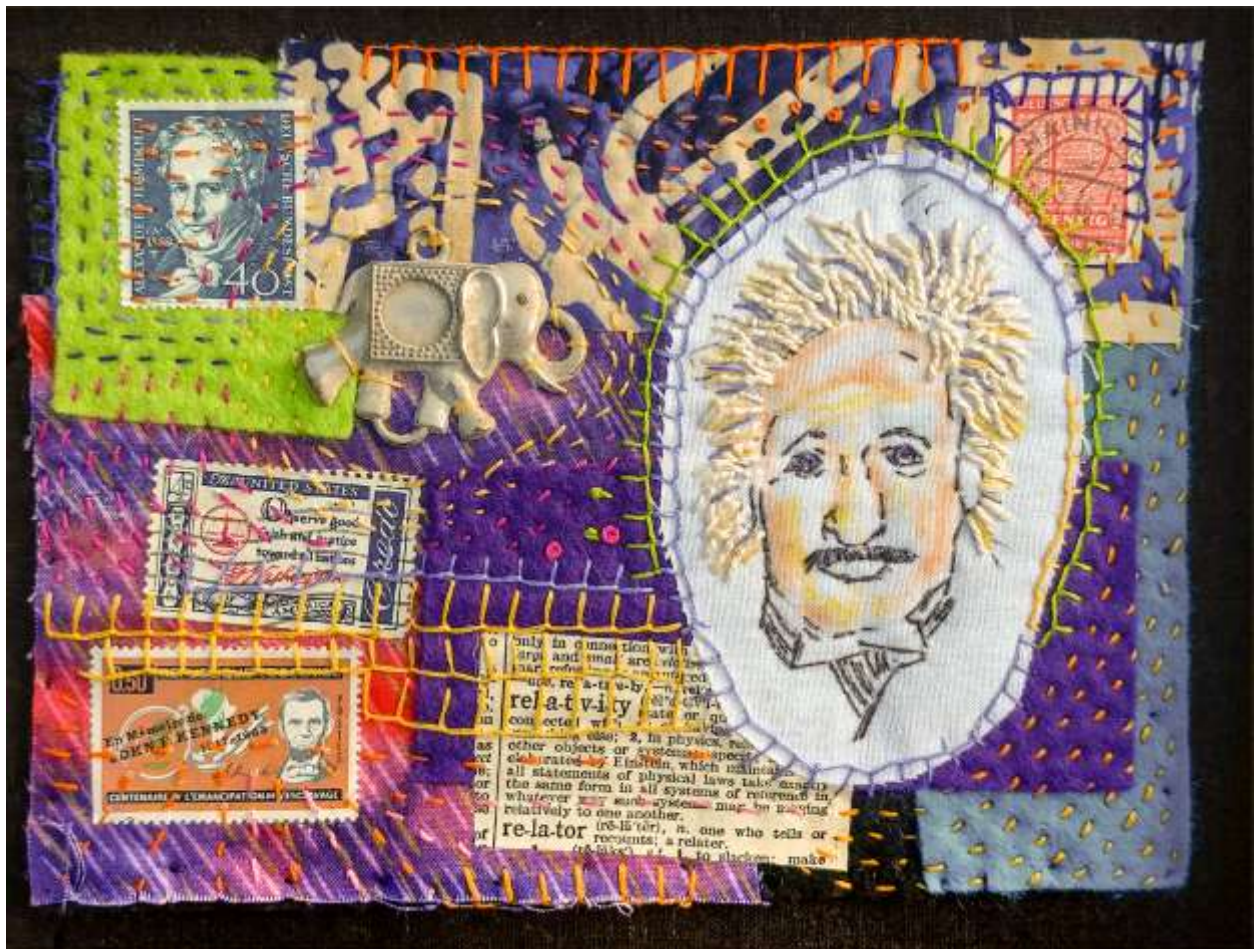


READING EAGLE

Art review: Eastern Europe through the lens of a multimedia exhibition

- Ron Schira - Reading Eagle correspondent
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"Relativity" by Martha Ressler, an art quilt included in "Doubletake East: Responses to Eastern Europe."



Return to the Bridge of Spies, by Jay Ressler

Miniature quilts by Martha Ressler and digital composite photographs by Jay Ressler are viewing now through Jan. 2 at Judy's on Cherry Contemporary Cuisine in Reading. Displaying some 40 pieces overall, the husband and wife team had traveled to Eastern and Central Europe in March and April on a working vacation that culminated in an exhibition of photos and quilts titled "Doubletake East: Responses to Eastern Europe."

Determined to do more than sightsee, they sought to interpret and comment on the area's culture and history since the isolation of the Cold War. They visited the Czech Republic, Eastern Germany and Poland for their impressions of such places as Auschwitz and the previous site of the Berlin wall.

Most of Martha's quilts, subtitled "Eastern Europe in Stitches," were created on site using materials acquired from their peregrinations among flea markets in Prague and Berlin while using local postage stamps to identify the location. All of them are small,

horizontal, about 6 inches in length and framed. A salon style installation adorns the staircase wall leading to the dining area.

Each one of the pieces contain a drawing sewn into the composition along with a tiny object like a pin or a drawer handle. "Relativity," for example, has a rough sketch of Albert Einstein alongside an elephant shaped locket and the definition of relativity torn from a dictionary; different colored threads inserted for color and design.

Another piece titled "The People's Violin" offers, among other things, a postage stamp with the image of a violin, showing how certain things, objects or activities become associated with a national identity. The artist, in her statement, said, "This region has been cut up by history, then stitched back together, like the quilts."

Jay's photos combine images from locations that are superimposed with a variety of occurrences and textures. For one instance, a photo titled "Bridge of Spies, Potsdam," displays a bridge and a palimpsest of a weather beaten wall, the word why painted over it in a stark red. Equally dispersed, both transparencies become interchangeable as the dominant image to make a statement about walls and bridges.

Another work titled "Klezmer Revival" depicts a cellist and clarinetist superimposed, a lit menorah to the right side. As if a playing a traditional Eastern European duet, the long wind instrument doubles as the cello bow in image as well as sound. Many of his photos carry political or moral content.

As much a jaunt through history as a vacation, the Resslers, in picture and thread, remind us of where Eastern Europe was only a few decades ago and where it is now. The exhibition could do well with additional documentation, however, as many of the references are assumed. People forget too easily.

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