

Acclaimed Fashion Designer Isaac Mizrahi Focus of Major Exhibition

Jewish Museum

New York, NY – The Jewish Museum presents the first exhibition focused on Isaac Mizrahi, the influential American fashion designer, artist, and entrepreneur, from March 18 to August 7, 2016. Through over 250 works, including clothing and costume designs, sketches, photographs, and an immersive video installation, this survey exhibition explores Mizrahi's unique position at the intersection of high style and popular culture. While best known for his work in fashion, Mizrahi's creativity has expanded over a three decade career to embrace acting, directing, set and costume design, writing, and cabaret performance. Beginning with his first collection in 1987 and running through the present day, *Isaac Mizrahi: An Unruly History* weaves together the many threads of Mizrahi's prolific output, juxtaposing work in fashion, film, television, and the performing arts.

Isaac Mizrahi's inventive and provocative style brings complex issues into the arena of fashion, igniting a spirited discourse about high versus low, modern glamour, and contemporary culture. His runway shows were cast with unconventionally beautiful models of all ethnicities, dressed in Star of David belts, Western wear-infused lace, Adidas sneakers in place of high heels, handbags worn as hats, or a humble cotton T-shirt paired with a taffeta ball gown skirt. Uniting opposites is a Mizrahi signature, which can be seen in his many combinations of evening and sportswear, formal and casual, couture and mass market. Mizrahi's outsized personality, charm, and innate sense of timing have made him a beloved figure, appearing in living rooms across the country through numerous film and television cameos, as a judge on *Project Runway All Stars*, and on his current show on the QVC network *Isaac Mizrahi Live!*.

Organized thematically, *Isaac Mizrahi: An Unruly History* explores key trends in Mizrahi's work—from the use of color and prints to his witty designs that touch on issues of race, religion, class, and politics. The core of the exhibition features iconic designs from the Isaac Mizrahi New York clothing label (1987–98), the "semi-couture" collections (2003–11), and his trailblazing line for Target (2002–8). It comprises over 40 "looks" that exemplify Mizrahi's colorful palette, experimental approaches to material, and irreverent use of cultural commentary and pop culture references. A selection of hats, jewelry, shoes, and accessories will also be on view.

Highlights include *Ball Gown Sport* (1994), which pairs a lavish ball gown skirt, complete with crinoline and bustle, with a cotton T-shirt; *Swirl* (1990), a collaboration with artist Maira Kalman inspired by Henri Matisse's hand-painted costumes for the Ballets Russes; *Desert Storm* (1991), a camouflage-printed halter dress created in response to the

1990 Persian Gulf War; *Exploded Tulip* (1992), which pays homage to the photographer Irving Penn's Flowers series; *High and Low* (2004), which pairs a Target sweater with luxurious hand-beaded lace pants re-embroidered in cashmere; and *Grand Pupa* (2009), a hand-painted dress that draws inspiration from the insect kingdom.

A dramatic installation of 12 costumes for theater, opera, and dance explores Mizrahi's wide-ranging work in performing arts—including the Mark Morris Dance Group, the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, the American Ballet Theatre, and the 2001 Broadway production of *The Women* at the Roundabout Theatre.

Mizrahi has also created three new made-to-order coats for the exhibition. Each is a variation on the same shape: *Daisy* presents a new take on a print for which the designer is known, rendered in hand-embroidered sequins; *Dropcloth* juxtaposes his two favorite fabrics, painter's canvas and wool felt; and *Bubble* is composed of a complex layering of delicate fabrics "quilted" together to create an ethereal yet structured coat.

A gallery filled with over 100 sketches from throughout Mizrahi's career provides unique insight into the designer's work. Sketching is fundamental to Mizrahi's design process, and fabric swatches are often attached to the images, adding texture and dimension to the artfully rendered compositions. A full set of preparatory drawings act as a storyboard for Mizrahi's fall 1992 collection, shedding light on his use of sketches in preparation for a runway show. Also on view will be a selection of photographer Nick Waplington's behind-the-scenes images of Isaac Mizrahi at work in the studio and on the runway taken between 1989 and 1993.

The exhibition will conclude with a three-screen, immersive video installation showcasing content drawn from archival footage of Mizrahi's runway shows; the award-winning documentary *Unzipped*; the television program *The Isaac Mizrahi Show*; scenes from his cabaret, *LES MIZrahi*; excerpts from numerous screen and stage appearances; and his work on *Project Runway All Stars* and *Isaac Mizrahi Live!* Classic moments from the myriad films and television shows that have inspired the designer and enriched his world view, including *La Dolce Vita*, *The Lone Ranger*, Woody Allen's *Celebrity*, *Dinner at Eight*, and more, are interspersed throughout the piece.

Isaac Mizrahi: An Unruly History is organized by Chee Pearlman, Guest Curator, with Kelly Taxter, Assistant Curator, the Jewish Museum. The exhibition was designed by Galia Solomonoff and Talene Montgomery of SAS/Solomonoff Architecture Studio. The exhibition graphics and catalogue were designed by J. Abbott Miller and his team at Pentagram.

Join the conversation on social media with **#IsaacMizrahi**.



About Isaac Mizrahi

Isaac Mizrahi was born in 1961 in Brooklyn, New York. Raised in a Jewish family, he attended the Yeshiva of Flatbush before transferring to New York City's High School for the Performing Arts and then Parsons School of Design. He entered the New York fashion scene in the late 1980s; his clothing line, Isaac Mizrahi New York, debuted at Bergdorf Goodman in 1986. In 1989 he received the Perry Ellis Award for Emerging Talent and was named Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA) Womenswear Designer of the Year, an award he won again in 1991. *Unzipped*, a riotous, witty, and insightful documentary about the making of his fall 1994 collection, earned Mizrahi and the director, Douglas Kieve, the 1995 Audience Award at the Sundance Film Festival. When his fashion house closed in 1998, Mizrahi followed other passions in theater and dance, designing costumes and sets for Mark Morris and Twyla Tharp and winning a 2002 Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Costume Design for a Broadway revival of Clare Boothe Luce's *The Women*. In 2003 he was the first fashion designer to launch a line of well-designed, affordable clothes in collaboration with Target.

Today he stars in *Isaac Mizrahi Live!*, a call-in home-shopping TV show that airs weekly on the QVC network. He also appears as a judge on *Project Runway All Stars*. Mizrahi has directed and narrated "Peter and the Wolf" at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, directed and designed "The Magic Flute" and "A Little Night Music" for the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, and worked the red carpet at the Oscars and Golden Globe Awards. He is currently at work on a television series and memoir.

About Chee Pearlman

Chee Pearlman is the director of Chee Company, Inc., a New York-based consultancy that creates books, conferences, exhibitions, and awards programs. Her career began in publishing as Editor-in-Chief of *I.D. Magazine*, a design publication, where she was honored with five National Magazine Awards. As a journalist, Chee has written for *The New York Times*, *Newsweek*, *Domus*, *Wired*, *Travel + Leisure*, and *Architects Newspaper*. She is editor of "Spectacle" (Phaidon), with David Rockwell and Bruce Mau, among many other books, and the curator of the acclaimed exhibition "The Voting Booth Project: Where Design and Democracy Collide," at The New School during the 2004 political campaign. Chee is a guest curator for the TED conference, bringing designers and architects to the TED stage. Chee served as Program Director for the Art Center Design Conference from 2004-2008, directing a series of groundbreaking international conferences. She is the founding curator of the Curry Stone Design Prize, an international \$100,000 award that recognizes designers creating social impact solutions, and was the founder and co-director of the Chrysler Design Prize for its 10-year duration, from 1993-2003. She is the recipient of a 2011 Loeb Fellowship at Harvard Graduate School of Design.



Exhibition Catalogue

In conjunction with the exhibition, the Jewish Museum and Yale University Press are publishing a 236-page catalogue by Chee Pearlman. The first publication focused on the work of Isaac Mizrahi, this lavishly illustrated book features essays on Mizrahi's place in fashion history, his close connection to contemporary art, and the performative nature of his life and work by fashion writer and *Vogue* contributor Lynn Yaeger, fashion theorist Ulrich Lehmann, and Jewish Museum Assistant Curator Kelly Taxter. Chee Pearlman's introductory interview with Isaac Mizrahi offers an intimate perspective on his life and work. Featuring over 200 color illustrations, the hardcover book will be available worldwide and at the Jewish Museum's Cooper Shop for \$50.00.

Audio Guide

Produced by the Jewish Museum in association with Acoustiguide, the random access audio guide for *Isaac Mizrahi: An Unruly History* features an introduction by Claudia Gould, Helen Goldsmith Menschel Director of the Jewish Museum, with commentary by Isaac Mizrahi, Guest Curator Chee Pearlman, Assistant Curator Kelly Taxter, fashion writer Amy Fine Collins, and choreographer Mark Morris. The audio tour will be available to museum visitors for \$5.00, and as a free downloadable app for iOS and Android.

Isaac Mizrahi: An Unruly History is accompanied by a series of public programs, including film screenings, gallery talks, panel discussions, and more. Programs take place at the Jewish Museum unless otherwise noted. Highlights include:

Dialogue and Discourse: Isaac Mizrahi and Wendy Goodman

The Gertrude and David Fogelson Lecture

Thursday, April 7, 6:30pm

Isaac Mizrahi speaks with Wendy Goodman, Design Editor of *New York Magazine*.

Tickets: \$15 general public; \$12 students and seniors; \$10 Jewish Museum members

Screening: *Unzipped* at Film Forum

The Saul and Harriet M. Rothkopf Media Program

Sunday, April 10, 8pm – at Film Forum, 209 West Houston Street, Manhattan

Acclaimed documentary *Unzipped* (1995, 73 min, 35mm), directed by Douglas Keeve, and executive produced by Nina Santisi, captures Isaac Mizrahi as he developed his fall 1994 runway show. The screening will be followed by a special appearance and Q&A with Isaac Mizrahi. This program has been funded by a generous donation endowment from the Saul and Harriet M. Rothkopf Family Foundation.

Tickets: \$14



Dialogue and Discourse: Isaac Mizrahi and Mark Morris

Tuesday, May 24, 6:30pm

Isaac Mizrahi speaks with his frequent collaborator and friend, innovative choreographer Mark Morris.

Tickets: \$15 general public; \$12 students and seniors; \$10 Jewish Museum members

Support

Isaac Mizrahi: An Unruly History is made possible by the Wilf Family Foundation, The Coby Foundation, Ltd., Xcel Brands, the May and Samuel Rudin Family Foundation, Inc., and Target.

Endowment support is provided by The Peter Jay Sharp Exhibition Fund, The Skirball Fund for American Jewish Life Exhibitions, the Barbara S. Horowitz Contemporary Art Fund, and the Joan Rosenbaum Exhibition Fund.

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The audio guide is produced in association with Acoustiguide and made possible by Bloomberg Philanthropies.

About the Jewish Museum

Located on Museum Mile at Fifth Avenue and 92nd Street, the Jewish Museum is one of the world's preeminent institutions devoted to exploring art and Jewish culture from ancient to contemporary, offering intellectually engaging, educational, and provocative exhibitions and programs for people of all ages and backgrounds. The



Museum was established in 1904, when Judge Mayer Sulzberger donated 26 ceremonial objects to The Jewish Theological Seminary as the core of a museum collection. Today, the Museum maintains a collection of over 30,000 works of art, artifacts, and broadcast media reflecting global Jewish identity, and presents a diverse schedule of internationally acclaimed temporary exhibitions.

The Jewish Museum is located at 1109 Fifth Avenue at 92nd Street, New York City. Museum hours are Saturday, Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, 11am to 5:45pm; Thursday, 11am to 8pm; and Friday, 11am to 4pm. Museum admission is \$15.00 for adults, \$12.00 for senior citizens, \$7.50 for students, free for visitors 18 and under and Jewish Museum members. Admission is Pay What You Wish on Thursdays from 5pm to 8pm and free on Saturdays. For information on the Jewish Museum, the public may call 212.423.3200 or visit the website at TheJewishMuseum.org.

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Press contacts:

Molly Kurzius
The Jewish Museum
212.423.3240 or mkurzius@thejm.org

Andrea Schwan
Andrea Schwan Inc.
917.371.5023 or andrea@andreaschwan.com

