

## FIRST U.S. SOLO ILIT AZOULAY EXHIBITION TO OPEN AT THE JEWISH MUSEUM SEPTEMBER 13

Jewish Museum

***Ilit Azoulay: Mere Things* to Feature Works from 2010 to Present Including *Queendom* from 2022 Venice Biennale and New Work Based on the Jewish Museum's Collections**

New York, NY, August 14, 2024—The Jewish Museum will present *Ilit Azoulay: Mere Things*, the first U.S. solo museum exhibition dedicated to the work of interdisciplinary artist Ilit Azoulay (Israeli, b. 1972; lives and works in Berlin), from September 13, 2024, through January 5, 2025. The exhibition features selections of Azoulay's work from 2010 to the present, showcasing large scale digital photocollages of archival objects that explore how images and objects transmit knowledge, shape memory, and support or undermine historical narratives. The presentation includes a new work that responds to the collections and context of the Jewish Museum, as well as selections from the series *Queendom* (2022), first presented as part of Azoulay's solo exhibition for the Israeli Pavilion at the 59<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale in 2022.

The works on view combine photomontage with sculptural and sound elements to magnify different aspects of object histories and introduce imaginative frameworks that expose the ways in which objects can embody multiple and shifting meanings. Advancing the Jewish Museum's role as a beacon for the Jewish community and a place to explore universal values, the exhibition encourages viewers to recognize one another's humanity by reconsidering how we perceive each other's stories.

Initially trained in photography, Azoulay's research-based practice explores the central role photography plays in archives and the idiosyncrasies of institutional systems created to preserve and produce knowledge. As an outgrowth of this practice, Azoulay created a new work, *Unity Totem* (2024), for the exhibition, mining the Jewish Museum's collection for ritual objects such as Torah finials and amulets. Mostly created by Jewish communities throughout the Arab world, including in the artist's familial homeland of Morocco, the objects in the photographs are suspended from a green hat that smokes like a cone of incense, spinning as they propel new spiritual energy outward into the world.

The series *Queendom* (2022) evolved similarly from a collection of photographs from the L. A. Mayer Museum of Islamic Art in Jerusalem. Working digitally with analog photographs by David Storm Rice (1913–1962), an Austrian-British and Jewish art historian and archaeologist, Azoulay isolated motifs and components in images of medieval Islamic metal vessels. She then spliced them into startling new forms that draw on the spirit of the original objects while opening up feminist reimaginings of male-dominated myths. By demonstrating the varied lives a single object can lead, Azoulay allows the viewer to consider how images and objects are positioned to support certain views of history and reality and to hide or discredit others. Selections from the series will be shown in the exhibition.

Another installation that reflects on how institutions broker the transmission of knowledge, *Shifting Degrees of Certainty* (2014) consists of photographs of 85 objects from historical sites in Germany undergoing preservation or reconstruction. These objects are nestled tightly together, creating equivalencies—sometimes poetic and sometimes comic in effect—with other objects as varied as a stuffed parrot and an imperial throne. In an accompanying audio component, a narrator highlights aspects of each object's history that differ from what historians and curators might deem important, asking visitors to confront how society preserves and interprets the past.

Additionally on view are selections from *No Thing Dies* (2017), a large-scale digital collage series commissioned for the Israel Museum in Jerusalem that combines photographs of rarely seen collection objects and spaces inside the Museum, and *Tree For Too One* (2010), a photo collage of found objects from the walls of a condemned house in south Tel Aviv.

The mounting of Azoulay's first solo exhibition in the U.S. builds on the Jewish Museum's ongoing practice of exploring contemporary art in real time, providing a platform for each emerging generation of artists. Dating back to the 1960s, when the Museum hosted the first solo exhibitions of path-breaking artists like Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg, the Museum has organized major solo exhibitions of such influential artists as Louise Bourgeois, Eva Hesse, Louise Nevelson, Man Ray, Ad Reinhardt, Martha Rosler, and Art Spiegelman.

*Ilit Azoulay: Mere Things* is organized by Shira Backer, Leon Levy Associate Curator, The Jewish Museum. Programming for the exhibition includes a conversation with Ilit Azoulay and curator Shira Backer on Thursday, September 12, and artmaking workshops for adults. Details to follow.

*Ilit Azoulay: Mere Things* is made possible by Bil Ehrlich and Ruth Lloyds, Jack and Judy Stern, and other generous donors, together with the Barbara S. Horowitz Contemporary Art Fund and the Melva Bucksbaum Fund for Contemporary Art.

### Artist Bio

Ilit Azoulay (b. 1972, Tel Aviv) lives and works in Berlin. She holds a BFA (1998) and MFA (2010) from the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design, Jerusalem. Her work has been exhibited in galleries and museums including solo exhibitions at Blue Rider Gallery (2019, Tai Pei), Center for Contemporary Art Tel Aviv (2019), The Israel Museum (2017, Jerusalem), Braverman Gallery (2013, Tel-Aviv), Kunst Werke (2014, Berlin), Herzliya Museum of Contemporary Art (2014, Herzliya), and Andrea Meislin Gallery (2011, 2013, New York). Azoulay represented the Israeli Pavilion at the 59th Venice Art Biennale (2022) with her project *Queendom*. The artist has taken part in group exhibitions in galleries and museums such as Moskowitz Bayse Gallery, LA (2022), Kunsthaus Zürich (2022), Eretz Israel Museum, Tel-Aviv (2021), BPS22, Charleroi (2020), Daimler



Contemporary, Berlin (2020), PLATO Ostrava, Ostrava (2020), Hangar Art Center, Brussels (2019), Bauhaus Dessau (2019), Ashdod Art Museum (2019), The Israel Museum (2017, 2011, Jerusalem), Pinakothek der Moderne (2016, Munich), The Museum of Modern Art (2015, New York), Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris (2015, Paris), Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (2015, Melbourne), Braverman Gallery (2013, Tel-Aviv), Andrea Meislin Gallery (2013, New York), and Daimler Art Collection (2012, Berlin) among others. Her works appear in numerous museum and private collections including The Museum of Modern Art in New York and Centre Pompidou Paris.

#### **About the Jewish Museum**

The Jewish Museum is an art museum committed to illuminating the complexity and vibrancy of Jewish culture for a global audience. Located on New York City's famed Museum Mile, in the landmarked Warburg mansion, the Jewish Museum was the first institution of its kind in the United States and is one of the oldest Jewish museums in the world. The Museum offers diverse exhibitions and programs and maintains a unique collection of nearly 30,000 works of art, ceremonial objects, and media reflecting the global Jewish experience over more than 4,000 years. The public may call 212.423.3200 or visit [TheJewishMuseum.org](http://TheJewishMuseum.org) for more information.

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#### **Press contact:**

Daniela Stigh, 212.423.3330 or [dstigh@thejm.org](mailto:dstigh@thejm.org)

