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Photography from Slovakia to Travel to the U.S. for the First Time
Last Folio: A Photographic Journey with Yuri Dojc
Opens on March 25

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

NEW YORK, NY – In 2006, the accomplished photographer Yuri Dojc encountered an abandoned school in Bardejov, Slovakia where time has stood still since the day in 1943 when its students were taken to concentration camps. When Dojc arrived, the schoolbooks were still there. He found notebooks with corrections, school reports, and remarkably enough, later in his journey—a book once owned by his own grandfather. His stunning photographs of what remains of a once vibrant community will now, for the first time, be on view in the United States, when ***Last Folio: A Photographic Journey with Yuri Dojc*** opens at New York’s **Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust on March 25**. The opening date falls on the anniversary of the first transport of Slovak Jews — 1000 young girls — to Auschwitz in 1942.

Museum of Jewish Heritage Deputy Director Ivy Barsky said, “Sometimes it is the job of the history museum not only to *tell* history, but to make history *felt*. That is precisely what Yuri Dojc’s evocative photographs do.”

Dojc, a successful commercial photographer, encountered a Holocaust survivor at his father’s funeral in 1997. Their meeting resulted in his decision to take photographs of the Slovakian survivors, before it was too late. In his journey across the country he took more than one hundred and fifty portraits recording their stories and their faces. On his travels he also happened upon objects and buildings that once belonged to the Jewish community. Moved by their beauty despite their state of ruin, he decided to find and photograph additional evidence of the lost community. He followed in the path detailed in his father’s book on the country’s Jewish heritage and began the project that would become *Last Folio*.

Dojc said, “We all strive to leave something behind, a mark that remains after we’ve left. But there is almost nothing left of the people whose lives were cut short during the Holocaust. Photography allows me to build a private memorial to them. It is through these photos that I can pay homage to them and keep their memory alive. I can only hope that my images will speak to the visitors to this exhibition.”

Together Dojc and filmmaker Katya Krausova, who joined him five years ago, have searched for and discovered a plethora of objects saved by the last Slovakian Jews and their non-Jewish neighbors. They have also collected the memories of how these remnants survived. In one case, a man who heard that his

town's mayor was going to destroy a synagogue to make way for a parking lot, moved in with his neighbor and donated his own home to store the books rescued from the neglected synagogue. The books remain in this house 30 years later. Dojc and Krausova met another man who had purchased an old synagogue and wanted to transform it into "the largest disco in Central Europe." He allowed them to take photographs of the once majestic building which now stands empty and dilapidated.

Krausova said, "Yuri and I travelled many roads to small towns and tiny hamlets all over the country, meeting people and finding remnants of lives and fragments of memories. Retracing the experiences of our families, and the worlds in which they lived and died, has been an enormously powerful journey that has been emotional, spiritual, and deeply personal."

At the centerpiece of *Last Folio* are photographs of the books Dojc found in a Jewish school in Bardejov. His beautiful portraits treat the books as survivors, the last witnesses to a once thriving culture. The images in the exhibition feature moving portraits of Holocaust survivors and capture the poignant ruins of schools, synagogues, and cemeteries. The exhibition also includes a documentary created by Krausova that follows Dojc through Slovakia.

The exhibition is specially designed for the Museum by Daniel Weil of Pentagram, one of today's leading designers. Inspired by the shape of the Rotunda gallery, the exhibition's floor plan is based on the Star of David, and features a centerpiece that is symbolic of a torah scroll. In addition to his work on *Last Folio*, Daniel recently completed his work at the newly re-opened Israel Museum.

Last Folio will be on view in the Rotunda Gallery through the late summer. Following the New York run, the exhibition will travel.

Born in Czechoslovakia, **Yuri Dojc** arrived in North America as a refugee in 1969. Four decades later, Yuri's photographs adorn the walls of private collections and galleries all over the world including the permanent collections of the National Gallery of Canada, the National Museum of Slovakia, and the Library of Congress. In 2001, he received the medal of honor from the Slovak Ambassador to the United States for *We Endured*, a series of portraits of Holocaust survivors.

Katya Krausova is an independent television producer/director whose work has been broadcast on national television channels and screened at prestigious film festivals around the world. She arrived in Britain following the 1968 Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia. She is a director of a leading UK independent film and television production company called Portobello Media and Portobello Pictures, which won the 1997 Best Foreign Language Film Oscar for *Kolya*.

Last Folio is made possible by a leadership gift in memory of John Grunwald by Rita Grunwald. Additional support provided by a gift in honor of Mrs. Magdalena Szollos-Kallan by Henry Kallan, Fern Schad and Alfred H. Moses, The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation, the May and Samuel Rudin Foundation, and EPSON, Canada.

News Corporation is a media sponsor.

Related Public Program

Thursday, March 24, 7 P.M.

Behind-the-Scenes Preview of the Last Folio

Moderated by Museum director Dr. David G. Marwell; with photographer Yuri Dojc and filmmaker Katya Krausova

Join the exhibition team for a multimedia look at the Museum's new exhibition. Hear first-hand from the photographer and filmmaker about their journey to Slovakia to capture the evocative images and scenes in the *Last Folio*. Following the program, ticket holders are welcome to be the first to view the exhibition before it opens to the public.

\$12, \$10 students/seniors, \$7 members

Companion Volume

This spring, a volume of select photos from the exhibition will be published along with a forward written by Museum of Jewish Heritage Director Dr. David G. Marwell and a compelling essay by Azar Nafisi, the author of *Reading Lolita in Tehran*.

Nafisi writes, "Books in these photographs are not mere objects, they are possessed by spirits exorcized through Yuri Dojc's magical eye: as they disintegrate into dust, the camera illuminates how that moment of disintegration is also a moment of immense energy and movement, one last and glorious statement of defiance, resisting both death and oblivion. They are alive, appearing in so many forms, as if they have now taken on the shapes of feelings and emotions of those who owned them, becoming conclusive evidence of their existence."

About the Museum of Jewish Heritage

The Museum's three-floor Core Exhibition educates people of all ages and backgrounds about the rich tapestry of Jewish life over the past century—before, during, and after the Holocaust. Special exhibitions include *Project Mah Jongg*, on view through February 27, 2011; *Fire in My Heart: The Story of Hannah Senesh*, on view through August 7, 2011; and *The Morgenthau: A Legacy of Service*, on view through September 5, 2011. It is also home to the award-winning *Keeping History Center*, an interactive visitor experience, and Andy Goldsworthy's memorial *Garden of Stones*. The Museum offers visitors a vibrant public program schedule in its Edmond J. Safra Hall and receives general operating support from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

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