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### **Dress Designs Bring a Holocaust Story to Life**

#### ***STITCHING HISTORY FROM THE HOLOCAUST***

*at the Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust*

NEW YORK, NY— In Prague 1939, Paul Strnad wrote to his American cousin seeking help for him and his wife Hedy to escape Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia. Nearly 60 years later, the Strnad family discovered the letter in their basement, along with a packet of Hedy's dress designs. Hedy and Paul Strnad did not survive. Their story is brought to life through the contemporary creation of Hedy's designs and the piecing together of this couple's history in an exhibition titled *Stitching History From the Holocaust*. Created by Milwaukee Jewish Museum, this exhibition opens at the **Museum of Jewish Heritage — A Living Memorial to the Holocaust on April 13, 2016 and will be on view through August 14, 2016.**

“In *Stitching History From the Holocaust*, it is remarkable how eight dress designs from the 1930s poignantly tell one young couple’s story and illuminate the immense loss of life and talent extinguished by the Holocaust,” said Bruce C. Ratner, Chairman of the Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust.

Select photos of the exhibition can be found here: <http://www.mjhnyc.org/shpress/>

#### **Background**

In another letter that Paul Strnad sent to his American cousin Alvin in 1938, he wrote, “You will of course have read in the press what a catastrophe has overtaken our country...Nothing will remain therefore to do but to adapt oneself to the circumstances and consider emigrating from Europe.” Despite his cousin’s efforts, Paul and Hedy Strnad were denied entry to the United States and died during the Holocaust. The Holocaust annihilated millions of lives and deprived the world of their contributions. This exhibition highlights a talent recently illuminated and a story that can never be completed.

*Stitching History From the Holocaust* is so named because at its core, it consists of eight dress designs, which are the creative work of Hedwig (Hedy) Strnad. The dressmaking motif is used to pair two kinds of “stitching:” creating the dresses from the sketches sent to her husband’s relatives in Milwaukee, and recreating Hedy’s and Paul’s history. Eight mannequins display the dresses, and surrounding the mannequins are information panels that allow the visitor to be drawn into the investigative work undertaken to piece together this couple’s life and the lives of their families.

The Milwaukee Repertory Theater’s costume shop meticulously created, with historic accuracy, eight dresses and accessories from Hedy Strnad’s original sketches by using period styles and techniques. The Milwaukee Jewish Museum staff collected years of research to give visitors a closer look into the lives of Hedy and Paul — a story that represents two of the millions of lives extinguished by the Holocaust and the immeasurable loss of talent and creativity.

*Stitching History From the Holocaust* is an original exhibit created by and on loan from Jewish Museum Milwaukee.

*Stitching History From the Holocaust* is made possible through the generosity of Anonymous, The Bradley Foundation, Brico Fund, Claims Conference: The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, Daniel M. Soref Charitable Trust, Penny & Jim Deshur, Suzy Ettinger, Herzfeld Foundation, Helen & Ron Jacobs, Marianne & Sheldon Lubar, Sue & Bud Selig, The Strnad Family. Funded in part by a grant from the Wisconsin Humanities Council, with funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the State of Wisconsin. Any views, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this project do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities. This project is funded in part through a grant from the City of Milwaukee Arts Board and the Wisconsin Arts Board

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### **Related Public Programs**

Tickets for public programs can be purchased at [www.mjhyinc.org](http://www.mjhyinc.org) or 646.437.4202.

#### **PERFORMANCE**

**Wednesday, May 11, 7 P.M.**

##### ***The Fabric of My Life***

Tziporah Salamon, a NYC fashion icon and daughter of Holocaust survivors, uses pictures, anecdotes, and clothes to weave a sartorial autobiography in which her remarkable wardrobe has informed her life's journey.

***\$15, \$12 Students with Valid ID, Free for Members***

#### **CONVERSATION**

**Sunday, July 17, 12 P.M.**

##### ***Stitching Through Time***

Go behind the scenes with Izzy Fields, designer of the elaborate period costumes for *The Golden Bride*, as she shares her creative process from research to conception.

***Free with Museum admission or ticket to a performance of The Golden Bride***

*Co-presented with the National Yiddish Theatre Folksbiene*

### **About the Museum of Jewish Heritage**

The Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust presents exhibitions that educate people of all ages and backgrounds about the rich tapestry of Jewish life over the past century—before, during, and after the Holocaust. The special exhibition *Seeking Justice: The Leo Frank Case Revisited* is on view through summer 2016. *Stitching History From the Holocaust* will be on view from April 13 to August 14, 2016. The Museum is also home to the award-winning *Keeping History Center*, an interactive visitor experience, and Andy Goldsworthy's memorial *Garden of Stones*. In Edmond J. Safra Hall, the Museum offers visitors a vibrant public program schedule celebrating the richness of Jewish culture and ideas. The Museum is the new home of the National Yiddish Theatre Folksbiene, now in its 101<sup>st</sup> season. The Museum receives general operating support from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and New York State Council on the Arts.