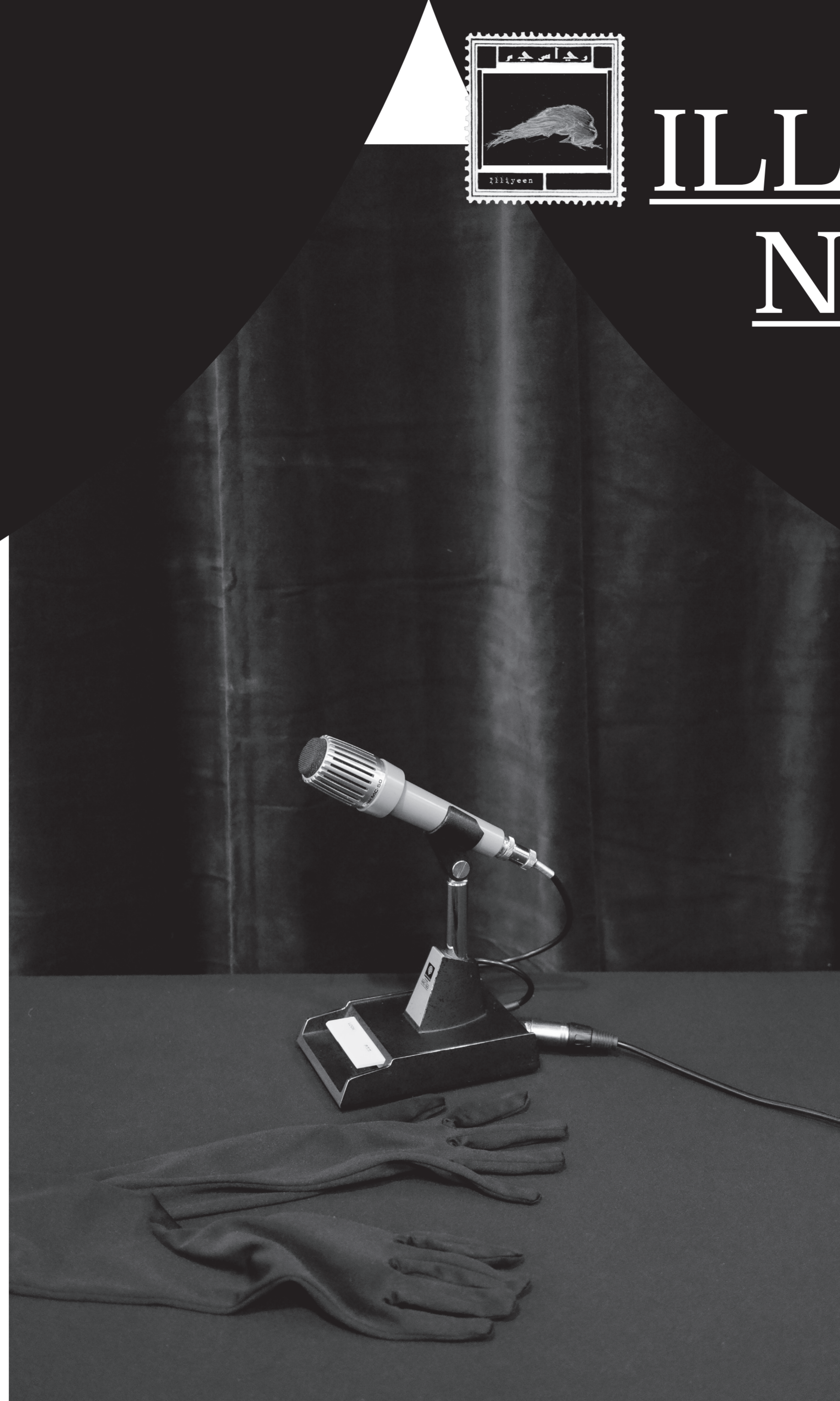




ILLIYEEN

NEWS





ILLIYEEN NEWS

ELIYAH MESAYER *THE SPEAKER'S ROOM*

In its architecture and function, a state office appears as an ambivalent symbol of power: at once an administrative work-space and a stage for the narratives through which nations legitimise themselves. The highest office of state is where the state becomes visible and operative, a place where stories of the nation are shaped, rehearsed and consolidated. From here, state authority is performed through addresses to the nation, and decisions are made about borders and boundaries, both physical and symbolic. Yet the idea of the nation exists only through repeated storytelling, while the state is a legal construct. The nation is a fragile entity, utterly dependent on the narratives that sustain it.

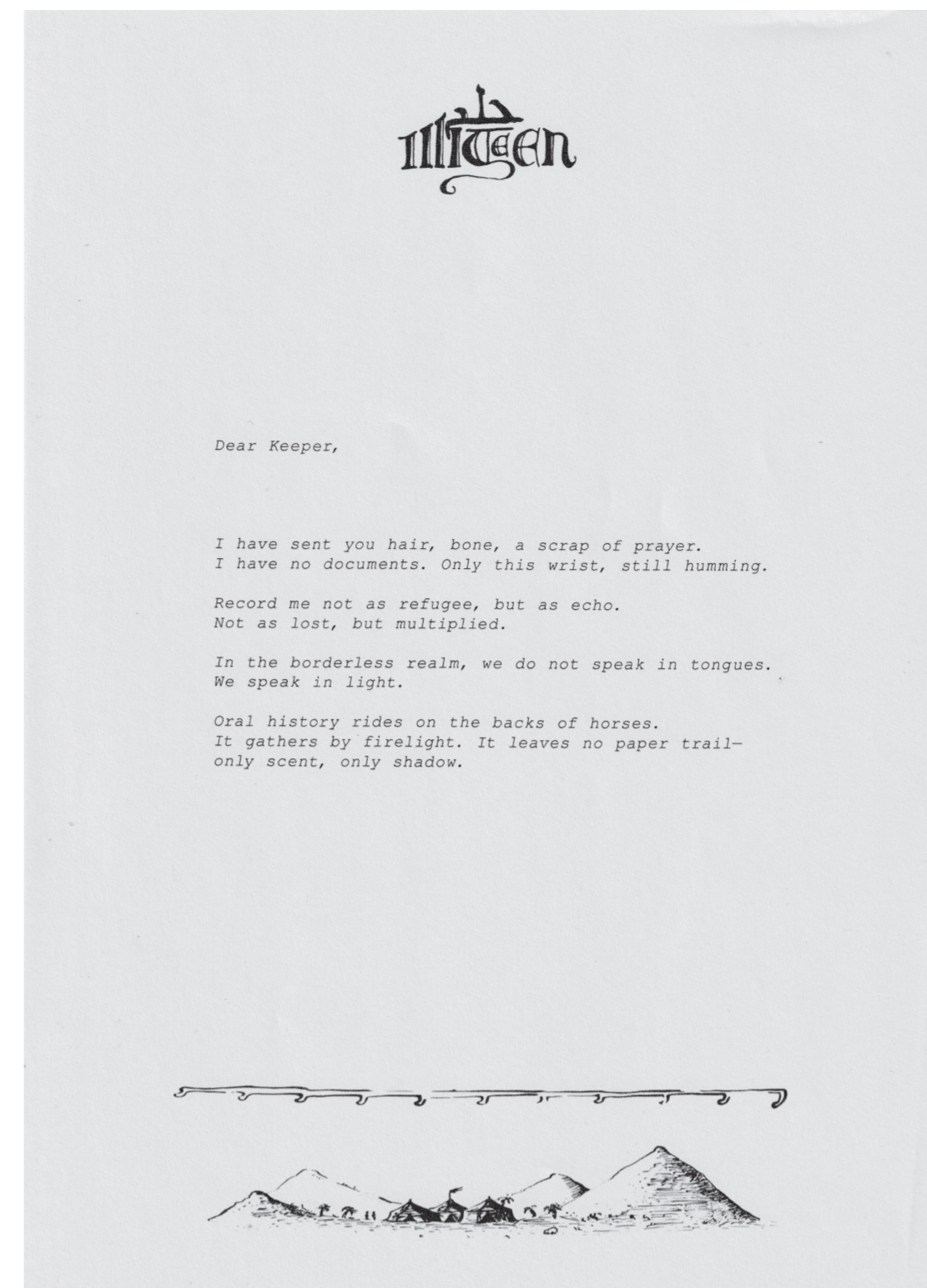


In *The Speaker's Room*, artist Eliyah Mesayer outlines the contours of an office of state, complete with familiar symbols of political authority. Through subtle displacements and small gestures, the exhibition unsettles the established iconography of such offices to instead create a space poised between copy and poetry, past and present. The office is stripped of any actual political function, while its architecture is reduced to texture, shadow and absence. What remains is an archive of office supplies from an indeterminate time; emblems of power pared back to their raw essence, left behind as traces and surfaces.

Mesayer uses imagination to puncture this powerful, administrative space. By staging an abandoned office, she shifts the centre of power and invites us to consider alternative realities. What would the world look like if the head of state were a poet? If statutes were whispered rather than broadcast on television as the head of state – prominently on display while putting their signature on another order – demonstrates their absolute power? In the exhibition there are neither broadcasts nor signatures. Instead there is notepaper, and a glitching video on the TV. In this shadow version of a state office, another kind of national narrative comes into being. A narrative held together not by stories of shared identity, national demarcations, or symbols of authority, but by collective and dreamy imaginings of community.

In her exhibitions, Mesayer conjures the imaginary state of Illiyeen, and *The Speaker's Room* is no exception. In Illiyeen, the poet holds the highest status, and the cloaks in the exhibition belong to former poets of the state. The last poet has left us blank paper, a silent journal, and a switched-off radio microphone as reminders of the fleeting nature of power and the waning significance of the word. Because despite the title, there is no one here to speak, command, or decide on behalf of others. Instead, we are left to imagine what the world might be like if a poet were the one behind the microphone.

The exhibition resists the idealisation of power, instead revealing its dependence on symbols, narrative and repetition – conditions without which it cannot exist at all. At the same time, the exhibition's iconography turns our gaze back to the state's responsibility. To the conventions written to safeguard rights articulated as shared and universal. When principles are bent to fit new national narratives, the state's original foundations are undermined. The legitimacy of the state resides in its quiet obligation to protect what was set down by those who came before us.



EDITORIAL

Illiyeen News is the first newspaper in artist Eliyah Mesayer's ongoing project Illiyeen. However, this is only a two-page prototype; more an imitation than a newspaper proper. Such acts of imitation are nonetheless a central strategy in Mesayer's practice where imagination is wielded as an active tool. And imagination takes centre stage in the exhibition when Mesayer asks, in a spirit of inquiry, what the world would look like if the head of state were a poet.

Illiyeen is a Bedouin term referring to a heavenly register in which the deeds of the righteous are written down and preserved. In Mesayer's practice, Illiyeen is transformed into an allegorical 'state of nowhere and nation of everywhere' beyond geographic and national borders. From here, she unfolds a poetic world-building that examines how power is formed, distributed and represented. In the newspaper, Illiyeen manifests itself through tangible traces and archival fragments: a flag, a letter, and Illiyeen's own postage stamp from a postal system that continues to exist, even though letters can no longer be sent in the state of Denmark.

Welcome to *The Speaker's Room*.



THE SPEAKER'S ROOM
Eliyah Mesayer

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23.01. – 03.05.26

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Eliyah Mesayer's new works are
commissioned by Den Frie

Den Frie