

Kazimierz – A Space of Memory, Identity, and Transformation

Kazimierz, once Kraków's Jewish quarter and now a vibrant urban space inhabited by an active local community, stands as a unique example of a place where past and present intertwine in every alleyway. For artists exploring themes of memory, identity, and transformation, Kazimierz is not merely a backdrop — it is a central character.

Founded in 1335 by King Casimir the Great as a separate town, Kazimierz took on a new identity in the 15th century when Kraków's authorities relocated the Jewish community there. For centuries, it was the heart of religious, educational, and social life for one of the most important Jewish diasporas in Europe. Seven synagogues, mikvehs, schools, cemeteries, and prayer houses formed a dense spiritual fabric that shaped daily life and community identity.

That world was violently interrupted during World War II. The Nazis not only physically destroyed Kazimierz but also attempted to erase the memory of its residents. The Jewish community was almost entirely exterminated, and many sacred buildings were devastated or repurposed. During the communist era, Kazimierz fell into silence and neglect — an unwanted void left by what had been lost. Since the 1990s, however, the district has slowly come back to life — not only as a space of symbolic memory but also as a real place of everyday living. Alongside growing artistic and cultural initiatives, Kazimierz has become home to a local Polish community whose presence has grown steadily over the years. In the courtyards of historic tenement buildings, new generations are growing up. Neighbors have known each other for years, and many small shops and service points have been run by the same families for decades.

Today's Kazimierz is a district of contrasts — a space undergoing gentrification and heavy tourism, yet still marked by close-knit neighborly relations, daily rituals, and a strong sense of local identity. More and more residents see the risk of losing the intimate, familial character of this part of Kraków — which is why it is so important that contemporary artistic work and reflection engage not only with the past but also with the unique present of this extraordinary district.

Projection Site:

HEVRE – A Former Synagogue, A New Function

One of the most symbolic sites of this transformation is HEVRE, the club whose façade will serve as the canvas for the video mapping projections. Located at the corner of Meiselsa and Bożego Ciała streets, the building once housed the Chewra Tehilim prayer house, built in 1896 by the Psalms Brotherhood. In its original form, the ground floor served as the main prayer hall, with a women's gallery above. During the German occupation, the interior was desecrated, and after the war, in 1951, the building was taken over by a state cultural group – the Krakowiacy Song and Dance Ensemble – which operated there for over fifty years.

It was not until the 21st century that the building's spiritual layer began to re-emerge. In 2008, during renovation work, original wall paintings were discovered beneath layers of plaster – frescoes in shades of blue and green depicting views of Jerusalem, along with symbolic animal imagery: a lion, a tiger, an eagle, and a deer. These are more than just decorative elements – they are visual echoes of faith, strength, vigilance, and spiritual rootedness. A niche remains where the

aron ha-kodesh (holy ark for storing Torah scrolls) once stood, surrounded by fragments of a red curtain – an almost theatrical frame of absence and silence.

Today, HEVRE is a space for gathering and creating – a club, restaurant, co-working space, and artistic hub. But its walls still carry memory – and it is precisely this duality that makes it such a compelling subject for artistic interpretation. HEVRE tells its story not only through what remains but also through what has vanished – ready to be brought back to life through light, sound, and motion.