

Media Contact:

Emily Perret
(414) 443-0850 x110
eperret@buzzmonkeyspr.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Jewish Museum Milwaukee to Host Houdini Exhibit This Fall

Interactive exhibit showcases legendary illusionist's life, legacy, magic tricks, and special connection to Milwaukee

MILWAUKEE, WI – Sept. 2, 2019 – The Jewish Museum Milwaukee's (JMM) newest exhibit explores the life of the world's most famous magician. *Inescapable: The Life and Legacy of Harry Houdini*, showcases the incredible story of how this Hungarian Jewish immigrant, Ehrich Weiss, began his legendary magic career in Milwaukee and transformed himself into the acclaimed illusionist. The exhibit is on view at the museum from September 26 through January 5.

The exhibit features photos, videos and archival records as well as rare artifacts and hands-on illusions for all ages. Visitors can recreate Houdini's famous metamorphosis and milk can tricks, escape from handcuffs, learn to be the king of cards and find their way out of an escape room.

"Houdini is universal, fascinating and completely self-invented," said Molly Dubin, curator at JMM. "He became the first international superstar and continues to impact many people, even decades after his death. His life was purposefully illusive, which gives audiences the chance to explore what's real and what's not for themselves."

Inescapable, curated by performer and magician David London, originally for the Jewish Museum of Maryland, tells the story of how Ehrich Weiss became Harry Houdini and looks at the technologies, marketing prowess and entertainment trends that transformed him into an icon. While the exhibit is pure fun – incorporating magic, escapes, séances, films, rare artifacts and hands-on-illusions, it also pulls back the curtain, revealing the story of the man behind the image.

The exhibit is organized into sections illuminating stages of Houdini's life and career:

- *Setting the Stage* describes the struggles of Houdini's early life and the difficulties faced by his father, the first Rabbi of Appleton.
- *The Self Liberator* features a spectacular display of reproduction posters, photos and press clippings, as well as original handcuffs and lockpicking tools that he used in his performances.
- *On the Cutting Edge* investigates his exploration of new technologies and features clips from his film career with a rare recording of his voice.

- *Houdini's Third Act: Exposes Frauds* showcases his crusade against deceptive spiritual mediums.
- *The Final Bow/Curtain Call* sets the record straight on the events that led to his death and explores the séances to contact him by his wife, Bess.

JMM has also added a *Houdini in Wisconsin* section that covers his formative time in the region. He was inspired by side shows at the Dime Museum, located then on Grand Avenue and learned the literal tricks of his trade while in Milwaukee, like acrobatics and holding his breath in the Milwaukee River. Houdini has a connection to and stories that are intertwined with several Wisconsin brands and celebrities, including Schlitz Brewing Company and Master Lock.

The Museum's offerings during the exhibit also include several different events to engage visitors of all ages, including:

- **Haunted MKE: A Forest Home Cemetery Tour** on Sunday, Oct. 13, from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Participants will be guided on a haunted tour of Milwaukee's priceless treasures, including the most important movers and shakers who lived during Houdini's time in Milwaukee.
- **Linking Houdini: A Halloween Séance** on Thursday, Oct. 31, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Attendees can participate in a séance to see if Houdini can cross the veil and prove spiritual afterlife exists. Séances have been conducted every year since his death on Halloween in 1926. There will also be a "Best-In-Show" and "Best Houdini Look-Alike" costume contest, fortune telling from roving tarot card readers, a signature Houdini cocktail from the mixologists at Central Standard Distillery and a moody museum tour.
- **Houdini and the Cult of Celebrity** on Thursday, Dec. 5, from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Attendees will learn about the evolution of celebrity during Houdini's time and our own, through new media technologies and changing conceptions of self.
- **October, November and December 'Third Days'** on the third Thursday of each month, Oct. 17, Nov. 21 and Dec. 19 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. Attendees can see the screening of Houdini's entire "Master Mystery" for free with the cost of admission. The series will be shown in three parts on consecutive 'Third Days' starting in October.
- **Escape Room Challenge by Breakout Games** runs throughout the exhibit, every hour on the hour. Visitors have to search for clues, solve puzzles and find their way out of handcuffs in under 10 minutes, just like the great Harry "Handcuff" Houdini. Reservations for the room can be made through <https://inescapable.youcanbook.me/>.

A full list of programming and more information on the new exhibit is available at www.jewishmuseummilwaukee.org.

Support for the exhibit and related programming comes from Shepherd Express and Wisconsin Public Radio.

Connect with Jewish Museum Milwaukee on Facebook and Instagram @JewishMuseumMilwaukee and on Twitter @JewishMuseumMKE.

About the Jewish Museum Milwaukee

The Jewish Museum Milwaukee is dedicated to preserving and presenting the history of the Jewish people in southeastern Wisconsin and celebrating the continuum of Jewish heritage and culture. The history of American Jews is rooted in thousands of years of searching for freedom and equality. The museum builds bridges between diverse groups of people through shared experiences and uses historical events to look at contemporary topics.

###