



Andrea Fuhrman

Smoky Hill River Festival Print 2017 – 'Mecca'

The theme for the Smoky Hill River Festival this year is "road trip." Hearing that, I imagined the curving road from Abilene to Salina, the tall rounded cathedrals of grain towers in Abilene, New Cambria and Salina, and the gorgeous shape of the Salina water tower that glows like a shining globe (which connotes travel), or a spaceship (more travel) looming as it graces the intersection of Magnolia Road and Belmont.

I've felt for a long time that Salina is my "cultural Mecca" since I often drive from Abilene to Salina to visit the Art Center, the Art Cinema and the Salina Public Library, where I am nurtured by the city's cultural offerings. Art exhibitions, artists, the coffee house and many friends reside in Salina.

I've been making postcard collages since 1996 during an artist residency at the Edna St. Vincent Millay Colony in New York. I was illustrating the residency on a recycled art postcard to mail to friends and realized I needed to explore the art form further. The intimate scale of the postcard and of this year's Festival Print mirrors my fascination with small things. As a child, I spent much time looking through a microscope at my father's glass specimen slides from his college biology classes.

My collages are made on recycled art invites that come in the mail. I use gesso, paint, found paper, metal and all sorts of materials glued or sewn onto the postcard, so it is transformed from an art invite into a small universe.

In my Festival Print collage, there is a golden curl of a plant form--a nod to the farmlands that surround Salina and accompany one on the journey on Old Highway 40 from Abilene. Also within the collage are ticket numbers, which one might obtain from passage, and a red-and-white crisscross scrap reminiscent of the colors of the iconic Cozy Inn. Paint-chip samples are an element I often use in my collages. Also included is an image of our planet, floating in a turquoise sea. A segment of a doily, the ornamental paper that embellishes a sweet, as an offering of peace, is added to the composition. Within the work, I'm thinking about climate change, politics, travel and nourishment. I named the limited-edition Festival Print "Mecca," meaning a place that attracts people of a particular group or with a certain interest. The Smoky Hill River Festival is exactly that: a coming together of citizens so they may revel in art and music on a summer day. Mecca also is a place where Muslims make a pilgrimage. I wanted to share my compassion for them and for all people.

For the Festival print, I created a 5" x 7" collage, then had the original reproduced on 100% cotton rag, 230 grams per square meter or weight, paper that is acid-free and archival, using pigmented inks. The prints should last for 60 to 200 years, depending on the substrate and the environment in which the print is displayed. Do not hang in direct sunlight.

"I do not want ART for a few any more than education for a few, or freedom for a few." - William Morris