

Media Release - July 10 2011

The Jewish Museum of Australia is currently exhibiting new major exhibition ***Mameloshn – How Yiddish Made a Home in Melbourne***.

With over fifty percent of the exhibition from the Museum's Permanent Collection, many objects having never been exhibited before, ***Mameloshn*** documents the journey of diverse Eastern European Jews who came to Melbourne, the end of the Earth, to recreate their lives in the years leading up to and immediately following World War Two. A story of migration and integration, it is at once a universal and distinct social history tale exhibited in a new and dynamic way.

Curated by Anna Epstein in direct consultation with a dynamic Yiddish advisory committee including renowned Melbourne writer Arnold Zable, historian and academic Andrew Markus and Klezmer musician Freydi Mrocki, ***Mameloshn*** is a stimulating historic journey through time and place.

Rebecca Forgasz, Museum Director says "Australia has absorbed and integrated immigrant communities from all over the world. We enjoy a rich multicultural life flavoured by the customs and traditions of hundreds of nationalities and religions in Victoria alone. This is one of those stories, but it is our story. It documents the establishment of a huge proportion of the Melbourne Jewish community - How they got here, how they established themselves and how they struggled and thrived as a minority community."

Anna Epstein, Exhibition Curator says, "Melbourne was the destination of most Yiddish-speaking migrants to Australia. In this far away country *ek velt* – at the ends of the earth – they did their best to recreate much of their old way of life, and Melbourne emerged as a vibrant centre of Yiddish culture, particularly in the suburbs of Carlton and St Kilda."

Designed by Exhibition Designer Simon Castricum from renowned Melbourne Architecture firm ARM, the exhibition is intended to be a sensory experience. "The idea was to alter the space, to make it feel like you were literally walking down the gas (street) and standing amongst some of the characters. Using graffiti inspired stencilling the people are drawn over historic photographs and applied as huge wall stickers – lifting past imagery into a modern scene we are exploring where the language is today."

"Rather than just displaying text on walls in an exhibition about language, there are large cubes printed with Yiddish words and their translations, soundscapes and iPads with stories for all ages - so that visitors can actually engage and interact with the language in a participatory way."

"It is an emotional story and we wanted visitors to be moved and inspired as they traversed the space," says Anna.

As Arnold Zable describes, 'The story of Yiddish in Melbourne is epic, with larger than life characters, fiery idealists, activists and dreamers, survivors and resisters, and arduous journeys from all corners of the globe. And all for Yiddish, a language of the people, a deeply expressive hybrid, synthesized from centuries of wanderings, an intimate mother tongue, rich with the salt of the earth.'

"The generation who lived and breathed the language and culture are passing on, and ***Mameloshn*** is partly a tribute to them. Their children, immersed in Yiddish culture, but whose mother tongue is English face the task of holding onto Yiddish. It felt like the perfect time to tell the story. This year is also the centenary celebration of the establishment of Kadimah, Melbourne's Yiddish Cultural Centre which used to be the epicentre of Yiddish life in Melbourne. The centre, its people and activities are a focus of the exhibition," says Anna.

***Mameloshn*** will provide an insight into how Melbourne's appetite for art, politics, food, music and theatre has evolved into what it is today – with Yiddish culture playing a very important role in Melbourne's cultural birth.

Program details on following page...

**Exhibition opens to the public on Sunday 3 April in the Loti Smorgon Gallery, Jewish Museum of Australia and runs until Sunday 11 March, 2012.**

For all media enquiries please contact Lior Albeck-Ripka, [l.albeck-ripka@jewishmuseum.com.au](mailto:l.albeck-ripka@jewishmuseum.com.au); 8534 3612

### PUBLIC PROGRAMS

#### An evening of Yiddish poetry, prose, and song

Complementing the exhibition *Mameloshn - How Yiddish Made a Home in Melbourne*, the Museum presents an evening of bi-lingual readings from well-known Melbourne Yiddish lovers. Come back in time through language as you discover the shtetl in gems of Yiddish literature and song. Those reading on the night include Melbourne writer **Arnold Zable** (*Café Scheherazade*, *Jewels and Ashes*), Danielle Charak, *Mameloshn* curator Anna Epstein, and Marcia Jacobs who will read from the work of her late father, award-winning author, **Jacob Rosenberg**.

**Date:** Sunday 16 October

**Time:** 5.30pm

Exhibition will be open before and after readings

**Venue:** Jewish Museum of Australia

**Cost:** \$15, \$10 for Museum members / concession

**Bookings are essential – limited places:** 8534 3600

### JEWISH MUSEUM WALKS

#### Jewish History Walk - Carlton (Lygon St)

Carlton was the centre of early Jewish community life in Melbourne. Visit the haunts of former generations and learn how they managed to establish a sense of belonging in a new land. You'll discover Stone's Synagogue; Monash House; Herzl House; the Chevra Kadisha; Smorgon's Butcher Shop; site of Carlton United Hebrew Congregation and much more! Please meet at 185 Faraday Street Carlton (opposite Brunetti's).

**Date:** Sunday 11 September **Time:** 10.15am for a 10.30am start

**Cost** is \$15

**Venue:** Lygon St, 185 Faraday St, Carlton

**Bookings are essential** 03 8534 3600 or [info@jewishmuseum.com.au](mailto:info@jewishmuseum.com.au)

#### Jewish History Walk – North Carlton

To coincide with *Mameloshn*, the North Carlton walk traces the history of the North Carlton Jewish (Yiddish) community. This area of North Carlton was home to many working class families as well as migrants including Jewish traders and families, many of whom established homes and business often as a result of fleeing persecution and anti-Semitism in Europe. Visit the homes of former Jewish tradespeople; see where Rabbi Joseph Gurewicz lived; the Peretz Yiddish School; Pose's Pickles; Tel Aviv Diary; Kadimah and more.

**Date:** Sunday 16 October **Time:** 10.15am for a 10.30am start

**Cost:** \$15

**Venue:** Meet outside entrance of Lee Street Primary School, Lee Street

**Bookings are essential** 03 8534 3600 or [info@jewishmuseum.com.au](mailto:info@jewishmuseum.com.au)

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