

**Alex Israel's *Self-Portrait (Mom)*
Created for the Series *Using Walls, Floors, and Ceilings*
Bringing New Work to the Jewish Museum Lobby**

New York, NY – As the latest iteration of the series *Using Walls, Floors, and Ceilings*, which brings contemporary art to the Jewish Museum's Skirball Lobby; a new work by Los Angeles-based artist Alex Israel will be on view from November 4, 2016 through April 23, 2017.

Self-Portrait (Mom) (2016) is a painting of the artist's mother made within an outsize silhouette of his head in profile. It was executed in the traditional Hollywood scenic style, a combination of airbrush and brushwork. Israel's *Self-Portrait* first appeared in 2012 as the logo for his online talk show *AS IT LAYS*, and subsequently as a series of color studies on fiberglass panels.

As the *Self-Portraits* have evolved, Israel began to depict scenes and symbols fundamental to picturing Los Angeles: the Dodgers baseball team, a palm tree, a director's chair. The artist enacts a not-so-subtle branding by intertwining his own image with those of his hometown, echoing the silhouette of a big apple filled in with New York City's most iconic buildings.

Through his artwork, as well as his entertainment and commercial enterprises such as the talk show *AS IT LAYS*, the forthcoming feature film *SPF-18*, and a line of sunglasses called Freeway, Israel investigates the notion of the American Dream: the idea that anyone from anywhere, with a combination of hard work and luck, can rise from a Nobody to a Somebody. This concept is alive and well in Los Angeles, where countless flock to become a star. *Self-Portrait (Mom)* shows the artist's mother standing on a beach, a timelessly elegant and confident woman comfortable with her place in the world. It echoes the all-American, aspirational advertisements of Ralph Lauren (born Ralph Lifshitz in the Bronx). The success of Jews in the New York garment industry is an example of the American Dream that preoccupies the imagination of Israel, who is also of Jewish descent.

The Warner Brothers film studios were also founded by Jewish immigrants. And it is on the Warner Brothers studio backlot, within the scenic art department's workshop, that Israel makes his work. Backdrop painters have largely become unemployed as a result of digital printing, and now Israel is the department's biggest client. Their talents make the fakeness of Hollywood feel real, and the shared willingness — and sometimes need — to believe in artifice is essential to Israel's art. He manipulates the Hollywood machine to fabricate his own legend, and *Self-Portrait (Mom)* raises his mother from an unknown to a glossy icon. It is also a double portrait, a story of mother and child, of bringing the artist into the world and fostering his talents.

About the series

Using Walls, Floors, and Ceilings showcases newly commissioned, contemporary art in the Skirball Lobby. The series builds on the Museum's 1970 exhibition *Using Walls*, which featured commissioned works installed both within and beyond the Warburg Mansion, by artists such as Richard Artschwager, Sol LeWitt, Richard Tuttle, and others. Nearly 45 years later, the Museum revisits this moment in its history by showcasing new work by emerging artists from around the world. Since its launch in 2013, the series

has featured artists including Claire Fontaine, Willem de Rooij, Chantal Joffe, Valeska Soares, and Beatriz Milhazes.

The *Using Walls, Floors, and Ceilings* series is organized by Kelly Taxter, Associate Curator.

About Alex Israel

Alex Israel was born in 1982 in Los Angeles, California, where he continues to live and work. He received a BA from Yale University, and an MFA from the USC Roski School of Fine Arts. Selected solo exhibitions include *#AlexIsrael*, Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo, Norway (2016); *Sightings*, The Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas (2015); *Alex Israel at the Huntington*, The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens, San Marino, California (2015); *Alex Israel*, Le Consortium, Dijon (2013). His work is in the collections of The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; Centre Pompidou, Paris; and the Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Israel is one of 42 artists included in the Jewish Museum's current exhibition *Take Me (I'm Yours)*.

Support

Using Walls, Floors, and Ceilings: Alex Israel is made possible by the generous support of Wendy Fisher.

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. Visitors can now also enjoy Russ & Daughters at the Jewish Museum, a kosher sit-down restaurant and take-out appetizing counter on the Museum's lower level.

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.

#

10/26/16

Press contacts:

Anne Scher and Alex Wittenberg

The Jewish Museum

212.423.3271

ascher@thejm.org

awittenberg@thejm.org

pressoffice@thejm.org (general inquiries)

