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Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan Announces *UNMASKED* Gallery Art Exhibit March 17 through June 5

Eight international multidisciplinary artists approach the concept of masking unique to culture, identity, social media, and the pandemic

New York, NY (March 3, 2022) – The Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan (MMJCCM) announces *UNMASKED*, a multidisciplinary art exhibit about the concept of masks related to culture and identity. The group exhibit, curated by **MMJCCM Director of the Lambert Center for Arts + Ideas Udi Urman**, features photography, painting, ceramic, and video installations by international artists **Guy Aon, Elinor Carucci, Omri Goren, Marie Hudelot, Iddo Markus, Michal Pollak, Gideon Rubin, and Julie Weitz**. *UNMASKED* will be on display in The Laurie M. Tisch Gallery at the MMJCCM from March 17 through June 5, 2022, and is free and open to the public.

“When I began thinking about this exhibition, the idea of being mask-free was nothing but a dream, a fantasy for better days,” shares **Udi Urman, Exhibit Curator and MMJCCM Director of the Lambert Center for Arts + Ideas**. “Almost eight months later, and just a couple of weeks before the opening of *UNMASKED*, New York has dropped the mask mandate. Although this exhibit is less about our relationships with N95s, it does draw attention to the ways in which we select to reveal or conceal ourselves. So, after a period of prolonged isolation and hibernation, I am personally grateful to our community for reconnecting with us through the work of these artists.”

Urman continues, “*UNMASKED* is a group exhibit of artists from three different continents, from cultural hubs including London, Paris, Tel Aviv, Haifa, New York, and Los Angeles. The exhibition showcases an array of styles and media, but is thread together by asking the question: ‘What happens when we mask ourselves? What happens when we un-mask?’ The selected artists answer these questions uniquely, often with humor, by exploring their own identities and the ways in which we come to know ourselves through technology and through one another.”

UNMASKED explores the ancient, paradoxical relationship between artists and masks. The eight artists featured in the exhibit approach the concept of masking in ways unique to their culture and identity. The historical context of masks will also be explored in this exhibit. Masks have been used throughout human history, intertwining traditions and collective identities, including during the Middle Ages when Jewish communities began celebrating Purim by wearing masks. In more

abstract ways, Jewish people have often worn “masks” and disguised their identities, by changing their last names or physical appearances to avoid life-threatening antisemitism.

The use of masks in contemporary society will also be explored: masks have evolved from physical objects into digital filters flooding social media platforms. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, masks have become a major part of everyday life, saving lives and helping keep communities safe. They have also become a political symbol, bringing to the surface deep social tensions.

UNMASKED will open on Thursday, March 17, and the Opening Night party at 6:30 pm will celebrate Purim with a stilt walker and hamentashen. **UNMASKED** is free and open to the public during JCC building hours. For more details, please visit mmjccm.org/current-exhibit.

Gallery exhibits and programs are made possible with the generous support of the Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Fund. Additional support is provided by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council and the generosity of individual donors.

All individuals aged 5 and up must be fully vaccinated to attend JCC programs. Individuals 12 and older are required to show proof of full vaccination (via NYS Excelsior Pass, NYC COVID Safe app, or vaccination card) each time entering the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan and JCC Harlem.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Guy Aoni's work has been presented in five solo exhibitions and nine group exhibitions; he is a gallery artist at Rosenfeld Gallery; and his latest performance work “Wearing Photography,” was presented at the Jerusalem Art Conference at the Van Leer Institute (2019), the Holon Museum of Design (2020), and at the Edmond de Rothschild Foundation (2020). Aoni holds a BFA from the Bezalel Art and Design Academy in Jerusalem (2014), he completed an exchange program at the Mixed Media Department at The Slade School of Fine Art in London (2013), and holds a Masters in Design at Bezalel (2019).

Elinor Carucci was born in Jerusalem and lives in New York. She graduated from Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design with a degree in photography, and her work has been included in exhibitions worldwide. Solo shows: Edwynn Houk Gallery, Fifty One Fine Art Gallery, James Hyman, and Gagosian Gallery, London. Group shows include The Museum of Modern Art New York and The Photographers' Gallery, London. Her photographs are included in the collections of The MoMa, the Brooklyn Museum of Art, Houston Museum of Fine Art, among others, and her work has appeared in *The New York Times Magazine*, *The New Yorker*, *Details*, *New York Magazine*, *W*, *Aperture*, and *ARTnews*. Awards: International Center of Photography Infinity Award for Young Photographer, The Guggenheim Fellowship, and NYFA Fellowship. Carucci has published four monographs: *Closer*, *Diary of a Dancer*, *MOTHER*, and *Midlife*. She teaches at the graduate program of Photography and Related Media at School of Visual Arts and is represented by Edwynn Houk Gallery.

Omri Goren is a fashion and jewelry label, as well as an academic and teacher. In 2013, he received his doctorate from the Sorbonne in Paris, and currently teaches at the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design in Jerusalem and the WIZO Haifa Academy of Design. Goren graduated with high honors from the department of Jewelry and Fashion Design. He worked in Paris for several years as the head designer at a company which produced a line of evening wear. Goren returned

to Israel in order to focus his attention on fashion and jewelry, where he designs and produces elements made out of porcelain and metal.

After studying film in Montpellier, **Marie Hudelot** took a course in photography and multimedia at the University of Paris 8, and then obtained a Masters in 2006. Hudelot has worked with numerous designers, artists, and news agencies, as well as advertising commissions. A finalist for many prizes like the HSBC Photography Prize in 2015, her personal work is published in the international press, has been presented in galleries, including the Cent Quatre Paris, the corridors of the RATP, as well as European festivals. Hudelot continues to collaborate with Festival Circulations that produced a memory game in limited edition, and is currently working on the publication of a monograph based on her first trilogy about identity.

Iddo Markus, born in Boston, and living in Haifa, is a multidisciplinary artist whose works consistently invite us to explore the relationship between figuration and abstraction. He received a BFA from Haifa University, a BFA from Beit Berl, and studied at SVA. He has done solo exhibits, group exhibits, art fairs, and his collections are on display in galleries including Herzliya Museum of Contemporary Art, Yair Art Gallery, Zemack Gallery, Rothschild Fine Art Gallery, St-Art Collection, Z-A Art Collection, Oded Shatil Art Collection, Bank Leumi Art Collection, and Raw-Art Gallery Collection.

Michal Pollak, Pottery and Ceramic Design. Pollak has been designing ceramics for over 35 years. Her unique way of working with the clay creates a signature look and feel for her art pieces. Pollak embraces the un-perfectness of her designs, she treats every scratch and every dent in the glaze with respect, she shines a light on them rather than trying to fix and hide.

Gideon Rubin received his BFA from the School of Visual Arts, New York and an MFA from the Slade School of Art, London. He has had numerous international solo exhibitions, group exhibitions, and is included in a number of prestigious international collections, including: Museum Voorlinden Collection; Herzliya Museum for Contemporary Art; McEvoy Foundation for the Arts; The Zabłudowicz Collection; Ruinar; Fondation Frances; Rubin Museum; Collezione Maramotti; The Collezione Fondazione, San Patrignano. Rubin is represented by Galerie Karsten Greve; Hosfelt Gallery; Fox Jensen Gallery and Fox Jensen McCrory; and Alon Segev Gallery. In 2014 he received The Shifting Foundation Grant.

Julie Weitz is a transdisciplinary visual artist whose narrative-based cinematic works include live and multimedia performances, photography, drawing, and installation. Weitz has been featured in *Artforum*, *Art in America*, *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Times*, *BOMB*, *LA Confidential*, *Photograph Magazine*, *Hyperallergic*, and on *KCRW*. Her first solo museum exhibition is currently on view at The Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco. Weitz is a 2020–21 Cultural Trailblazer of the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs and a Wallis Annenberg Helix Fellow at Yiddishkayt. She has received past support from the California Center for Cultural Innovation, The Banff Centre, Asylum Arts, and the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture. Weitz teaches in Los Angeles and contributes to Contemporary Art Review Los Angeles.

Udi Urman is the Director of the Lambert Center for Arts and Ideas and The Sonabend Center for Israel at the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan. Previously, Urman served as the Executive Director of Friends of Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design. Prior to his work with Bezalel, Udi was the Director of Cultural Affairs at the Israeli Consulate in New England and in New York. Udi has extensive experience in the arts and cultural sphere, has taught at Brandeis University, and is the founder of NY Public Art, a platform for public art lectures, tours, and projects in New York.

ABOUT THE MARLENE MEYERSON JCC MANHATTAN

Together with its community, the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan creates opportunities for people to connect, grow, and learn within an ever-changing Jewish landscape. Located on 76th Street and Amsterdam Avenue, the JCC is a vibrant non-profit community center on the Upper West Side. It also presents a robust slate of virtual programming, serving an even wider community. The JCC serves over 55,000 people annually through 1,200 programs each season that educate, inspire, and transform participants' minds, bodies, and spirits. Throughout COVID-19, the JCC has pivoted to meet the community online, exceeding 102,000 registrations to over 3,000 virtual classes and programs in the earliest part of the pandemic. Since its inception, the JCC has been committed to serving the community by offering programs, classes, and events that extend beyond neighborhood boundaries, reaching people at all stages of their lives.

Learn more at mmjccm.org

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