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NY exhibit explores how memory reconstructs reality

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By [Ellen Freilich](#)

NEW YORK (Reuters) - Israeli artist and filmmaker Maya Zack uses 3D technology to recreate the apartment of a Jewish family living in 1930s Berlin in a new exhibit that explores how the past is remembered.

"Living Room," which will be on view at The Jewish Museum from July 31 to October 23, combines computer generated images of the apartment of Manfred Nornburg, a German-born Jew, and his memories of everyday life in pre-war Berlin to study the intersection of personal memory with historical events.

"My entire body of work in the last few years has to do with memory and reconstructing reality through different processes," Zack told Reuters.

Using four large-scale, computer-generated 3D prints, Zack shows cross-sections of the living room, dining room, kitchen and other spaces, including furniture, appliances, tableware, wallpaper and light fixtures. 3D glasses give the oversized images immediacy and depth.

Zack, who was born in Israel and lives and works in Tel Aviv, was struck during a trip to her grandmother's childhood home in Slovakia with a sense of emptiness and absence when she tried to imagine her grandmother's life inside that home. The experience inspired her attempt to reconstruct reality from borrowed memory.

Nornburg, who fled Berlin in 1938 as a boy and now lives in Israel, had vivid memories of his life in the Berlin apartment where he lived with his parents and brother before the war.

While looking at the images, visitors to the exhibit hear a recording of Nornburg's stories. His anecdotes and recollections of familiar objects add texture and help infuse life into the rooms and their contents.

Zack, whose film "Mother Economy" was shown at The Jewish Museum in 2008, is interested not only in what Nornburg can recall, but also in his memory gaps. Ghost-like images or outlines represent those losses. Books lean against a wall without the underlying support of a shelf.

A striking aspect of the exhibit is the absence of life. There is an overturned cup and a copy of the Jüdische Rundschau newspaper lying open on the floor, as if the family had just left the apartment in haste. The objects express hurriedness and disarray.

Zack's work has been exhibited in group shows in Berlin, Munich, Milan and New York and in many museum collections. Her films have been screened at festivals in Los Angeles, Vienna, Paris, Cologne, Budapest, Haifa, Tel Aviv and New York.

(Reporting by Ellen Freilich, editing by Patricia Reaney)

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