

# artists' café

Best of Somerset Mixed-Media

UNLEASH YOUR INNER

*Jane Austen*

p. 4

TIPS for WORKING  
WITH A LIMITED  
COLOR PALETTE

p. 32

ALL ABOUT

*Artful  
Image Transfers*

p. 8

INSIDE THE  
PORTFOLIOS OF  
ANDREA MATUS DEMENG  
DANIELLE DONALDSON  
LOUISE O'HARA



Stampington & Company

VOLUME 10 • DISPLAY UNTIL 03/17  
\$14.95 US • \$16.95 CAN



artistscafe.com



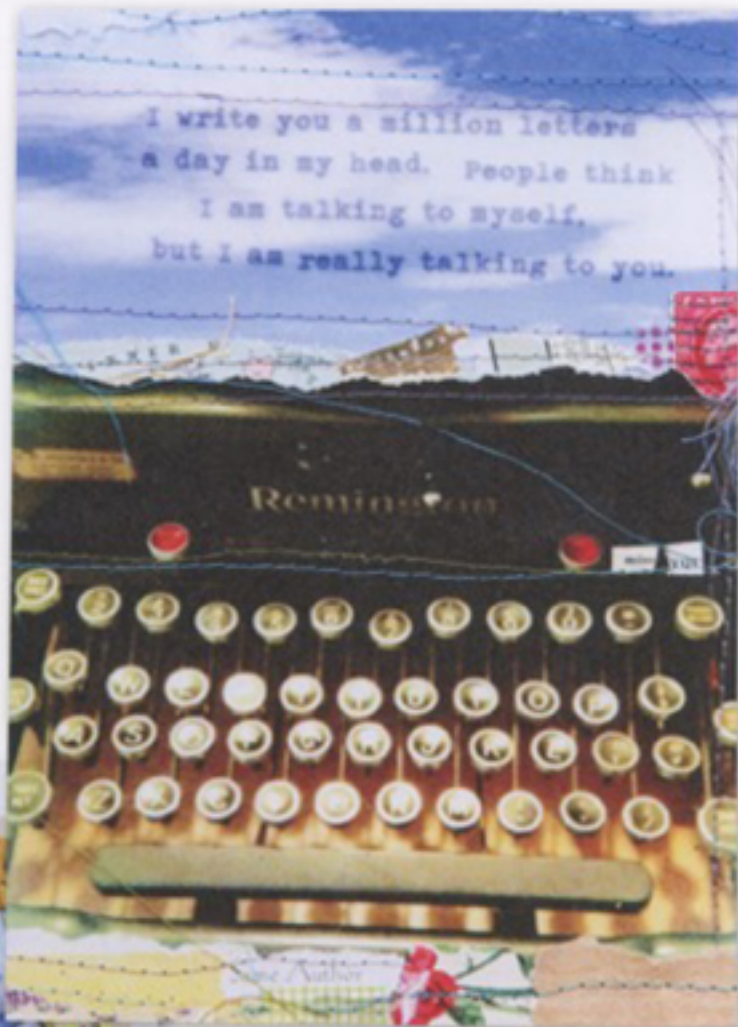


# *Sprinkling Hearts* on Doorsteps



This article first appeared in the Winter 2014 Issue of Sew Somerset.

**H**ow does a card line start? Mine started accidentally. I dropped a bin filled with a few thousand foam hearts in my doorway as I was walking into my house one afternoon last summer. Red hearts in an assortment of sizes were everywhere. I instantly took a picture, feeling like the moment was more than what it seemed to be. There were so many hearts on our porch and in our garden. My daughter and I began to scoop up handfuls of hearts and sprinkle them on friends' doorsteps. Some made it back in the bin. Others still show up under a leaf in the garden. Later that day, on a piece of paper I wrote down, "I want to sprinkle hearts all over your doorstep," and that became the first of many stitched art prints and cards. There was already a shift going on inside me.



I had been a full-time artist for years, creating art and installations from salvaged materials, but I felt a pull to go deeper and to reach others on a more personal level; to put more of "me" out there. To do that, I needed to add in my words, and my words were everywhere. They were written in old journals and on remnants of paper pressed between pages in books. Everything I needed was already there, I just had to look. There were the words I wrote to my sister in an altered book I made for her years ago: "I started to tell her a story and she smiled. She knew what I was going to say next. She usually does. We have a history." There were the fleeting thoughts that I had written down quickly: "I wish I was more mature, but I'm just not." And I started to write down new words. I thought about the strong women I knew and how resilient they were; how resilient we all are. "There were times she lost her way, but she never lost her grit and swagger." →



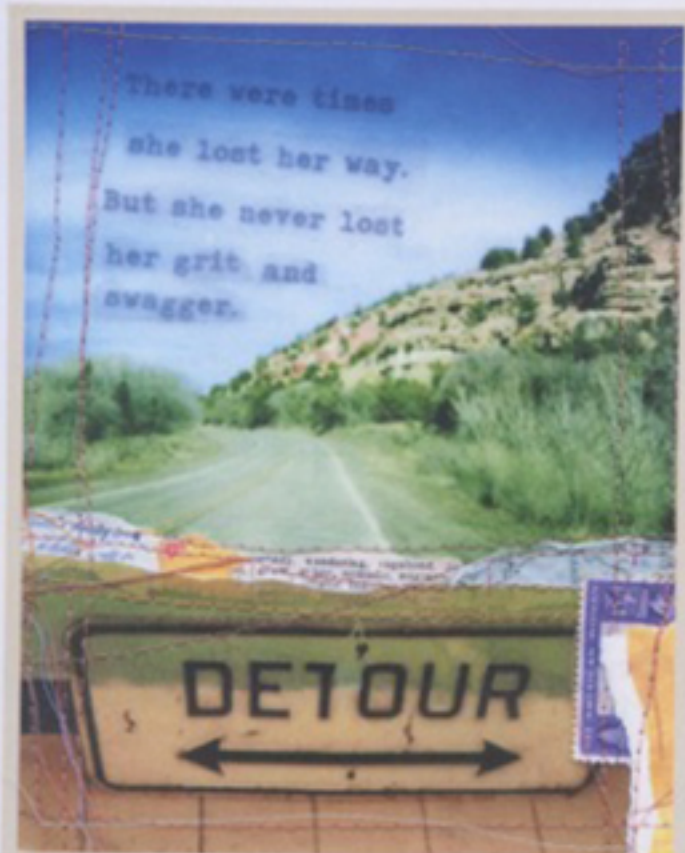
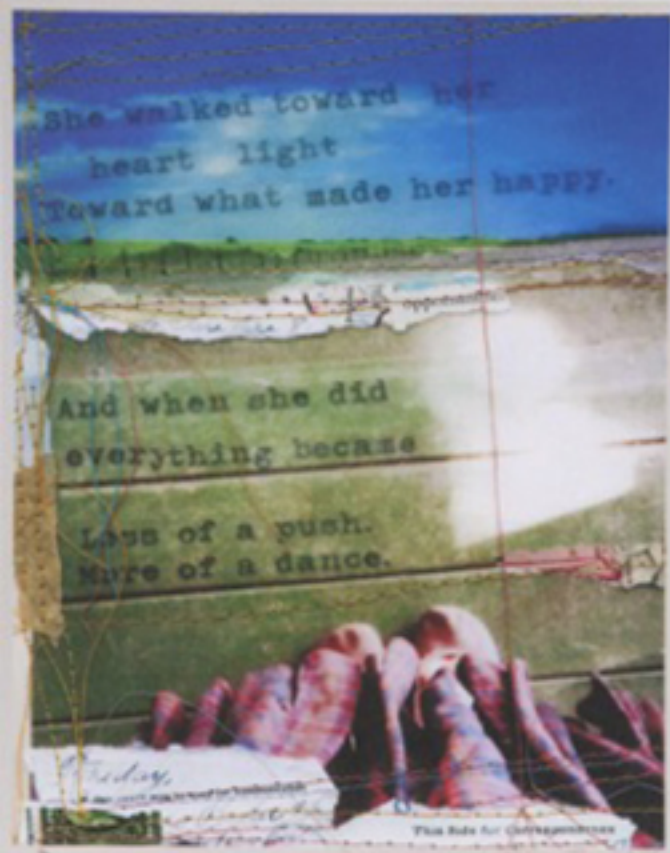
I want to

sprinkle hearts

all over your doorstep.

©2014 Colleen Abma





There were the words I wrote to my sister in an altered book I made for her years ago: "I started to tell her a story and she smiled. She knew what I was going to say next. She usually does. We have a history." There were the fleeting thoughts that I had written down quickly: "I wish I was more mature, but I'm just not." And I started to write down new words. I thought about the strong women I knew and how resilient they were; how resilient we all are. "There were times she lost her way, but she never lost her grit and swagger."

Like the words, I had photos I had taken over the years. I had a photo of an old coat a friend had sewn just for me. Some of these worked perfectly for words written long ago: "Like an old coat, your friendship warms me."

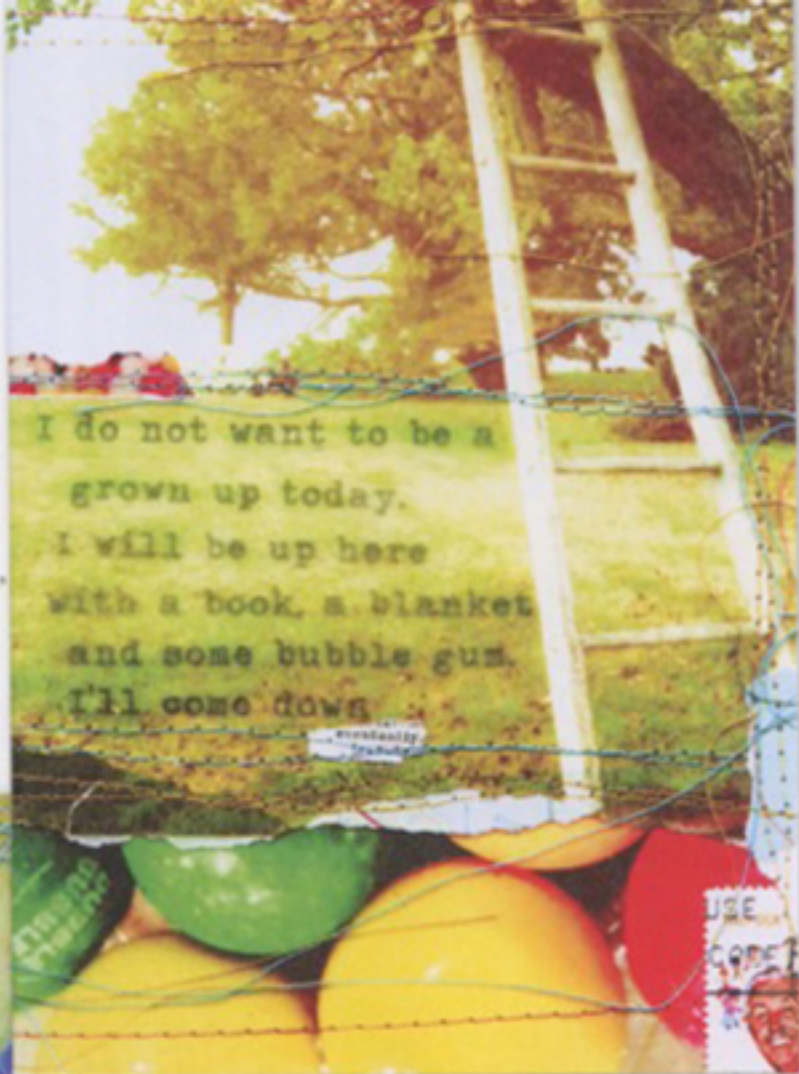
Sometimes the photos come first and then the words follow. A photo of an old typewriter I took in New Hampshire at a thrift store inspired me to write, "I write you a million letters a day in my head. People think I am talking to myself but I am really talking to you." Before I felt the pull to get my words out, I felt a strong desire to sew on paper. It was as if I instinctually knew what I had to do to create this new work before I even knew what the work would be. →





When I attended Squam Art Workshops in September of 2012 I used a sewing machine to sew on paper for the first time. The experience of those five days on Squam Lake was a catalyst for me. I was completely open to leaving my comfort zone and adding new elements into my art. This past September, I taught at Squam and helped others push past their comfort zones.

Today, my random and wild stitches bring my work together. Photographs are gently torn and the composition is changed. Blue skies from one photo are stitched together with a photo from another day. A photo of colorful sprinkles are sewn next to a photo of the clovers that grow in the fields outside my studio.



And underneath it all, my words are layered in. Then I sew in the magical pieces that could be easily be left behind: pieces of painted paper that fall to the side of my studio desk, old calendars full of paint and scribbles, fabric leftover from altered clothing, vintage stamps, and bits of letters and postcards written long ago.

Each of my 8" x 10" prints has a real sewn stitch so a colorful thread can fall playfully on the mat or just add dimension to the artwork.

I was elated to have the opportunity to debut these cards and prints at the National Stationary Show in New York this past May. My stories are now other people's stories, too.





#### TIPS

- Allow yourself time to play. It will all come together beautifully if you let go and trust the process.
- Sprinkle hearts on doorsteps. It just feels good.

*Colleen Atara is a mixed-media artist, storyteller, and treasure hunter who lives in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Her artwork is in private and public collections across the United States and abroad. She teaches classes on creating altered books and healing at Squam Art Workshops. Find more of her work at [colleenatara.com](http://colleenatara.com) or send a hello to [colleen@colleenatara.com](mailto:colleen@colleenatara.com).*

