

Project explores city's identity

„ Tací Fast hopes her “We Are Wichita” photo collage will foster community pride.

BY STEPHANIE BARNARD

Wichita Eagle correspondent

Taci Fast quotes the famous photographer W. Eugene Smith when she talks about her latest project: “Photography is a small voice, but sometimes one photograph or a group of them can lure our senses into awareness.”

“You can sometimes change things with a photo,” said Fast, 47, owner of Millyrose Photography and Design Gallery in downtown Wichita. She wants to try to foster a stronger sense of community with a photo collage called “We Are Wichita, the _____ Project.”

Fast is inviting residents into her studio to have their photo taken and to fill in a response to the prompt “Wichita is . . .” The response can be positive or negative.

The resulting images and words will be compiled into a photo montage and, Fast hopes, a book. The goal, she said, is to celebrate diversity and foster a sense of community.

“You have east Wichita, west Wichita, south Wichita and downtown, and they’re all segregated into these nice little geographical boxes,” Fast said. “Really, as Wichitans, we are all part of one box in the middle of a larger box in the middle of the country.”

So far, Fast has photographed about 50 people and is trying to get a true cross-section of Wichita.

“I’ve been grabbing homeless people off the street,” she said. “I want everyone to feel like they belong and that they have a voice.”

The studio will host an open house tonight as part of the Final Friday gallery crawl. Wichitans can get their photos taken tonight or anytime the gallery is open through May 25. No appointment is required and the photo session is free, though a release form must be signed.

The photo montage will be on display during next month’s Final Friday.

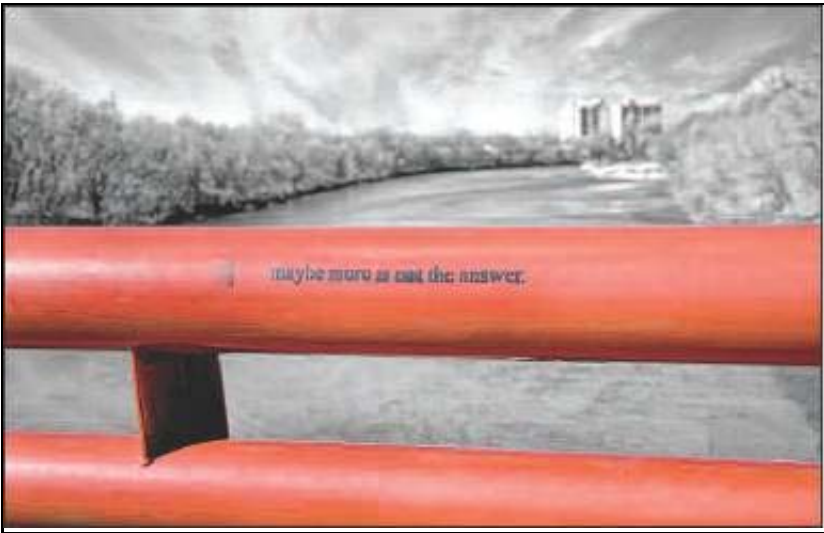
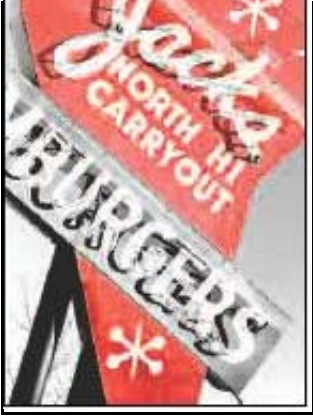
Fast, who opened Millyrose in October, was raised in Wichita and attended Wichita State University. After graduating in 1982, she lived in Atlanta, Kansas City, Denver, Iowa and Oklahoma, eventually returning home about four years ago.

“I couldn’t wait to get back,” she said. “It’s a completely different community now.”

Her Wichita pride is displayed at the studio through large black-and-white posters of iconic local spots such as Jack’s North Hi Carryout and the rocket at Riverside Park.

“I think Wichita is hungry for culture and some of the ‘big city’ experiences,” Fast said. “I hope to contribute to the cultural landscape of the city by providing new and unique exhibits.”





Courtesy photo

Iconic images of Wichita's downtown, the Arkansas River and businesses such as Jack's North Hi Carryout decorate Taci Fast's art studio.





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