ARTIFACTS FROM HISTORIC PRINTING PROCESS TELL STORY OF ICONIC 20TH CENTURY NEWSPAPER

Exhibition illuminates the cultural impact of Yiddish-language Forward through archival printing plates

New York, NY – September 10, 2019 – Artifacts from early-20th century printing will on display at the Museum at Eldridge Street beginning October 24, after nearly a century hidden away in storage. The new exhibition, Pressed: Images from the Jewish Daily Forward, dives into the archives of the iconic Yiddish-language newspaper the Forward. This exhibition uniquely pairs printing and cultural history, opening a window into the world of the wildly popular Forward newspaper and the lives of Jewish readers across the country.

For more than 120 years, the Forward newspaper has given an eager American Jewish audience a unique mix of news, culture and opinion. Published on the Lower East Side beginning in 1897, this Yiddish-language newspaper had a circulation of more than 275,000 in its heyday. The publication had a decidedly progressive bent, often extolling the virtues of labor strikes and fights for rights of new immigrants. Photos were especially popular; the Forward sourced images from their readers’ daily lives (an early adopter of crowdsourcing), printing photos of leading intellectuals alongside everyday Jewish families around the globe.

Today, the Forward is a digital-only publication appearing in both English and Yiddish. Its archives are vast, tracing the history of the printed publication and the stories it covered. Pressed presents a selection of archival metal plates that were used to print photos in the paper. In many cases, the photos from which these plates were made no longer exist, making the plates the only remaining artifact of their historic images. The plates are accompanied by contemporary prints made on traditional equipment at the South Street Seaport Museum’s Bowne & Co. Stationers, which have rendered the images with more clarity than they ever appeared in the newspaper. For some, the pages of the Forward on which the images once appeared are also displayed.

Together these pictures of strikes and activists, Yiddish theater stars and baseball players, daily life and historic moments, present the history of this singular publication, its audience and Jewish life in America and around the world.
Pressed: Images from the Jewish Daily Forward opens with an evening reception on Wednesday, October 23rd, featuring remarks from exhibition curators and Forward leadership. Exhibition opens to the public on Thursday, October 24th, 2019 and runs through spring 2020. Exhibition is included in the price of Museum admission and on view during all Museum hours.

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The Museum at Eldridge Street is housed in the historic Eldridge Street Synagogue, a magnificent National Historic Landmark and New York City landmark. The building was nearly lost to neglect before a 20-year, $20 million project restored the National Historic Landmark to grandeur. The Eldridge Street Synagogue is our nation’s first great house of worship built by Eastern European Jews, and stood, even then, as a proud symbol of immigrant ambition and success. Today it is one of the few remaining marker of the great wave of Jewish migration to the Lower East Side.

Upon restoration, the Museum received nearly every major preservation honor, including the prestigious National Trust for Historic Preservation 2008 Preservation Award and the Metropolitan Chapter of the Victorian Society in America’s Restoration Award. In the words of New Yorker architectural critic Paul Goldberger, the project was conducted with a “combination of rigor and affection.” And in 2010, the stunning modern addition of a stained-glass window by artist Kiki Smith and architect Deborah Gans ushered the historic space into the 21st century.

Today the Museum is reimagining how a historic sacred space can foster community and culture. Since its reopening, more than 300,000 people from around the world have visited art exhibitions, tours, cultural festivals and educational programs. The historic space has become a one-of-a-kind art gallery, a place of cultural collaboration, and a laboratory for new thought on immigration and cultural preservation. The Museum’s signature event is June’s Egg Rolls, Egg Creams and Empanadas Festival, celebrating the diverse communities of the Lower East Side through food, music, folk art, and cultural customs.

The Forward delivers incisive coverage of the issues, ideas and institutions that matter to American Jews. Its rigorous reporting and balanced commentary on politics, arts and culture have won numerous awards year after year, including repeated recognition by the Society of Professional Journalists.

Founded in 1897 as a Yiddish-language daily, the Forward soon became a national paper, the most widely read Jewish newspaper anywhere. By the 1920s its circulation outstripped the New York Times. It chronicled the events that affected a population of immigrants eager to earn their place in American life, and published regional editions around the country before any other newspaper.

The English Forward was launched as a weekly in 1990. Its perspective on world and national news, and its unparalleled coverage of Jewish arts culture and opinion have made it the most influential nationwide Jewish media outlet today. More than a million unique visitors turn to forward.com each month for award-winning news, thoughtful commentary, and captivating videos. More than 50,000 subscribers receive e-newsletters that highlight the latest stories and areas of special interest like Arts & Entertainment and Food & Drink.