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Judith Levy's panoramic postcards with an edge

By TOM RYAN, Midwest Voices contributing columnist

What is the nature of memory? How does it work; that way the mind pulls us back to a time, a place, a person? Why can we sit and reflect and be transported? Why does memory arrive without warning? Have you ever had a collection of memories wash over you in a huge wave?

What is history from a personal and collective sense? Can fiction inform history? Do you enjoy reading historical fiction, how a writer can create the atmosphere of a time and take you there? Does history give you a feeling of hope or does it make you feel worried about the present because you sense a repetition in the rhythm of life?

Do you collect things? If you do, do those things serve as reminders of people, places, things, and experiences?

On your travels over the course of the coming year, take some time to see Judith Levy's panoramic postcards in the post office window on the north side of 12th Street, between Baltimore and Main, in downtown Kansas City, Missouri. Have a look at these dreamy landscapes and dream a bit. And since they will hang in public view for such a long time, consider visiting her panoramas a few times. My first visit was yesterday.

I won't write a spoiler for you. Sometimes, actually too often, we hear too much about art before experiencing the art. Writers like me tend to deconstruct too often. We tend to disassemble before appreciating the whole. We dissect because we're focused upon the why and how. We don't dream enough, because dreaming is risky.

These oversize postcards will not fit into your mail slot. I could post the digital images and you could email them to friends. I suggest you meet with Judith next Monday and Wednesday (from 11am-5pm, Oct 18 and 20) in front of her window and say hello. She'll give you a real postcard that you can keep or send to someone. You could even uncap that old fountain pen in your drawer and handwrite a note, lick a stamp, affix it on the back, slip it into a mailbox and send it on a journey somewhere. Imagine that.

Imagine the places you've been, the people you've met. What's the history in your head? You use that history every day, that experience of yours, that precious

perspective of the world, your way of sensing the things around you. Chances are, you have a great deal of hope in your heart since art is a part of your life.

Printed upon archival cotton paper, mounted upon Sintra, delicately suspended, floating in black background window space, her four cards tell stories if you'll take the time to listen with your eyes. You'll come away with questions...questions that fueled this artist to create something new from old things, taking old pixels and turning them into digital ones, printing them upon lush paper with heft, and giving the images a new life of posterity in the literal light of day in a public place.

Have you ever visited: - Fredrick Douglas Park in Valor, Virginia? - Albertson Square in Hopeland, Missouri? - Refuge County, South Dakota? - Premonition Point in Ozark, California?

If you haven't, you will after seeing these colorful mosaics of memory.

Judith G. Levy describes her work as "about history and remembrance... I make installations, video, two-dimensional work, and performance pieces that explore the explicit and elusive nature of private and public memory." She has presented solo exhibitions of her work at venues including The Indianapolis Museum of Art, Big Car Gallery, and Indiana University, all in Indianapolis, as well as at Soo Visual Arts Center in Minneapolis and NavtaSchulz Gallery in Chicago. She has completed public art installations in Indianapolis and Chicago and been featured in group exhibitions at presenting institutions including PlugIn Institute for Contemporary Art, Winnipeg, Canada; Midway Contemporary Art, Minneapolis; and The Plains Art Museum, Fargo, North Dakota. Levy received her BA in Drawing and Painting from Hunter College in New York, and her Master of Social Work from Adelphi University, Garden City, New York.

Urban Culture Project is an initiative of the Charlotte Street Foundation, an organization dedicated to making Kansas City a place where artists and art thrive. Urban Culture Project creates new opportunities for artists of all disciplines and contributes to urban revitalization by transforming spaces in downtown Kansas City into new venues for multi-disciplinary contemporary arts programming.

...public art is a wonderful gift...