The Jewish Museum Launches New Audio Tours Featuring a Range of Perspectives, Available on All Devices

New York, NY, July 18, 2019 — The Jewish Museum has launched new audio tours that will illuminate works of art from the Museum’s collection, highlight a range of perspectives, and provide an engaging experience for visitors of all backgrounds. Tours feature the voices of contemporary artists Maira Kalman, Isaac Mizrahi, Arlene Shechet, and Kehinde Wiley; curators and rabbis discussing Jewish traditions and rituals through ceremonial objects; students talking about art; verbal descriptions for visitors who are blind or have low vision; and a podcast-style conversation between artists Ross Bleckner and Deborah Kass discussing their work in the context of Jewish identity and LGBTQ+ history.

Available on Tours.TheJewishMuseum.org, the audio tours are available on a new web app that is easily accessible on any device with internet access, for both on-site and off-site use. The initiative was funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies.

“The Jewish Museum was one of the first museums, 20 years ago, to receive funding from Bloomberg for our audio guide program,” said Claudia Gould, Helen Goldsmith Menschel Director. “We are deeply grateful to Bloomberg Philanthropies for its generous grant in support of our new mobile tour platform that enables us to continue providing the widest possible access to deep and engaging content for our visitors.”

“The Jewish Museum is an invaluable resource for hundreds of thousands of visitors – including students – each year, embracing a range of work including contemporary art, history, and Jewish heritage. The new audio tours are the latest example of the Museum’s creative commitment to engaging audiences,” said Kate D. Levin of Bloomberg Philanthropies.

New audio tours include:

- The **Artists’ Voice**, a series of audio tours led by contemporary artists, performers, writers, and designers. In addition to speaking about their own work and process, artists select a number of works in the Jewish Museum collection that inspire them, including personal reflections and memories sparked by objects on view. Kehinde Wiley talks about the process of creating his work *Alios Itzhak (The World Stage: Israel)* and mines the collection for portable objects meant to carry tradition and history across long distances. Isaac Mizrahi discusses the optimistic thread shared by designers of fashion and architecture. Illustrator Maira Kalman and her son, designer/artist Alex Kalman, share stories from Hanukkah celebrations at home, and read a secret poem hidden in Russ & Daughters at the Jewish Museum.
- **The Jewish Rituals Tour** discusses Jewish traditions and rituals through ceremonial objects from the Museum’s collection. Led by Senior Curator Emerita Susan Braunstein, the tour features commentary from rabbis, artists, historians, and educators. On the tour, visitors will hear about Hanukkah lamps from eighth-generation Rabbi Irwin Kula; a discussion of Shofarot (a musical instrument made from the horn of a ram or other kosher animal used to mark the High Holidays) with Braunstein and Rabbi Darcie Crystal; as well as Museum docent Rachel Ringler, who sings a Shabbat blessing in a stop focusing on spice containers (ritual objects used at the end of the Sabbath).

- **On the Kids & Family Tour**, designed for kids aged six and up, educator Mark Joshua Epstein explores works from the Museum’s collection with 5th and 6th grade students. The tour features lively conversations, surprising stories, and insightful reflections about art, artifacts, and Judaica in the Museum’s collection.

- **The Verbal Description Tour** is designed for visitors who are blind or have low vision. This tour uses vivid descriptive language and encourages a close examination of images and forms, while also providing background information on the objects and on the artists who made them.

- **In a podcast-style conversation marking Stonewall 50, Artists Ross Bleckner and Deborah Kass discuss their work in the context of Jewish identity and LGBTQ+ history. The dialogue is moderated by Eric Marcus, host of the Making Gay History podcast.**

Upcoming content will include thematic tours centered on immigration and the Jewish experience; a Director’s Tour with the Jewish Museum’s Helen Goldsmith Director Claudia Gould; a tour exploring the origins of the Museum’s collection; and video tours in American Sign Language (ASL) for visitors who are deaf.

The Jewish Museum developed the new mobile tour platform in close collaboration with digital agency Code and Theory. Michael Martin, Managing Partner, Code and Theory, said, “Leveraging an intuitive, lightweight user interface keeps the visitor’s focus on the artworks and not the phone. Its decoupled architecture and implementation allow for the experience to extend offsite, driving education and inspiration beyond the museum walls.”

Audio content was produced in collaboration with Acoustiguide.

**About the Jewish Museum**

Located on New York City’s famed Museum Mile, the Jewish Museum is a distinctive hub for art and Jewish culture for people of all backgrounds. Founded in 1904, the Museum was the first institution of its kind in the United States and is one of the oldest Jewish
museums in the world. Devoted to exploring art and Jewish culture from ancient to contemporary, the Museum offers diverse exhibitions and programs, and maintains a unique collection of nearly 30,000 works of art, ceremonial objects, and media reflecting the global Jewish experience over more than 4,000 years.

Location: 1109 Fifth Avenue at 92nd Street, New York City
Information: The public may call 212.423.3200 or visit TheJewishMuseum.org

Press Contacts:
Anne Scher, 212.423.3271 or ascher@thejm.org
Daniela Stigh, 212.423.3330 or dstigh@thejm.org