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**NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORY INSTALLS**  
**COMMISSIONED CONTEMPORARY MEZUZAH**

The **National Museum of American Jewish History** has a **new mezuzah** on display in the Museum's entryway. The mezuzah was commissioned by Executive Director Emerita Gwen Goodman with the support of Museum patron Marian Wolgin. A mezuzah is a handwritten parchment scroll inscribed with biblical passages on one side, and the word Shaddai (another name for G-d) on the other side, inserted in a small case or tube and attached by Jews to the doorpost of their homes to serve as a constant reminder of G-d's presence and commandments given to the Jewish people. This mezuzah was designed by



**Mezuzah, 2014 Daniella Kerner and Stanley Lechtzin Computer-printed bronze and nickel-plated bronze Commissioned for the National Museum of American Jewish History Gift of Norman and Marian Wolgin in memory of Amy Wolgin Wiener**

metal artists and Tyler School of Art professors **Daniella Kerner** and **Stanley Lechtzin**.

This mezuzah was one of ten designed over the span of one year for the Museum's consideration, all of which were designed to be printed in metal using computer production/CAD-CAM. Kerner and Lechtzin have been creating Judaica together since the late 1980s. Their works are featured in many museum collections worldwide, including the **Museum of Art and Design** in New York, the **Designmuseet** in Helsinki, Finland, the **Philadelphia Museum of Art**, and the **Pforzheim Museum of Jewelry** in Germany.

Kerner and Lechtzin spent much time conducting research on the history and symbolism of mezuzot (Hebrew plural of mezuzah) in the process of creating the one now on display. This contemporary mezuzah took approximately ten days to print using a depositing method which is not widely used when working in metal because of its level of difficulty. The body of the mezuzah is layered bronze, and the word Shaddai emanates from the right side, over the piece, in nickel-plated bronze. In keeping with Jewish tradition Kerner and Lechtzin kept the parchment hidden within the mezuzah, but also found a way to incorporate the text into the design. The final design is a contemporary and unique representation of traditional forms and symbols. According to Kerner, a large influence on the mezuzah's design was an essay by Marc-Alain Ouaknin entitled "Symbols of Judaism", in which the mezuzah represents movement and passage.

Ivy Barsky, the Museum's CEO and Gwen Goodman Director, says "we are delighted to have this beautiful new piece of art, which was designed specifically for the Museum, hanging in our entryway."

The mezuzah is a gift of Norman and Marian Wolgin in memory of their daughter, Amy Wolgin Wiener, and can be viewed in the main entryway of the museum.

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The National Museum of American Jewish History, located on historic Independence Mall in Philadelphia, brings to life the 350-year history of Jews in America. Tracing the stories of how Jewish immigrants became Jewish Americans, the Museum invites visitors of all backgrounds to share their own stories and reflect on how their histories and identities shape and are shaped by the American experience. An open door for all, NMAJH honors the past and contributes to a better future by sharing the power of imagination and ideas, culture and community, leadership and service, in ways that turn inspiration into action.

The National Museum of American Jewish History is located at 101 South Independence Mall East at the corner of Fifth and Market Streets in Philadelphia. Museum hours are Tuesday to Friday, 10:00 am - 5:00 pm, and Saturday and Sunday 10:00 am - 5:30 pm. NMAJH is closed most Mondays, including federal holidays and some Jewish holidays. Museum admission is \$12.00 for adults, \$11.00 for senior citizens and youth, free for children 12 and under, Museum Members, and active military with ID. On Wednesdays until Labor Day, the Museum will stay open until 8:00 pm. Admission after 5:00 PM is pay-what-you-wish. For more information, visit [NMAJH.org](http://NMAJH.org) or call 215.923.3811.