

MAKING/HISTORY

The Wooden Synagogue Replication Project

Re-Building a 17th century Wooden Synagogue with the
Museum of the History of Polish Jews



Over 200 magnificent Wooden Synagogues of Poland were destroyed by the end of World War II.

This is a ONCE IN A LIFETIME Travel Program

Students will travel to Poland to participate in the Handhouse Studio / Museum of the History of Polish Jews international workshops to create a 85% scale replica of the timber roof structure and polychrome wooden ceiling from the now lost 17th century wooden Gwoździec Synagogue. The completed roof structure will be installed in the new Museum of the History of Polish Jews and become a major part of the permanent core exhibition, set within the stunning architectural space of the Museum's modern building. The Museum is scheduled to open 2013 in Warsaw on the site of the former Warsaw Ghetto facing the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising monument.

Timber Frame Roof Workshop Travel Programs

Students will work alongside an international team of traditional carpenters from the Timber Framers Guild (www.tfguild.org), architects, artist, historians and educators to help with the reconstruction of the unique timber frame roof structure of the Gwoździec synagogue using period tools and techniques, as well as experience contemporary Polish life, visit historically important sites, and investigate the varied origins of Polish and Jewish Culture.

Massachusetts College of Art and Design
Group 1 - May 23 - June 12
Massachusetts College of Art and Design
Group 2 - May 31 - June 18
School of the Art Institute of Chicago
Group 3 - June 8 - June 27
University of California San Diego
Group 4 - June 13 - July 1



Ceiling Painting Workshop Travel Programs

Students will work alongside an international team of architects, artist, historians and educators to participate with the painting of the wooden ceiling panels for the Gwoździec synagogue using traditional painting techniques, as well as experience contemporary Polish life, visit historically important sites, and investigate the varied origins of Polish and Jewish Culture.



Massachusetts College of Art and Design
Group 5 - July 3 - July 21
Maryland Institute College of Art
Group 6 - July 21 - Aug 8
Oberlin College & Kent State University
Group 7 - Aug 8 - Aug 26

2011 - 2012, the Museum of the History of Polish Jews and Handhouse Studio will rebuild components of an exquisite 17th-century wooden synagogue. This historic structure will be set within the stunning architectural space of the Museum's modern building. The Museum is under construction on the site of the former Warsaw Ghetto facing the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising monument. None of these extraordinary wooden synagogues survive. The Nazis burned the last of them to the ground in 1939. But, we do have excellent documentation that will allow us to reconstruct one of the most beautiful of these architectural treasures, the Gwoździec wooden synagogue. We plan to rebuild its polychrome ceiling and timber-framed roof to 85% scale, using traditional tools, techniques, and materials.

The wooden synagogue is a perfect expression of the Golden Age of Polish Jewry during the 17th and 18th centuries. The Gwoździec ceiling and roof, a centerpiece in our presentation of the 1000-year history of Polish Jews, will extend up from the Core Exhibition into the grand public space of the Museum's modern building. The building was designed by Ilmari Lahdelma and Rainer Mahlamäki of Finland, winners of an international competition, the first in Poland for a public institution. From the Core Exhibition, visitors will look up at the polychrome ceiling, while from the grand public space of this modern building, they will look through a cutaway in the roof and see the marvelous timber frame structure within.

This truly unique project offers an exceptional educational experience. First, we will bring together an international team of students, conservation architects, architectural historians, master timber carpenters, and other experts to recover the knowledge of how to build such structures by actually building the roof structure and vaulted ceiling panels through a six week workshop. Second, we will divide the vaulted ceiling panels into eight sections and we will paint the panels in empty synagogues in eight different locations in Poland. We will encourage participation of local townspeople, with the goal of stimulating local interest in the Jewish past of these towns, connecting Jews around the world that descend from those places with those living there today, and fostering collaborative efforts to preserve the memory of Jewish life in Poland. The Handhouse principle of "learn by building" demonstrates the power of architecture to build community and foster historical awareness and appreciation.



Gwozdziec Synagogue ceiling painting study - 2009

Any and all questions regarding:
Making/HISTORY:
The Wooden Synagogue Project

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