



Edmond J. Safra Plaza
36 Battery Place, New York, NY 10280
(646) 437-4200 www.mjhnyc.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 26, 2010

Contacts: Betsy Aldredge / (646) 437-4337 / baldredge@mjhnyc.org
Abby R. Spilka / (646) 437-4333 / aspilka@mjhnyc.org

Photography from Poland to Travel to the U.S. for the First Time
Traces of Memory: A Contemporary Look at the Jewish Past in Poland
from the permanent exhibition of the Galicia Jewish Museum, Kraków
Opens on March 16
at the Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust

NEW YORK, NY – “Rather than coming here [to Poland] just to mourn, we should come with a great sense of dignity, a great sense of pride for what our ancestors accomplished,” the late Chris Schwarz (1948-2007) told the *New York Times*. Over a period of 12 years, Schwarz, a freelance photographer who became founder and director of the Galicia Jewish Museum in Krakow, traveled with British anthropology Professor Jonathan Webber around Poland’s villages and towns in search of the country’s Jewish past. Schwarz’ very powerful photos, accompanied by Webber’s texts, became the Galicia Jewish Museum’s permanent exhibition in 2004. Now, for the first time, *Traces of Memory: A Contemporary Look at the Jewish Past in Poland* will be on view in the United States, when it opens at New York’s **Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust on March 16.**

The Museum of Jewish Heritage also operates the Auschwitz Jewish Center in Oświęcim, Poland. Both organizations share a commitment to commemoration and education, not only about the tragedy of the Holocaust, but about the rich culture of the Jewish people. As these themes are explored eloquently in *Traces of Memory*, Museum Director Dr. David G. Marwell thought it would be a perfect fit for the Museum of Jewish Heritage.

“We are delighted that we could bring to New York this stunning exhibition that has had such a profound impact on the thousands who have visited it in Krakow,” said Dr. David G. Marwell. “Chris Schwarz’s extraordinary photographs and Jonathan Webber’s insightful text combine to both enrich and educate,” he said.

Traces of Memory is a lament to the destroyed Jewish civilization that once flourished in Poland, a documentation of the locations where the annihilation took place, and an exploration of the commemorative efforts that are now taking place in the country. The exhibition comprises five themes that correspond to the different ways in which Poland’s Jewish history can be approached: ***Jewish Life in Ruins; Jewish Culture as it Once Was; The Holocaust: Sites of Massacre and Destruction; How the Past is Being Remembered;*** and ***People Making Memory Today.*** The approximately 3,000 square foot exhibition will be on view in the Irving Schneider and Family Gallery through August 15.

Highlights of the 42 images include a haunting photo of the last tombstone in a former Jewish cemetery where the Germans created the Plaszow concentration camp, featured in *Schindler’s List*. *Traces of Memory* also features images of ruins of abandoned synagogues and cemeteries, and those that have undergone meticulous restorations. While Schwarz and Webber’s project documents the brutality of Auschwitz-

Birkenau and other places where Jews were murdered, they also include beautiful images of memorial efforts made by Jewish survivors, as well as the local Polish population. One especially heartbreaking image is of a memorial wall in Krakow constructed from fragments of smashed Jewish tombstones. The exhibition concludes with photos that illustrate the renewal of Jewish culture in Poland such as an image of crowds gathered for the Jewish Culture Festival in Krakow.

The son of a Polish Jew who escaped to England in 1939, Chris Schwarz first arrived in Krakow in the 1990s. In 2004, after more than a decade of working with Webber, Schwarz opened the Galicia Jewish Museum in a renovated pre-war mill building. Today, in addition to *Traces of Memory*, the museum houses three temporary exhibition galleries, and operates one of Poland's most extensive Jewish cultural and education programs. Since opening, more than 125,000 people have visited the museum. Schwarz passed away from cancer in 2007. He was 59 years old.

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 *The Morgenthau: A Legacy of Service*, on view through December 2010 and *Beyond Swastika and Jim Crow: Jewish Refugee Scholars at Black Colleges*, extended through February 21. The Museum offers visitors a vibrant public program schedule in its Edmond J. Safra Hall. It is also home to *Keeping History Center*, an interactive visitor experience, and Andy Goldsworthy's memorial *Garden of Stones*. The Museum receives general operating support from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

About the Auschwitz Jewish Center

The Auschwitz Jewish Center is operated by the Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust from the Museum's New York City campus. The Center opened its doors in 2000 and joined with the Museum in 2006. Located just three kilometers from the Auschwitz–Birkenau death camps, the Center provides a place for individuals and groups from around the world to pray, study, and learn about the vibrancy of Jewish culture before the war, and memorialize victims of the Holocaust. The only Jewish presence in the vicinity of Auschwitz, the Center's facilities include Oświęcim's only surviving synagogue. Please visit www.ajcf.org for more information.

###