

Prayers for the Earth in Threads of Silk

EARLY ONE SPRING MORNING, I was bicycling along a path that parallels a small stream when I saw something that would captivate my creative energies for many years. Through the tall growth that lined the river's bank, I saw a bird I'd never seen before. Its tall, white, airy quality stirred my depths. I was awed. I stopped biking to take a closer look and it took to the sky. As soon as I could, I sought out references to determine the bird's identity. It was the beautiful white egret.

Soon after that I had the occasion to be in Israel, where I saw a lovely tile floor with an egret motif with flora. The design was quite large. I found myself walking through its "wetlands," absorbing its life.

I became a bird watcher and an observer of wetlands. I started researching birds in art. I found both Western and Oriental inspirations. I wanted to find new ways to express my interest in combining poems with paintings, as I had done in the 1980s. And I wanted to make universal statements.

So I began to feel deeply inside myself, searching for design elements able to express what I wanted. First, the circle came to mind because it represents the cycles in life. Second, the wetlands entered because wetlands represent all that is necessary for life to thrive—air, water, land, and a balance of animal and plant life.

As I found in my research the white egret represents the phoenix in Eastern culture. All of us recognize that rebirth is an important theme in the arts and an

experiences would not suffice. Universal themes already existed, and I had to find the ones that spoke to my soul. I found them in the Hebrew prayer book, the *Siddur*.

And so I started developing my motifs with Hebrew phrases from the *Siddur*.

The first of the series is the one pictured in this article:

Prayers for the Earth Suite, No. 1: May our eyes behold, our hearts rejoice, and our souls be glad. (Y'ru ainaynu, v'yismach l'baynu, v'sawgail nafshaynu.)

As an artist, my vision must create wonder, generate deep joy and create a sense of serenity that only our souls can fathom. All of these requirements are satisfied with my current work. Each piece takes about a year to design, problem-solve, and embroider. Three works are complete to date; a fourth is ready to be applied to silk.

I find that people who see my work respond to it, whether they understand the Hebrew or not. Since each piece takes enormous effort to produce, I'm seeking a way to reproduce them. My dream is to find a market for my images. Possibilities include quality reproductions for posters, greeting cards, or postal cards.

Kay Faye Fialkoff, a Fair Lawn, NJ native, received her B.Ed. in mathematics education from the University of Miami. She is self-taught in crewel embroidery and considers her works to be prayers for the environment and the inhabitants of Earth. ❖



The author's "Prayer for the Earth Suite, No. 1" measures 15 inches in diameter and is done on silk fabric.

important part of growth and development in life. So the white egret surely would be an excellent motif.

Then came the consideration of the poem. After exhibiting poem paintings, participating in poetry readings, and giving poetry workshops, I came to the conclusion that personal poems about small expe-