

## New Exhibition at MUZA - Eretz Israel Museum, Tel Aviv

### Evgeny and Yakov Henkin: Images of Memory

The first exhibition in Israel of the Henkin brothers, photographers active in parallel in 1930s Leningrad and Berlin.

**Curator:** Raz Samira

**Associate Curator:** Ilana Ellada Matatov

**Opening:** September 19, 2025

**Closing:** February 7, 2026

MUZA - Eretz Israel Museum, Tel Aviv is proud to present the first exhibition in Israel of the photography of brothers Evgeny and Yakov Henkin. Some of the unique black-and-white photographs on display were previously exhibited at the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg - one of the largest and most important museums in the world and at the Street Photo Milano photography festival. The Henkin Brothers Archive, located in Lausanne, contains over 7,500 negatives and is a treasure trove of memories from times and worlds that have vanished. The archive draws the attention of photography scholars, Jewish history researchers, and curators. Its contribution to the record is not only academic, but also cultural and moral.

**Olga Walther, granddaughter of Yakov Henkin and President of the Henkin Brothers Archive Association, stated:** *"The Henkin Brothers Archive is proud of the unique and comprehensive collaboration with MUZA, fulfilling a long-standing hope to present the Henkin brothers' photographs in Israel. We began working on the project in 2022, when the political and security situation was entirely different. Despite today's difficult and complex reality, we chose to move forward together with this great cultural institution and its wonderful team, to connect with the people and the place, and to engage on a human level - just as the Henkin brothers' photographs emphasize the human and humane aspects of life even in troubled times."*

**Ami Katz, Director General of MUZA, said:** *"It is a great privilege to give voice to and preserve stories that history threatened to silence. The exhibition Evgeny and Yakov Henkin: Images of Memory connects the private past of Evgeny and Yakov Henkin with the shaping of collective memory, highlighting the power of culture to illuminate dark corners even nearly a century after the cameras were put aside."*



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*I am proud that MUZA will introduce the Israeli public to the Henkin brothers' rich body of work and to the era in which they lived and created."*

**Raz Samira, MUZA's Deputy Director and Chief Curator, and curator of the exhibition:** *"I am excited and happy that the Henkin Brothers exhibition is taking place at MUZA. Their photography is an important achievement for understanding culture in the period between the two world wars, and it is relevant to our own time. The work of the Henkin brothers, and especially the perspective they present, reflects a search for humanity within a world that is falling apart—making their contribution to research not only academic, but also cultural and moral. I thank Olga Walther and Denis Maslov, founding members of the Henkin Brothers Archive Association, for their close assistance at every stage of developing the exhibition."*

**Evgeny (1900–1938) and Yakov (1903–1941) Henkin** were amateur Jewish photographers active in the 1920s and 1930s. They worked in parallel in two cultural capitals: cosmopolitan Berlin of the Weimar Republic, and Soviet Leningrad (today St. Petersburg).

The small portable Leica and FED (the Soviet version of the Leica) cameras they used allowed them to capture scenes of everyday life: a couple kissing by a canal, children playing in boats made of sand, parades and street processions, family dinners, short countryside vacations—a hidden treasure of leisure and vernacular experience.

In the interwar decades, Jewish communities across Europe – especially in major cities like Berlin, Vienna, Moscow, and Leningrad – experienced a period of integration while also facing mounting threat. Jews entered universities, participated in culture, journalism, and the professions, and urban life allowed them to adopt a new, often middle class lifestyle – vacations, leisure, secular education, consumerism, physical culture, and sports. Photography in general, and that of the Henkin brothers



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in particular, reflected this process: on one hand as a new lifestyle ideal, and on the other as an expression of human freedom.

This period was also marked by tensions: the rise of extreme ethno-nationalism in Germany and of communist dictatorship in the Soviet Union rendered Jewish identity suspect, sometimes repressed. In Soviet Russia, Jews faced a complex dilemma between aligning with the socialist project and preserving identity. In Germany, despite often being integrated into cultural and economic elites, Jews became easy targets for delegitimization, labeled as “foreigners” at the heart of German modernity.

In 1925, Evgeny Henkin left Russia for Berlin, where he developed a love for the performing arts, particularly music, and explored experimental art. He photographed moments of bourgeois tranquility - families in public gardens, in cafés. In his photographs, ominous signs can be detected: anti-Semitic graffiti on Jewish shops, campaign posters for Hitler’s party ahead of the 1933 elections, children playing under the Nazi flag.

His brother Yakov Henkin worked in the Soviet Union during the dominance of Socialist Realism, which placed the worker, farmer, and soldier at the center, highlighting industrial, agricultural, and social achievements. Yakov’s intimate and personal photographs offered an alternative to the official public discourse, expressing an authentic and human view of life under the regime.

In 1936, Evgeny returned to the Soviet Union. In 1937, during Stalin’s Great Purge, he was arrested and, in early January 1938, executed and buried in an unmarked grave. In 1941, when the Third Reich invaded the Soviet Union, Yakov volunteered for the Red Army. He served on the Leningrad front, was severely wounded, died of his injuries, and was buried in a military cemetery on the outskirts of the city.



The exhibition will be accompanied by a comprehensive catalogue of the displayed black-and-white photographs by the Henkin brothers, an essay on their work by the curator, and additional texts; it will be published in Hebrew and English.

The exhibition and catalogue were made possible through the generosity of the **Fondation Le Cèdre (Switzerland)** and an Anonymous donor, as well as additional support provided by **Leonid Solovyev** and **Elena Ziskind**.

**All rights to the photographs and works of the Henkin brothers are reserved to the Henkin Brothers Archive Association (HBAA), Switzerland.**

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MUZA-Eretz Israel Museum, Tel Aviv

**Opening:** September 19, 2025

**Closing:** February 7, 2026

**Address:** MUZA-Eretz Israel Museum, 2 Haim Levanon St., Ramat Aviv, Tel Aviv

**Ticket prices:**

Regular: 52 NIS

Children under 18: Free

Soldiers: 26 NIS

Students: 35 NIS

Senior citizens: 26 NIS

**Opening hours:**

Monday, Wednesday: 10:00–16:00

Tuesday, Thursday: 10:00–20:00

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Friday: 10:00–14:00

Saturday: 10:00–18:00

Closed on Sundays

**Phone:** +972-3-6415244

**Website:** <https://www.eretzmuseum.org.il/>

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/eretzmuseum/>

**Instagram:** <https://www.instagram.com/eretzisraelmuseum/>

For more information, please contact Yifat Rubinstein / Tal Maslati, MUZA account managers, or me 24 hours a day.

Sincerely,  
Ran Rahav  
Public Relations Advisor, MUZA

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