LOS CORASSONES AVLAN
Conversations on Jewish Life on the Island of Rhodes

The Rhodes Jewish Historical Foundation and Centro Primo Levi are pleased to invite you to visit the pop-up installation “Los Corassones Avalan” which explores Jewish life in Rhodes before World War II and plays on the tension between personal memory, official history and ongoing research debates.

The project will be installed in a 19th century carriage house on West 4th street that shares the courtyard with the historic night bar named after Antoine Saint-Exupéry’s novel Vol de Nuit. The bar was once a popular eatery and cabaret called The Samovar, which the photographer Jessie Tarbox Beals seized in one of her legendary images of lower Manhattan and where Al Jolson is believed to have performed in his early career.

Los Corassones Avalan expands the ideas of the Rome Lab, a 2017 installation created by Centro Primo Levi and the Jewish Museum of Rome, which challenged traditional museum narratives by playing on the tension between personal memory, official history and ongoing research debates. Conceived as an old funhouse, made up of objects, projection and rotating soundscapes, the new installation will juxtapose ambiguities, uncertainties and discontinuities onto linear representations of the past. It will invite the public to imagine a world that was profoundly different from ours and to question stereotypes and prepackaged depictions of other cultures that increasingly restrict the way in which we experience the present.

With the fall of the Ottoman Empire, many Rodeslis (as Rhodes’ Jews refer to themselves) left their island and created communities around the world, in Africa, the Americas and Europe. A few decades later, the entire community was deported to Auschwitz and its centuries-long history came to an end.

The new juderias (Jewish quarters) always had their own forms of cortijos (courtyards), their own version of burmuelos and quajados (baked delicacies), their own singular transliterations of Spanish, Greek and Turkish words passed down always with slight family variations; their own melodies for romansas (love songs often sung by women) and zemirot (liturgical songs); and their own communal space constructed between memory and imagination.

Inspired by Stella Levi’s family tales and passion for historical inquiry, Centro Primo Levi and the Rhodes Jewish Historical Foundation have undertaken the creation of a multimedia installation that will conjure this collective juderia through fragments of history, personal memories and the unique collection of objects and books that Los Angeles-based lawyer Aron Hasson has lovingly assembled through years of research and exchange within his family and the Rodesli diaspora.

Los Corassones Avalan is made possible in part through the generous support of the Viterbi Family.

During the month of November, the carriage house, which is usually closed, will become home to the installation and to roundtables, readings, talks, films and music presentations, where the public will learn and discuss the little-known story and traditions of the “Rodeslis”, the Jewish community living on the island of Rhodes for an unknown number of centuries and in the midsts of many different cultures: Persian, Greek, Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Catalan, Genoese, Venetian, Ottoman, and Italian.

Spearheaded by Stella Levi, this installation is the result of the collaborative work of Isabelle Levy, Erin Mizrahi, Rebecca Samonà, Natalia Indrimi, and Alessandro Cassin. Multimedia: Awen Film and Bitstaff Consulting. Archival sound: www.sephardifolklit.org

Through November 24.

RSVP for the opening

In partnership with Kehila Kedosha Janina and the American Sephardi Federation