

# Isaac Julien's *Looking for Langston* at 30

A Film Screening and Roundtable Celebrating Queer Harlem  
in support of Harlem Renaissance 100

Wednesday 9 December 2020, 2:00–4:30 pm EST

with Isaac Julien, Jack Halberstam, Monica L. Miller, and John T. Reddick

Moderated by Ellie M. Hisama and Isaac Jean-François

An online event free and open to the public

Registration requested at <https://theforum.columbia.edu/langston>



Film Noir Angels, *Looking for Langston* © Isaac Julien

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**HARLEM**  
RENAISSANCE 100

African American and African Diaspora Studies Department    Center for Jazz Studies    Department of Music  
Institute for Research in African-American Studies    Institute for Research on Women, Gender, and Sexuality  
Society of Fellows/Heyman Center for the Humanities

Luscious images of interior intimacies coalesce with velvet black queer soundscapes in Isaac Julien's groundbreaking 1989 film *Looking for Langston*.



Part of Columbia University's contributions to the 2020 celebration of the centennial of the Harlem Renaissance is an online screening of Isaac Julien's landmark film alongside an interactive roundtable discussion with the director and speakers who have all engaged with Julien's aesthetic vision. This event honors the significance of the thirtieth anniversary of *Looking for Langston* in black studies, queer studies, and cultural studies, and will explore Julien's gorgeous meditation on the poetics of black queer life and the literary histories that have persisted into the present. This free public event joins the program for *Harlem Renaissance 100*, bringing to celebration a signal film and lively discussion that focuses on queer Harlem.





Credit: Isaac Julien, photo Thierry Bal

## Participant Biographies

**Isaac Julien CBE RA** is Distinguished Professor of the Arts at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Julien's work as a filmmaker and installation artist expands across aesthetic texts including his seminal *Looking for Langston* (1989), *Young Soul Rebels* (1991) and *True North* (2004). Julien's work is held in collections that include Tate, London; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Centre Pompidou, Paris; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington DC; the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York; Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris; the LUMA Foundation, Arles; the Kramlich Collection; the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art (Zeitz MOCAA), Cape Town.



**Jack Halberstam** is Professor of Gender Studies and English at Columbia University and Director of the Institute for Research on Women, Gender, and Sexuality. Halberstam is the author of eight books including *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* (Duke University Press, 1995), *Female Masculinity* (Duke University Press, 1998), *In A Queer Time and Place* (New York University Press, 2005), *The Queer Art of Failure* (Duke University Press, 2011), *Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender, and the End of Normal* (Beacon Press, 2012) and, a short book titled *Trans\*: A Quick and Quirky Account of Gender Variance* (University of California Press). Halberstam's latest book is titled *Wild Things: The Disorder of Desire* (Duke University Press, 2020).



**Ellie M. Hisama** is Professor of Music at Columbia University and is a member of the Executive Committee of the Institute for Research on Women, Gender, and Sexuality. Her research and teaching focus on the visual arts, public engagement, and the social and political dimensions of music. She is the author of *Gendering Musical Modernism: The Music of Ruth Crawford, Marion Bauer, and Miriam Gideon* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), which was named a Choice Outstanding Academic Title, and “‘Blackness in a white void’: Dissonance and Ambiguity in Isaac Julien’s Multi-Screen Film Installations” in *Rethinking Difference in Gender, Sexuality, and Popular Music* (Routledge, 2018). She has published essays on the music of Geri Allen, Joan Armatrading, David Bowie, The Cure, and Julius Eastman. She is Founding Director of the workshop *For the Daughters of Harlem: Working in Sound*, which brings students from local public schools to Columbia’s campus to create, record, and reflect upon their work in sound.



**Isaac Jean-François** is a doctoral student in the joint degree program with African American Studies and American Studies at Yale University. Jean-François’s research interests include black studies, phenomenology, psychoanalysis, queer theory, and sound studies. His article titled “Julius Eastman: The Sonority of Blackness Otherwise” was recently published in the journal *Current Musicology*.



**Monica L. Miller** is Professor of Africana Studies and English at Barnard College, Columbia University. A specialist in contemporary African American and Afro-diasporic literature and cultural studies, she is the author of the award-winning book *Slaves to Fashion: Black Dandyism and the Styling of Black Diasporic Identity*. A frequent commentator in the media and arts worlds, she teaches and writes about black literature, art, and performance, fashion cultures, and contemporary Black European culture and politics.



**John T. Reddick** is an architect and cultural historian based in Harlem, New York. He is an A'lelia Bundles Community Scholar at Columbia University and has engaged the public in various events around aesthetic traditions and architectural visions of New York's Harlem community. Reddick is a founding member of Harlem PRIDE and a member of the Harlem Cultural Collaborative.

Isaac Julien's *Looking for Langston* at 30: A Celebration of Queer Harlem is presented by The Forum at Columbia University in collaboration with the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Advancement; Columbia Neighbors; Harlem Cultural Collaborative; the Center for Jazz Studies; the African American and African Diaspora Studies Department; the Department of Music; the Institute for Research in African American Studies; the Institute for Research on Women, Gender, and Sexuality; and the Society of Fellows and Heyman Center for the Humanities.

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### **Event Coordinator**

Isaac Jean-François

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### **Booklet Designer**

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## **Acknowledgments**

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*In memoriam Marcellus Blount, 1960-2018*  
*With love and appreciation*

