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**EXHIBITION TELLS THE STORY OF THE EPHRUSSI FAMILY,  
CELEBRATED IN THE BESTSELLING MEMOIR *THE HARE WITH AMBER  
EYES* BY EDMUND DE WAAL**

**Featuring works by Jean-Honoré Fragonard, Claude Monet, Berthe Morisot, Gustave Moreau, and Auguste Renoir; Decorative Arts; and Japanese Netsuke, including the Hare of the Book's Title**

***The Hare with Amber Eyes***

**November 19, 2021–May 15, 2022**

**Press Preview: Wednesday, November 17, 10am–1pm, Remarks at 11am. RSVP: [pressoffice@thejm.org](mailto:pressoffice@thejm.org)**

New York NY, November 15, 2021—The Jewish Museum presents [\*The Hare with Amber Eyes\*](#), an exhibition that tells the story of the Ephrussi family—celebrated in the 2010 memoir and *The New York Times* bestseller of the same name by Edmund de Waal—and showcases the breadth and depth of their history and illustrious collections. The exhibition, on view at the Jewish Museum from November 19, 2021, through May 15, 2022, explores the family's rise to prominence and splendor in the first half of the nineteenth century, followed by a focus on the prolific collector and historian of art, Charles Ephrussi, to the inter-war years, and finally World War II, when the family lost its fortune and collection to Nazi looting.

Diller Scofidio + Renfro, working closely with de Waal and the Jewish Museum, created an interpretive installation using art and artifacts, loaned variously by the family and by other cultural institutions. These items trace the turbulent history of the Ephrussi's movements through place and time. The domestic setting of the Jewish Museum evokes the architecturally distinguished homes the Ephrussi family inhabited over the course of generations. Their stories are brought to life through audio excerpts from *The Hare with Amber Eyes* read by Edmund de Waal and encountered by visitors at specific locations throughout the exhibition, giving context to the wide range of objects on display. An audio playback device and headphones will be available to borrow, and infrared triggers will signal the devices to play audio clips as visitors tour the exhibition.

The Jewish Museum  
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[TheJewishMuseum.org](http://TheJewishMuseum.org)

Under the auspices of  
The Jewish Theological Seminary

Jewish Museum

The exhibition brings together pieces from the Ephrussi's collections to examine the ways in which objects can function as storytellers, symbols of resilience, and monuments of a family legacy, including artworks by Jean-Honoré Fragonard, Claude Monet, Berthe Morisot, Gustave Moreau, and Auguste Renoir, among others; decorative objects; and family photos and ephemera from their lives across four continents. At the exhibition's centerpiece are 168 pieces of the extraordinary collection of Japanese netsuke, miniature carved sculptures from the Edo Period (17th–19th centuries), originally collected by Charles Ephrussi in the late 1870s. The collection of netsuke has been handed down to subsequent generations, serving as a connection between the past and the present. The most recent member of the family to inherit the collection, author and ceramicist Edmund de Waal, drew from them the inspiration for his memoir *The Hare with Amber Eyes*, continuing the family's storied legacy of artistic and cultural pursuits. Recent large-scale photographs by Dutch photographer Iwan Baan of the Ephrussi's grand former residences in Paris and Vienna underscore the passage of time.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, the Ephrussi family became one of the most influential Jewish families in Europe. Charles Joachim Ephrussi (1793–1864) built his fortune as a grain distributor in Odessa. His descendants continued to grow the family's wealth and influence as bankers, becoming peers of the Rothschild family, and expanding their presence across the major capitals of Europe. In Vienna, Charles's son Ignace (1829–1899) founded the Ephrussi & Co bank, eventually receiving the noble title of Knight (Ritter). The Ephrussis achieved high social status as leading participants in the imperial city's flourishing economic and architectural sectors and were known for their cultural and intellectual contributions. Reflecting their success, the family commissioned the Palais Ephrussi, a noble residence on the famed Ringstrasse. The family owned castles and estates throughout Europe, including the famous Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild on the French Riviera.

Charles Ephrussi (1849–1905), one of the notable members of the family, was Charles Joachim Ephrussi's grandson and a distinguished



art critic, historian, and collector. He was a prominent figure in the cultural fabric of late 19th century Paris, serving as part-owner, editor, and contributor to the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, the famed French art review that was the foremost art historical reference during this period. Through his activities, he befriended luminaries of the thriving Parisian art and literary scenes, including Edgar Degas and Edouard Manet among the Impressionists, the symbolist poet Jules Laforgue, and writer Marcel Proust. Charles's presence can be felt across the history of art in the period—his likeness appears in the work of Auguste Renoir and he served as an inspiration for a central character (Charles Swann) in Proust's masterpiece, *In Search of Lost Time*.

In addition to fine art of various periods, Charles Ephrussi amassed a significant collection of Japanese art and decorative objects, including netsuke figurines, miniature wooden or ivory carved sculptures used as garment toggles. This was a reflection not just of Charles' encyclopedic interests but of Japonisme, the interest in Japanese art and design among Europeans after trade between the West and Japan resumed in the 1850s following a 250-year hiatus. Charles was one of the important promoters of Japanese art in France during this period, eventually acquiring a total of 264 netsuke figurines.

As one of the most prominent Jewish families in Europe, the Ephrussis became a major target as antisemitism grew in the late 19th and 20th centuries. During World War II, the family found refuge in exile, making their way to England, America, and Mexico. They lost their vast fortune and priceless art collection to the Nazis and were unable to recover their wealth and most of their property in the aftermath of the war. One exception was the collection of netsuke, featured prominently in this exhibition. Of the family collection, 168 are displayed in the exhibition, as well as a projection of the 79 netsuke sold at auction in 2018 with proceeds going to the Refugee Council, a charity working with refugees and people seeking asylum in the UK.

The book, *The Hare with Amber Eyes*, has won many literary honors including the RSL Ondaatje Prize and the Costa Biography Award and



has been translated into over 30 languages. In 2015, de Waal was awarded the prestigious Windham-Campbell Prize for Non-Fiction by Yale University. The following year, it was chosen as the Independent Bookshop Week's Book of the Decade.

*The Hare with Amber Eyes* is organized by the Jewish Museum, New York; Stephen Brown, Curator, with Shira Backer, Leon Levy Associate Curator; and Elizabeth Diller in collaboration with Edmund de Waal. Interpretation and design by Diller Scofidio + Renfro.

The exhibition is based on *The Ephrussis: Travel in Time*, an exhibition organized by the Jewish Museum Vienna that was on view November 6, 2019, through March 8, 2020. The catalogue published to accompany the exhibition at the Jewish Museum Vienna is available for purchase at the Jewish Museum's Cooper Shop.

The audio system is provided by tonwelt, a media company based in Berlin.

### **Public Programs**

Drawing inspiration from the major cities which serve as the locations for the family memoir *The Hare with Amber Eyes*, the Jewish Museum will present a range of public programs (both virtual and in person) which address, among other topics, cultural production in late 19th-century Paris, the music of Viennese composers, and contemporary perspectives on collecting Japanese art. In addition, there will be virtual talks featuring Edmund de Waal and Elizabeth Diller, a curator talk in partnership with 92Y, art history classes which contextualize the exhibition within the narrative of World War II era looting, and art-making workshops for adults.

### **Support**

*The Hare with Amber Eyes* is made possible by The Wilf Family Foundations, the Arnhold Family, Wendy Fisher and the Kirsh Foundation, Denise Littlefield Sobel, E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation, Judy and Leonard Lauder, Reuben and Jane Leibowitz, The Goldie and David Blanksteen Foundation, a gift from the estate of Gaby and Curtis Hereld, Jeanine Parisier Plottel and



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### **About the Jewish Museum**

Located on New York City's famed Museum Mile, the Jewish Museum is a distinctive hub for art and Jewish culture for people of all backgrounds. Founded in 1904, the Museum was the first institution of its kind in the United States and is one of the oldest Jewish museums in the world. Devoted to exploring art and Jewish culture from ancient to contemporary, the Museum offers diverse exhibitions and programs and maintains a unique collection of nearly 30,000 works of art, ceremonial objects, and media reflecting the global Jewish experience over more than 4,000 years. The public may call 212.423.3200 or visit [TheJewishMuseum.org](http://TheJewishMuseum.org) for more information.

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