

For our children, so they may know from where they came

# THE MISSING MEZZUZOT OF ZDUŃSKA WOLA

## The First Hundred

75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liquidation of the Zdunska Wola ghetto

A project about life, celebrating the diversity and vibrancy  
of the Jewish community of Zdunska Wola before 1939



SYDNEY  
JEWISH  
MUSEUM  
HOLOCAUST  
AND AUSTRALIAN  
JEWISH HISTORY

ASPJ  
Australian Society of Polish Jews  
and their Descendants



רְכָבֵן יִצְחָק זַדְנֶסְקָה וּבְשָׁרוֹאִי  
The Organization of Former Residents of Zduńska Wola in Israel



Pockets of Hope  
a documentary of hope beyond hate, music beyond tears...



Polaron  
European Citizenship

*Mezzuzah* (plural: *mezzuzot*) comprises a piece of parchment contained in a decorative case and inscribed with Hebrew verses of the Jewish prayer *Shema Yisrael*. A mezzuzah is affixed to the doorpost of Jewish homes.

*The Missing Mezzuzot of Zdunska Wola* is an interactive exhibition/installation of 3,000 mezzuzot created as a metaphor evoking the memory of the Jewish families living in Zdunska Wola, Poland before 1939.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vulYtv85yZo>



## The First Hundred Mezzuzot

An exhibition of The First Hundred of 3000 mezzuzot opened at the Muzeum Historii Miasta Zduńska Wola ul. Złotnickiego 7, on the 75th anniversary of the liquidation of the Zdunska Wola ghetto, 27 August 2017 at 12 pm. It is now a permanent exhibit, for educational purposes, at the Zduńska Wola museum.

## The purpose of the Missing Mezzuzot project is to:

- Celebrate the vibrant energy and diversity of Jewish life in prewar Zdunska Wola
- Acknowledge the contribution of the small Jewish community of Zdunska Wola
- Preserve the names of those who disappeared without a trace
- Provide the next generations with the knowledge of their history, alongside that of the Holocaust
- Stimulate intergenerational discussion
- Encourage and promote intercultural dialogue and understanding
- Create an engaging interactive work of enduring beauty



## How?

A unique questionnaire has been designed to evoke meaningful, and historical vignettes from participating families. For example:

What colour do you see when you think of Zdunska Wola? **Red.**

Why red? **You know that my grandfather's beard was red. I can still feel him tickling me with the bristles of his beard.**



Each response has been recorded and archived by using text, video, sound, music and/or photographs, and then digitally linked to the family mezzuzah.

The mezzuzot are mounted as an installation and the family's stories are accessed by tablet in the room of the exhibition.

## The Website

The website [www.missingmezzuzot.com](http://www.missingmezzuzot.com) forms the heart of the project. It is the hub for all of our documents, stories, anecdotes, music and pictures.

The installation makes the website accessible to the audience, creating an interactive and dynamic exchange.

## The Design

Each mezzuzah is housed in two glass test tubes. The outer test tube has a glass stopper with a vertical disc. The disc is imprinted with a spiral resembling a fingerprint.

The inner test tube contains the mezzuzah, wound in such a way as to show its text. This inner tube is sealed. It is surrounded, and partially hidden, by light-coloured soil from Jerusalem and a thin layer of dark soil from Zdunska Wola.

Where there are no Jewish descendants from Zdunska Wola, mezzuzah will remain visible, as the soil will reach the half-way mark of the inner tube.

Where there are descendants, the inner tube will be surrounded by soils of the diaspora.



BLICBLAU  
Sieradzka 9

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zginęli



## Design choices and considerations

Glass was chosen for the mezzuzah casing because of its transparency, illuminating qualities and ability to reflect light. Light functions as a metaphor for integrity, clarity of thought, education and an open mind.

The uniformity of the design is deliberate so as not to differentiate between rich or poor, religious or secular, educated or otherwise.

The soil from Jerusalem at the base of each mezzuzah unites every Jewish person, as Jerusalem is the ancestral land of our forebears; every Jewish grave is sprinkled with soil from Jerusalem.

The soil from Zdunska Wola creates the divide. For some families it represents a tragic discontinuation. For others, where the Zdunska Wola soil meets soil from elsewhere, it represents survival and the continuity of future generations.

The design of the mezzuzah is deliberately cylindrical so that it cannot easily be affixed to the doorpost of a house, emphasising that one cannot so easily replace what was destroyed.

## The Installation

The mezzuzot are mounted on 4 panels in a configuration of 5 across x 5 down. The name of each family is engraved on a small brass plaque that sits below each mezzuzah.

A tablet mirrors the installation, with an onscreen icon corresponding to each mezzuzah.

When an icon on the tablet is touched, the corresponding mezzuzah on the installation board will illuminate, showing a particular family's current location or tragic fate. Simultaneously, vignettes, video clips, stories, music, anecdotes and/or photographs of each chosen family will open on the tablet, enabling the audience to access a family's story.

An accompanying catalogue, entitled 'Looking for Zduńska Wola' features a foreword by curator Estelle Rozinski, curatorial essays, family images, archival documents, stories and statements.





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