## Hit Azoulay

## Mere Things

This exhibition offers a window into the work of Ilit Azoulay (born in Jaffa, Israel, 1972; based in Berlin), spanning the past fourteen years. Initially trained as a photographer, the artist has developed a multimedia practice that remains deeply rooted in her primary medium. Using photo-editing programs, Azoulay combines new and existing photographs to create composite images. While some of these digitally composed images represent plausibly real spaces and events, others use digital fragmentation and stitching to create fantastic new things.

The subjects of Azoulay's work, as the exhibition's title suggests, are objects. Many are ordinary items that might go unnoticed: apple seeds and metal washers, cast-off clothing and light switches. Others trail history: a gargoyle from the facade of a medieval church, a prized archaeological find. Azoulay treats each of these sundry things as equally important, an act of subversive leveling. Deep research into the history, physical qualities, and cultural significance of the objects she documents is intrinsic to her way of working. The extent of this attention and the forms it takes are likewise reminiscent of archives and museums.

Such institutions care for objects with the understanding that they have worth because they can confer knowledge or pleasure. Azoulay's work reveals the idiosyncrasies of their operations, suggesting that both what we know and what we see as valuable are contingent.

Contingency is inherent in narrative, which by necessity includes or emphasizes some aspects of reality rather than others to help us make sense of the world. The works in this exhibition highlight the centrality of narrative and storytelling in Azoulay's practice. A belt is a symbol of a faraway grandmother's embrace; a latticed concrete wall is revealed as the site of a colony of parasitic ants. Other objects are cast in new roles: a pebble becomes a boulder; the handle of an ewer, the scepter of a queen. These shifting perspectives prompt us to consider the particularities of our own spatial, cultural, and historical positions. Audio elements, texts, and images—with scale and placement carefully manipulated—help draw out these stories and create new ones, as objects migrate spryly across space and time. Rich in myriad meanings and possibilities, these objects are never "mere things."

Shira Backer
Leon Levy Associate Curator

Unless otherwise noted, all works are by Ilit Azoulay.

Nonflash, noncommercial photography for personal use is permitted in this exhibition.

Follow @TheJewishMuseum and share your photos using #IlitAzoulay.

Follow the artist @IlitAzoulay.