

RUTH PATIR'S (M)OTHERLAND, COMMISSIONED FOR THE ISRAEL PAVILION AT THE 2024 VENICE BIENNALE, ACQUIRED BY THE JEWISH MUSEUM

Reflecting the Museum's commitment to contemporary art that resonates with universal themes, Patir's five-part video demonstrates the power of activism through art responding to issues of our times



Ruth Patir, *Intake*, 2024, video still, courtesy of the artist and Braverman Gallery, Tel Aviv.

New York, NY, December 2, 2024 – The Jewish Museum announced today that it is acquiring *(M)otherland*, a video installation by Ruth Patir originally created for the Israel Pavilion at the 2024 Venice Biennale. Comprising a series of videos featuring digitally animated Iron Age fertility goddesses, the work brings together ancient archaeology and advanced imaging technologies to reflect on the complex intersection of gender, motherhood, and the tensions surrounding fertility and reproductive rights in today's world. The work will premiere at the Tel Aviv Museum in March 2025 and will go on view at the Jewish Museum following the reinstallation of its collection galleries, currently in progress as part of a broader reinvention of the Museum's third and fourth floors slated for completion in the fall of 2025.

Originally conceived for and installed in the Israel Pavilion for the 2024 Venice Biennale, *(M)otherland* did not open to the public following the decision of the artist and the exhibition curators (Mira Lapidot and Tamar Margalit) in the days before the Biennale opening to keep the exhibition closed until a ceasefire was reached in the ongoing war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza and a hostage release agreement was reached.

"With this acquisition, we are honored to bring Ruth Patir's powerful and poignant work to U.S. audiences, underscoring our commitment to collecting and showcasing work that invites dialogue and reflects on universal issues that demonstrate our shared humanity," said **James S. Snyder, Helen Goldsmith Menschel Director**. "We are deeply grateful to the generous donors who have made this important acquisition possible, recognizing Ruth's exemplary

demonstration of cultural engagement and cultural activism, both through her work's theme and her decision-making at the time of the Biennale."

The work's original four videos—*Petah Tikva (Waiting)*, *Intake*, *Retrieval Stories*, and *(M)otherland*—document Patir's personal experience after a gene mutation diagnosis and subsequent fertility treatment and the challenges of navigating a male-dominated medical establishment. Based on recordings of conversations between the artist and her doctors, mother, and friends, and an imaginary online audience, the videos feature 3D animations of ancient female figurines—based on Iron Age artifacts (dating from 800–600 BCE) excavated across the eastern Mediterranean region whose true purpose and meaning are unknown, but which have commonly been identified as fertility amulets—deployed by Patir, often humorously, as stand-ins for herself and the women in her circle. Patir reflects on how, following her diagnosis, she faced pressure to pursue IVF treatment, which in Israel has long been state-funded to promote demographic growth, and how she experienced a growing ambivalence and even resentment about state interference in a deeply personal decision.

"I was overwhelmed to see how state politics is exposed in these fertility clinics, in how the womb feels like a technological instrument. Being there I felt like a vessel, and documenting my experience felt like the only thing to do," said Patir. "Of course, in most countries, these procedures are very expensive and therefore reserved to a certain privileged class, but in Israel they are subsidized and extremely encouraged."

The fifth video, *Keening*, which was created after the events of October 7, 2023, in the south of Israel, features these same figurines alongside thousands of fragments housed in museum storage, coming to life in a processional march, taking part in a shared public expression of sorrow and rage, demonstrating the poignancy of collective mourning and of women's communal power.

Together, these videos provide a meaningful exploration of the ways in which personal decisions are shaped by societal constructs and intersect with broader national and global political realities. By spotlighting deeply private moments of vulnerability, Patir creates a narrative that addresses far-reaching issues relating to the fallibility of the human body, the medical establishment, and political and societal concerns and evokes the universality of human experience.

The acquisition of *(M)otherland* comes at a pivotal moment for the Jewish Museum as it reshapes its collection narratives relating to the complexities of these times and embarks on a major renewal of its third and fourth floor galleries. Opening in the fall of 2025, this project reflects a new vision for using the Museum's collections to tell stories about the vibrancy and complexity of Jewish culture across 3,500 years while also engaging with its collections for teaching and learning as a central priority.

About Ruth Patir

Ruth Patir is a new media artist who fuses documentary storytelling with computer-generated imagery in a quest to expand the borders of realism. Her work is often grounded in her own biography and gradually expands to address



larger societal issues, such as the politics of gender, technology, and the hidden mechanisms of power.

Patir received her MFA from Columbia University, New York (2015) and her BFA from the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, Jerusalem (2011). Solo exhibitions of her work were presented at CCA Tel Aviv-Yafo (*My Father in the Cloud*, 2022); OnCurating Projects, Zurich (*M/otherland*, 2021); and Hamidrasha Gallery, Tel Aviv (*Love Letters to Ruth*, 2018). She has also participated in numerous group exhibitions, in such venues as: the 14th Gwangju Biennale; and the Center for Contemporary Art (CCA) Tel Aviv-Yafo; Danspace Project, New York; Petach Tikva Museum of Art, Israel. Screenings of her work have been presented at The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Jerusalem Film Festival; Anthology Film Archive, New York; and more. Patir's work is in public collections including Centre Pompidou, Paris; Tel Aviv Museum of Art; The Israel Museum, Jerusalem; and Kadist Foundation, 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 for more information.

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