

NEWS RELEASE

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Skirball Cultural Center to present

SARA BERMAN'S CLOSET December 4, 2018–March 10, 2019

One-of-a-kind installation by Maira Kalman and Alex Kalman
is complemented by twelve new paintings by Maira Kalman

LOS ANGELES—The Skirball Cultural Center presents *Sara Berman's Closet*, an exhibition by illustrator-author Maira Kalman and curator-artist Alex Kalman inspired by the life of Maira's mother and Alex's grandmother, Sara Berman (1920–2004). An exploration of independence, feminism, identity, family, and memory, the unique display recreates Sara's modest, meticulously organized closet in which she kept her all-white apparel and accessories after reinventing herself in her sixties. *Sara Berman's Closet* was originally recreated for Mmuseumm in a lower Manhattan alleyway in 2015, then presented two years later at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It will be on view at the Skirball from December 4, 2018 through March 10, 2019.

Born in Belarus and married in Tel Aviv, Jewish émigré Sara Berman settled in the Bronx with her husband in the early 1950s to raise their family. When their two daughters were grown, the Bermans returned to Israel, but Sara did not stay for long. In 1980, after thirty-eight years of marriage, she packed up one suitcase and left. She returned to New York City and moved into a small studio apartment in Greenwich Village, where she established new rituals all her own. One morning, in another self-expressive burst of independence and individuality, Sara decided to wear only white.

In a humble closet, Sara lovingly organized her all-white undergarments, nightgowns, shirts, pants, shoes, sweaters, hats, and linens. With militaristic precision, she kept her minimal wardrobe in perfect order, starching, ironing, folding, and stacking her clothes—even her socks. This too signified her liberation: Sara had edited everything to the essential and in this editing found happiness.

When Sara died in 2004, her family saved the contents of her closet. Inspired by its beauty and meaning, her daughter Maira and grandson Alex conceived and created *Sara Berman's Closet*. At the Skirball, the installation will be complemented by twelve new paintings by Maira Kalman that depict pivotal scenes from her mother's life—from childhood to marriage to her new life in New York City.

Related Publication and Artist-Author Talk

Sara Berman's Closet at the Skirball is timed to coincide with the publication of an illustrated memoir of the same name, authored by Maira Kalman and Alex Kalman, due for release by HarperCollins

Publishers on October 30. The book features family photographs, exclusive images, prose, and Maira Kalman's distinctive paintings.

On Wednesday, January 23, **Maira Kalman** and **Alex Kalman** will speak at the Skirball about their collaboration on *Sara Berman's Closet*. In this exclusive LA engagement, they will offer an intimate glimpse at their mother/grandmother's extraordinary life and influential legacy. Details about this program—which will include a reading and book signing—will be announced in mid-December.

About the Artists

Maira Kalman was born in Tel Aviv and moved to New York with her family at the age of four. She was raised in bucolic Riverdale, in the Bronx, and now lives in Manhattan. She is a world-renowned artist, writer, illustrator, and designer. She has published more than twenty-five books and creates editorial work for many magazines; she has illustrated many covers for the *New Yorker*. Maira Kalman has had eight exhibitions at the Julie Saul Gallery since 2003. In 2010, the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, organized a retrospective *Maira Kalman: Various Illuminations (of a Crazy World)*. The exhibition toured through 2011, including at the Skirball Cultural Center November 2010–February 2011.

Alex Kalman is the owner of the interdisciplinary What Studio? and the co-founder and director of Mmuseumm in lower Manhattan dedicated to "Object Journalism." His work has been shown in museums and publications around the world including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, the V&A (Victoria & Albert Museum), the *New York Times*, and the *New Yorker*. In 2015, he curated *Future Aleppo* by Mohammed Qutaish, a fourteen-year-old Syrian refugee. Mohammed, who aspires to be an architect, began building a model of Aleppo from found objects after experiencing the wartime destruction of his city. Alex Kalman arranged for Syrian and Turkish volunteers to transport a portion of Mohammed's model out of Syria for public exhibition; it was exhibited at Mmuseumm in 2016, at the Skirball in 2017, and the V&A in 2018. It is currently on world tour. Alex Kalman also founded the MyBlock Education Program, a low-cost education model for high school students to use video as a tool of self-expression.

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About the Skirball Cultural Center

The Skirball Cultural Center is a place of meeting guided by the Jewish tradition of welcoming the stranger and inspired by the American democratic ideals of freedom and equality. We welcome people of all communities and generations to participate in cultural experiences that celebrate discovery and hope, foster human connections, and call upon us to help build a more just society.

Visiting the Skirball Cultural Center

The Skirball Cultural Center is located at 2701 N. Sepulveda Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90049. Museum hours: Tuesday–Friday 12:00–5:00 p.m.; Saturday–Sunday 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.; closed Mondays and holidays. Admission to exhibitions beginning March 1, 2016: \$12 General; \$9 Seniors, Full-Time Students, and Children over 12; \$7 Children 2–12. Exhibitions are always FREE to Skirball Members and Children under 2. Exhibitions are FREE to all visitors on Thursdays. For general information, the public may call (310) 440-4500 or visit skirball.org.