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Room for Memories

“Living Room,” a 2009 installation by the Israeli artist Maya Zack, went on view July 31 at the Jewish Museum in New York. The piece comprises four digital 3-D prints, each 4 feet high by 10 feet wide, hanging on the four interior walls of a room built within a gallery. Visitors don 3-D glasses and study the images while a 20-minute English translation of an oral history narrated by Yair Noam, an 88-year-old retiree in Tel Aviv, is broadcast in the space. Below is an annotated look at one of the images. — RACHEL WOLFF [Related Article »](#)

THE CABINET Mr. Noam recalls that this piece of furniture contained Shabbat candlesticks and a Hanukkah lamp, objects that were, he says, “the sum total of our Jewishness.” (The credenza is seen from behind, backless, in another image, revealing the menorah inside.)

THE BOOKCASE When Mr. Noam couldn’t remember quite how high this bookcase stood, Ms. Zack saw an opportunity. “Such expressions of doubt are given an extra expression of doubt” in the piece, she explained of the ghostlike addition hovering above the object itself. Other surreal elements pop up, including a handbag suspended in midair just to the left of the bookcase, as if grasped by a missing family member.

THE WALLPAPER “It could have looked like a real place,” Ms. Zack said, “but I chose not to give it texture or pattern so it stayed this nonmaterial material.” There is one exception in this patch of floral wallpaper, mentioned in passing by Mr. Noam. “It only appears in this one area because he spoke about it only in the context of this window,” she explained.

THE DINING ROOM TABLE A toppled bowl of fruit; a spilled glass of milk; a newspaper strewn on the floor. Here Ms. Zack creates a vignette that combines some of Mr. Noam’s most specific memories of everyday life with an attempt to evoke the sort of anxiety that he and his family might have felt at the time. “It has to do with the climate before the Second World War — a threatening atmosphere where things are scary, and it’s not clear exactly what’s going to develop,” she said. “But at the same time, there is this effort to keep some kind of normal daily routine.”

THE PIANO This piano, like other objects in the foreground, is sliced open. The idea is to foster a sense of a self-contained world: “You don’t need to see what’s outside of the frame,” Ms. Zack said. In other images there is a gaping hole in an internal wall, revealing plumbing, which Ms. Zack sees as “an image representing me getting into a person’s head.”

THE SOFA The sofa has the Deco-influenced curves of the period, but the floral pattern recalled by Mr. Noam has been erased. He remembers his extended family gathering in the living room after Sunday lunches to chat and smoke, and his old bachelor uncle making himself a bit too comfortable on the couch, “falling asleep, snoring a bit.”

THE RADIO This Körting radio was a focal point in the Nomburg home. “I think I started loving music because of that radio,” Mr. Noam says in his narration, and Ms. Zack and her technicians diligently rendered the exact 1930s-era model the family most likely had.

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