

DESIGN LIFE NOW

NATIONAL DESIGN TRIENNIAL 2006

Podcast Transcript: Jessica Smith

I'm Jessica Smith, and I'm a textile designer and pattern designer. I've painted a vignette of a dining room setting, which consists of a table with plates, dinnerware, chair-covers that have patterns which speak to each other to form a conversation around a political subject.

Akbar was a Mughal prince in the 16th Century in India, Delhi. And during that time, during the Renaissance of the Mughal dynasties was also the similar Renaissance happening in Europe. I'm juxtaposing similar, very dynamic architectural feats, both of Akbar at this period, so his red fort and his palace, where, actually, he met a lot of religious advisors from all over the world, juxtaposing that with similar places from the Italian Renaissance, architecturally, so the place settings are each in the genre of tourist souvenir plates, and they will have an architectural feature from each of these areas of the Renaissance, both east and west.

So each of the plates is a souvenir plate. Aesthetically, it takes on what we might think of as a Middle Eastern aesthetic as far as its drawing quality, and the phantasmagorical floral and fauna on the edges, and then the center has an image, a drawn image of an architectural feature from the Renaissance, either the Italian Renaissance, Akbar's dynasty, the Mughal Renaissance and Iranian Renaissance, the Renaissance happening on a global level.

When you come to the table, I envision that your feeling is of a sort of a traditional, exotic look, but in an American light. As if you were in a catalog or in a store or in the dining room of someone who has purchased a whole aesthetic, and when you come to it, you then look and see that the patterns are not traditional and that they have a conversation, which goes a step further.

Design is, in many ways, a subtle statement of our aesthetic place and time in history.