



PRESS RELEASE

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New York, NY, February 2015 - Centro Primo Levi launches CPL Editions, a new Italian publishing endeavor at the historical bookstore and publisher S.F. Vanni's

Opening party: February 17th between 6:00 pm and 9:00 pm

Address: 30 West 12th Street, NYC

Launching of the first books of CPL Editions (see www.primolevicenter.org)

Visual history of S.F.Vanni through historical family photographs

Visit the old space and the new one, connecting the present to the last remnant of the Village's publishers' row

Refreshments

S.F. VANNI, the first Italian bookstore in America, in business from 1884 to 2004, will reopen as a pop-up bookstore and cultural space, under the auspices of Centro Primo Levi.

The goal is not to revive the old traditional bookstore, but to re-imagine it for today.

The tradition of Italian books in New York begins with Mozart's librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte, who first brought Italian books to NY in 1805. S.F. VANNI, opened the store (at 548 West Broadway) at the end of the 19th century; bookseller and publisher Andrea Ragusa, brought it into the 20th century on Bleecker Street and then to its present address.

Now, CPL EDITIONS— Centro Primo Levi’s e-book and print-on-demand publishing venture—a niche independent publishing initiative dedicated to the history of Italian Jews— will operate out of S.F. VANNI, in 21st century America.

For decades, thousands of dusty Italian books sat on metal shelves in the two rooms beyond the old-fashioned pale blue curtains of S.F.VANNI’s storefront. Revisited with advice from architect Bonnie Roche and designer Jonathan Wajskol, the first room has become a multifunctional space for book presentations, lectures, and film screenings. The second room —with the original books sold and published by S.F. VANNI, many of them rare editions, will be preserved as ‘urban archeology’. Board member Stella Levi imagines it as something between a *beit midrash* and a salon, a living space where a variety of events will take place. CPL’s director Alessandro Cassin envisions it as tribute to a long tradition of Italian and Jewish family-based publishers that strongly impacted the surrounding culture.

Andrea Ragusa, bookseller and publisher, arrived in the US in 1931, on a mission: to sell the newly compiled Italian Encyclopedia (*Enciclopedia Italiana Treccani*), and create —through books— a bridge between Italy and the United States. Within a decade his bookstore became the main supplier of Italian books and periodicals, not only to New York City, but also to libraries and universities throughout the United States and Canada.

S.F. Vanni at 548 West Broadway
1884



S.F. 135 Bleecker Street
1880



SF Vanni at 30 12th Street
1940





CPL EDITIONS, in partnership with OR BOOKS, intends to build on Ragusa’s experience and bring it into the 21st Century while preserving a locus of Italian cultural history in New York. In the process of breathing new life into this historic bookstore, CPL EDITIONS will present its six inaugural titles:

Bianca Guidetti Serra, *Primo Levi, The Friend*

Olga Tarcali, *Return from Erfurt- Story Of a Shattered Childhood: 1935-1945*

Gemma Vitale Servadio, *“I Am Counting on You, On Everyone...” Eight Letters from Fossoli, 1944*

Roberto Bassi, *Skirmishes on Lake Ladoga- Venice to Rome: in flight from the Racial Laws*

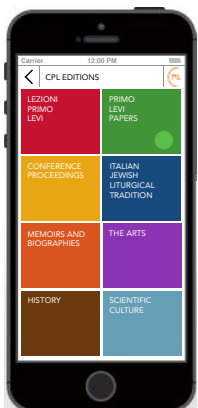
Annalisa Capristo, *Gather What You Can and Flee: Jewish Intellectual Emigration From Fascist Italy*

Paola Mieli, *A Silver Martian- Normality and Segregation in Primo Levi’s Sleeping Beauty in the Fridge*

CPL thanks Olga Ragusa for her enthusiasm, generosity and love for books.

The CPL @ S.F. VANNI’s initiative is made possible through a generous grant from Peter S. Kalikow and the ongoing support of Jeff Keil, Danielle Pinet and Lice Ghilardi.

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