as emblematic of a cycle of tragic and absurd inevitability that continues today.

In 2009, Aziz + Cucher researched and traveled extensively in Israel, Palestine and Lebanon. Then during a residency in Berlin, the artists translated their thinking into four independent video installations:

- *The Time of the Empress* consists of three large projections of digitally animated architectural drawings in a constant cycle of construction and decay. These images are accompanied by a multi-channel sound environment in which female voices can be heard reflecting on the quotidian details of everyday life and the eternal and inevitable passage of

time. The title of this work refers to a passage from Marguerite Yourcenar's *Memoirs of Hadrian*.

- *In Some Country Under a Sun and Some Clouds* presents a series of six monumental figures, projected onto landscapes, and seemingly caught in a state of paralysis and indecision, endlessly repeating gestures that seem to prevent them from exiting history or entering some future and straddling the awkward divide between the comic and the tragic. For this work the artists collaborated with six dancers who perform a series of tasks and choreographed gestures recorded in front of a green screen and digitally inserted into biblical, timeless landscapes.
- *Report from the Front* is a single-channel video with soundtrack that turns an archeological excavation site into a potential battlefield whereby viewers are confronted with themes of land ownership, history, and the search for traces of belonging. This video uses documentary footage that depicts the ethnographic implications of archeological excavation from a distance, and without emotion. The forceful voice-over narration of an "archeological despot" adds a layer of humor preparing for the tragic and comical ending in the final video.
- *By Aporia, Pure and Simple* is a multi-channel video installation in which Aziz + Cucher appear in an absurdist, clownish performance that alludes to the daunting and seemingly futile task of engaging with existential questions as they piece together video footage from their travels for the exhibition. This is the first time that the artists appear in their work, suggesting Aziz + Cucher's intense personal identification with the topics addressed throughout the exhibition.

About the catalogue

The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully-illustrated 125-page catalogue with an essay by the curator, Lisa D. Freiman that will document this new body of work, elucidating it in relation to Aziz + Cucher's previous experiments in digital art, dating back to the early 1990s. The catalogue will also include an essay by Tami Katz-Freiman, who was until 2010 the Chief Curator at the Haifa Museum of Art in Israel; as well as a newly commissioned interview between Los Angeles-based art historian Richard Meyer and the artists, which focuses on the origins of their collaboration in San Francisco where they met as graduate students at the San Francisco Art Institute. The catalogue will be co-published by the IMA and Hatje Cantz, Germany.

About Aziz + Cucher

New York-based Anthony Aziz (American, b. 1961) and Sammy Cucher (Venezuelan, b. 1958) are widely recognized as pioneers in the field of digital imaging and have created an accomplished body of work over the past two decades. While *Some People* consists solely of video installations, Aziz + Cucher's body of work includes photography and sculpture. Their work has been widely exhibited internationally and they have been the subject of solo exhibitions at the Herzliya Museum of Art, Israel; Stiftelsen Art Center, Bergen, Norway; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid; the Photographer's Gallery, London; and the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City. In 1995, Aziz + Cucher represented Venezuela at the Venice Biennale.

Aziz + Cucher have participated in numerous group exhibitions, including exhibitions at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei, Taiwan; Hayward Gallery, London; International Center of Photography (ICP), New York; New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York; Rijksmuseum Twenthe, The Netherlands; List Visual Arts Center, M.I.T., Cambridge, Massachusetts; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; and Nationalgalerie, Berlin.

Works by Aziz + Cucher are held in permanent museum collections, including the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose; Musée de l'Elysée, Lausanne, Switzerland; MUSAC, Museum of Contemporary Art, Leon, Spain; Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid; Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago; National Gallery of Australia; Denver Museum of Art; and Galeria de Arte Nacional, Caracas, Venezuela.

Aziz + Cucher have received numerous awards, including the Ruttenberg Award from the Friends of Photography/Ansel Adams Center in San Francisco, as well as grants from the Pollock-Krasner Foundation, Etants Donnés/The French-American Fund for Contemporary Art, the New York Foundation for the Arts, Art Matters Inc. and Western States Art Federation/NEA.

About the Indianapolis Museum of Art

Encompassing 152 acres of gardens and grounds, the Indianapolis Museum of Art is among the 10 largest and 10 oldest encyclopedic art museums in the United States, and features significant collections of African, American, Asian, European and contemporary art, as well as a newly established collection of design arts. The IMA offers visitors an expansive view of arts and culture through its collection of more than 54,000 works of art that span 5,000 years of history from across the world's continents. The collections include paintings, sculpture, furniture and design objects, prints, drawings and photographs, as well as textiles and costumes.

Additionally, art, design, and nature are featured at 100 Acres: The Virginia B. Fairbanks Art & Nature Park and Oldfields–Lilly House & Gardens, an historic Country Place Era estate on the IMA grounds. Beyond the Indianapolis campus, in May 2011 the IMA opened to the public the recently acquired landmark Miller House and Garden in Columbus, Indiana. One of the country's most highly regarded examples of mid-century Modernist residences, Miller House was designed by Eero Saarinen, with interiors by Alexander Girard, and landscape design by Dan Kiley.

Recognizing the IMA's positive impact on its community, the Museum was named a recipient of the 2009 National Medal for Museum and Library Services – the nation's highest honor for museums and libraries. The IMA's commitment to free general admission, programming for schools and teachers, environmental leadership and online initiatives were among cited community contributions in the Museum's selection for the award.

Located at 4000 Michigan Road, the IMA and Lilly House are open Tuesday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Thursday and Friday, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.; and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. The IMA is closed Mondays and Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's days. For more information, call 317-923-1331 or visit www.imamuseum.org.

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