



# THE MEZUZAH MESSAGE

January 30 - June 26, 2025

*“It was not with our ancestors that God made this covenant but with us, the living, every one of you that are here today.” Deuteronomy 5:3*

*“And you shall inscribe them on the doorposts (mezuzot) of your house and on your gates.” Deuteronomy 6:9*

At this time of rising antisemitism, the Heller Museum invited leading contemporary artists to conceive of innovative designs for the mezuzah, an object of biblical origin that affirms our Covenant with God and publicly proclaims our faith.

Seventeen artists imaginatively revised this traditional Jewish ceremonial object, which is affixed on the right side, at the top third, of the doorposts of our homes, Jewishly-purposed edifices, and the rooms within.

The mezuzah (meaning doorpost) is a case bearing a *klaf* (hand-lettered parchment scroll) with words from Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 11:13-21. It contains the Shema prayer, “Hear O Israel! Adonai is our God, Adonai is One,” and continues with instructions on how to love God, keep God’s commandments, and teach them to one’s children.

Created with unexpected materials, reflecting diverse styles, and ranging in scale from monumental to diminutive, these artists’ mezuzot bring new energy to a traditional Jewish ritual object. They creatively demonstrate how our commitment to our heritage and pride in our Jewish identity can be declared and celebrated today.

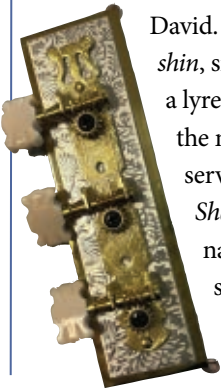
Phyllis Freedman, *Curator*

## 1. FRANN ADDISON

***Musician’s Mezuzah***, 2023

Classical guitar tuner, brass, embossed, 5.75" x 1.875" x .5"

The first musical instrument mentioned in the Bible was the ancient Hebrew lyre, called a *kinnor*, played by King David. The Hebrew letter *shin*, similar to the shape of a lyre, is placed at the top of the mezuzah, where it also serves as the symbol for *Shaddai*, one of God’s holy names, that appears on the scroll within the case.



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## 2. ELLEN ALT and LAWRENCE CONLEY

***Mezuzah Unscrolled***, 2024

Printed retractable banner and case, 70" x 33"

Saying “these times call for Jews to step up and step out with bold proclamations of our Jewish identity,” Alt and Conley expand upon the concept of the mezuzah by enlarging its scale, displaying the prayers, and celebrating identity with color and texture.

### 3. GAYLE ASCH

#### *LEGO Mezuzah*, 2024

LEGO bricks, glue, klaf,  
6" x 2.5" x 1.5"

Celebrating the joy of creative play by using LEGO bricks, Asch created a tiny structure for the scroll and included symbolic shapes of a shofar and kiddush cup. The six-petaled LEGO flowers are reminiscent of Stars of David.



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### 4. BONNIE ASTOR

#### *Mezuzah in Space*, 2024

Mixed media,  
18" x 6" x 18"

Inspired by seeing the vastness of space through a telescope, Astor created her mezuzah in the shape of a planet, with an inner scroll, surrounded by her favorite Judaic symbols representing the many stars in the sky.



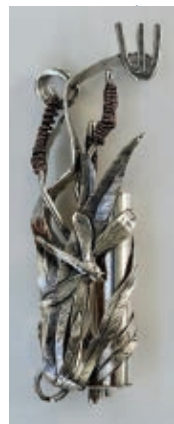
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### 6. SHERRI COHEN

#### *Dragonfly Amidst the Cattails*, 2020

Sterling silver and copper,  
5" x 1.5"

Stylistically influenced by Art Nouveau, Cohen uses sculptural reliefs of flora and fauna to capture her awe of nature.



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### 7. JANET DASH

#### *Central Synagogue*,

c. 1990  
Sterling silver,  
5" x 1.5" x .5"

Dash's mezuzah honors her many happy years as a member of

Central Synagogue, whose distinctive Moorish dome is depicted.



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### 5. MAXWELL BAUMAN

#### *Shalom*, 2024

LEGO bricks, 25" x 6.5" x 1"

Bauman artfully manipulated the LEGO bricks and Hebrew calligraphic font to legibly spell *shalom*, chosen because it welcomes all who come in (and expresses goodbye and peace) and begins with the letter *shin*, the first letter in *Shaddai* (Almighty) that appears on the scroll within.

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### 8. JANET DASH

#### *Double Shin*, c. 1990

Sterling silver,  
4.25" x 1.25" x .5"

Dash says her joy is in fashioning ritual art in a contemporary style. Here the letter *shin* is an integral part of the design.



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## 9. BETH GROSSMAN

### *And With These Words Shall You Bind Your Hand*, 2006

Carved wooden soup ladle, leather strap, parchment scroll, 16" x 4" x 2"

#### (BACK COVER, RIGHT)

Grossman explains that the homestyle soup ladle, bound like an arm with a *tefillin* strap, serves as a reminder of the Jewish value of *shalom bayit* (peace in the home). It is customary for Jews entering a home or synagogue to touch the mezuzah with their hands and kiss their fingertips. This hand-carved mezuzah makes a connection with the sacred, almost like a hand shake, before entering a new space.

## 10. NAOMI GROSSMAN

### *Our Home*, 2024

#### (FRONT COVER)

Wire, mixed media, parchment scroll, 60" x 36" x 30"

The image of two hands cradling the words and scroll conveys that the mezuzah protects us, our beliefs, and our traditions. The words, some taken from the biblical inscription on the parchment scroll, represent the values and memories that the mezuzah holds. Grossman says "the mezuzah is strong and resilient like wire and steel but also fragile in these fragile and uncertain times."



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## 11. MELANIE KLINE

### *Tallit*, 2002

Sterling silver, 10" x 3" x .25"

The design of this mezuzah case was first drawn, then drilled into the silver using the tiniest of dots. Swirling points of light represent the heavens. Beyond the tube holding the parchment, Hebrew phrases and pictures depict the physical world and God's promises of rain, wine, oil, and grain for as long as the heavens are above the earth. The carved tablets declare the devotion in our hearts on our doorposts and are a reminder to teach our values to our children.



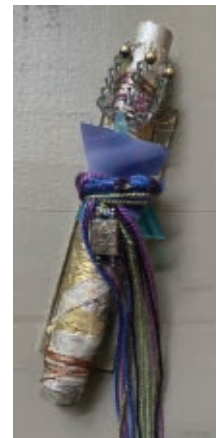
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## 12. RANDY KLINE-GROSS

### *Jewish in the Keys*, 2024

Lionfish spines and acrylic, 5" x 1" x 1"

Florida-based Kline-Gross uses the beautiful but venomous spines of the invasive lionfish. They became an environmental issue when unwanted lionfish were discarded from home aquariums into Florida's waters, where they have multiplied.



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## 13. CINDY LUTZ KORNET

### *Bless This Household*, 2024

Mixed media, 7.25" x 3.625" x 1.75"

Kornet uses several articles of adornment, including a sterling silver charm, to enhance the PVC tubing that holds the scroll.



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**14. KSENIJA KOSTIC-PECARIC**  
*Doorpost Bird Nest, 2024*

Mixed media,  
41" x 18" x 5"

Kostic-Pecaric feels a connection between her family tree and the local birds who build nests for their families.

Each rolled scroll features the three Hebrew letters of *Shaddai* (*shin, daled, yud*) on the outside, an acronym for *shomer daltot Yisrael* (guardian of Israel's doors).

**17. ELLEN COHEN SCOTT**

*Lady Liberty, 2024*

Fabric, paint, embroidery thread, 5" x 4"

Scott's textile mezuzah proclaims the American values of freedom and the Jewish values of human rights so powerfully expressed by the



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Jewish poet Emma Lazarus's welcoming inscription on the Statue of Liberty.

**15. ANITA RABINOFF-GOLDMAN**

*House for the Mezuzah for the House, 2024*

Altoid boxes, gold leaf, acrylic paint, beads, wire, 6.675" x 2.375" x 1"

Rabinoff-Goldman explains that her objective was to create something both practical and beautiful so as to embody the concept of *hiddur mitzvah*—the elevation of an object to honor its purpose. "By upcycling a common object into a ritual item, the object is uplifted."



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**18. DEBORAH UGORETZ**

*In and Out, 2010*

Papercut, 14.25" x 10.25"

(BACK COVER, LEFT)

Ugoretz explains, "The mezuzah is a signifier of transitional space in which God dwells. According to the Sages, since it is neither in nor out, this liminal void delineates the space that is a holy space."

Ugoretz employs papercutting, dating back to the late 17th century, which was brought to Europe from China by Jewish merchants.

**16. DIANE REICH**

*Bless This Household, 2024*

Mixed media, 13" x 17"

Multiple small scrolls of parchment surround an image of a house within which a blessing for a happy and peaceful home is inscribed.



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