



United States Embassy Abuja
ART in Embassies Exhibition

David Carmack Lewis

Commute, 2009. Oil on canvas, 53 x 50 in. (134.6 x 127 cm). Courtesy of the artist, Portland, Oregon

ART in Embassies



Established in 1963, the U.S. Department of State's office of ART in Embassies (AIE) plays a vital role in our nation's public diplomacy through a culturally expansive mission, creating temporary and permanent exhibitions, artist programming, and publications. The Museum of Modern Art first envisioned this global visual arts program a decade earlier. In the early 1960s, President John F. Kennedy formalized it, naming the program's first director. Now with over 200 venues, AIE curates temporary and permanent exhibitions for the representational spaces of all U.S. chanceries, consulates, and chief-of-mission residences worldwide, selecting and commissioning contemporary art from the U.S. and the host countries. These exhibitions provide international audiences with a sense of the quality, scope, and diversity of both countries' art and culture, establishing AIE's presence in more countries than any other U.S. foundation or arts organization.

AIE's exhibitions allow foreign citizens, many of whom might never travel to the United States, to personally experience the depth and breadth of our artistic heritage and values, making what has been called a: "footprint that can be left where people have no opportunity to see American art."

Assembling an exhibition for Abuja is always interesting. The city is very modern and new, but until recently it was just a small traditional village in north central Nigeria. Not far from Abuja, archaeologists have uncovered (and continue to uncover) art of great age and sophistication. The Nigerian capital lies in an area of great contrasts – long, arid months often followed by brief, torrential rains; enormous skies over rolling hills; great wealth beside grinding poverty; tradition and modernism existing side-by-side.

The paintings in this exhibition were created by artists from southern California and Oregon, where the current ambassador has his home in the United States. The show includes both abstractions and representational subjects. The abstractions add color and dynamism to the grand, pale walls of the residence and the representational pieces show subjects the community in Abuja will recognize: high thunderheads, mud-mired roads, desert encampments and turbaned men of the desert, beautifully colored birds, and luminous night skies with flights of bats – all fairly common sights in sub-Saharan Africa.

Our goal at ART in Embassies is always to create exhibitions that will contribute to the diplomatic discussion through visual channels. I hope that this small exhibition will serve that purpose.

Bob Soppelsa
Senior Curator/ART in Embassies

Introduction

I am pleased to have had the opportunity to collaborate with Curator Dr. Robert Soppelsa and the ART in Embassies program to assemble this dynamic selection of paintings for the U.S. Ambassador's Residence in Abuja. I am grateful as well to Sally Mansfield, Marcia Mayo, and Amanda Brooks of ART in Embassies, and to my staff assistant, Katy Hinton, for their collaboration in the preparation of the exhibition catalogue.

A traditional Nigerian proverb says: "Anyone who sees beauty and does not look at it will soon be poor." From the terracotta statues of Nok to the Benin bronzes to modern wood carvings and paintings, Nigeria has developed a rich artistic legacy over the course of the last 2,500 years. That legacy has influenced and inspired artists in every corner of the world.

In this exhibition of work by artists from the region that I call home, the Pacific Northwest of the United States, visual abstractions and expressive colors parallel the shapes and hues present in Nigerian art history, while desert scenes directly reference modern West Africa. Expressive portraits contrast with bold tapestries of color, and shadowy night scenes draw out the brightness of neighboring daylight landscapes. My wife Renée and I are proud to display this selection of art in the main entertaining area of our residence, where it can be enjoyed by guests as diverse as the exhibition itself.

Ambassador and Mrs. Terence P. McCulley

*Abuja
December 2011*

Steven Hudson 1943

"The subject of the triptych is an immense thunderstorm overcoming a mountain landscape. The storm cloud is an exaggerated cumulonimbus, powerful bringer of thunder, lightning, wind and rain, a dancing Shiva of destruction and renewal. Meteorologists estimate that a single storm cloud of this type may contain the energy of ten nuclear bombs. On one level, my intention is to suggest the awesome power of nature and our helplessness in comparison.

On another level, the triptych is a memorial meant as a response to loss and a hope for rebirth. Among the many friends and loved ones who have passed during the past few years was my friend Michael Kabotie, the Hopi artist and poet who taught at Idyllwild Arts for many summers. From Michael I learned the traditional Hopi belief that the dead return in the form of rain. My work is in no way meant to appropriate a Hopi concept, but rather to honor the universal metaphor available to all of us. As all beings have briefly flashed and will flash in transition, so is there the suggestion of innumerable colored raindrops inside this storm cloud. In a sense, the spirits of all who have ever lived are within it.

Triptychs enjoy a long history in the art of the west and were frequently employed as altarpieces. Although the traditional Christian altarpiece was filled with religious symbols, meant to focus the viewer on a world to come, mine is intended to celebrate a more secular mythos, although no less devotional."

– Stephen Hudson

**All Our Fallen Have Fallen
in Rain (triptych)**, 2010-11
*Acrylic on canvas, each of 3 panels:
84 x 52 in. (213.4 x 132.1 cm)*
*Courtesy of the artist,
Idyllwild, California*





David Carmack Lewis 1965

David Carmack Lewis has lived and painted in Portland, Oregon since 2000. Originally from Virginia, he studied art at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, and in Cardiff, Wales, in the U.K.

Lewis' richly colored oils on canvas have evolved from thought provoking figure studies in symbolically rich scenarios to evocative nocturnal landscapes. He says, "At night colors either vanish into darkness or are transformed

by the light source illuminating them. My recent work explores the variety and contrasts of different light sources and their interplay with darkness, while I continue to pursue my interest in narrative image making."

Lewis' paintings are in numerous private collections across the country, and have been exhibited in Oregon, Washington, Arizona, Michigan, New Mexico, and South Africa.

www.atticgallery.com



Muddy Road, 2009

Oil on canvas, 33 x 46 in.

(83.8 x 116.8 cm)

Courtesy of the artist,

Portland, Oregon



Commute, 2009. Oil on canvas, 53 x 50 in. (134.6 x 127 cm). Courtesy of the artist, Portland, Oregon



Transect, 2011. *Oil on canvas, 50 x 33 in. (127 x 83.8 cm).* Courtesy of the artist, Portland, Oregon

Joellyn Loehr 1947

"I come at painting from the wrong way around. I do not set out to illustrate anything – not an object, a scene, nor an idea. The painting is a record of events in the studio and of experiments both intuitive and calculated – with color, with the physical properties of paint on a surface, and with random shapes and gestures. Throughout most of the process, the subject of the painting is the painting itself. Marks, colors, and shapes accumulate, are modified, are erased by abrasion or layering, are consolidated and connected to one another. Over time a working surface is built, destroyed, and rebuilt.

During the process, as work continues, glimpses of subject matter beyond the canvas begin to appear. Relationships and connections develop between what happens on the canvas and personal memories of dreams, events, and landscapes. The painting moves from an inchoate assemblage of visual elements to 'something resembling something,' however abstract. Relationships are built, strengthened, diminished, redrawn.

Within this seemingly random process, there are themes and patterns that recur. The image is oriented to the edges of the canvas. The surface constitutes a shallow field of space established by variations in transparency and intensity. The color black is important to the overall visual structure. There is a balance between finished and raw, dull and bright, areas of gestural activity and areas of calm, between grace and awkwardness."

~ Joellyn Loehr
www.loehrdesign.com



Tygh, 2008. Oil on canvas, 54 x 48 in. (137.2 x 121.9 cm). Courtesy of Blackfish Gallery, Portland, Oregon



Redwing, 2008. Oil on canvas, 54 x 48 in. (137.2 x 121.9 cm). Courtesy of Blackfish Gallery, Portland, Oregon



Owyhee 1, undated. *Oil on paper on panel, 23 x 20 in. (58.4 x 50.8 cm). Courtesy of Blackfish Gallery, Portland, Oregon*



Owyhee 2, undated. *Oil on paper on panel, 23 x 20 in. (58.4 x 50.8 cm). Courtesy of Blackfish Gallery, Portland, Oregon*



Owyhee 3, undated. *Oil on paper on panel, 23 x 20 in. (58.4 x 50.8 cm). Courtesy of Blackfish Gallery, Portland, Oregon*



Owyhee 5, undated. *Oil on paper on panel, 23 x 20 in. (58.4 x 50.8 cm). Courtesy of Blackfish Gallery, Portland, Oregon*

Michael Schlicting 1954

Much of the stimulus for Michael Schlicting's art comes from his travels. An opportunity to teach a painting workshop in Tuscany led to his love of Italy, particularly the Tuscan landscape. A good number of Schlicting's paintings are inspired by images gleaned from his frequent trips there. In addition, he has traveled in South America, with Chile serving as another fertile source of inspiration.

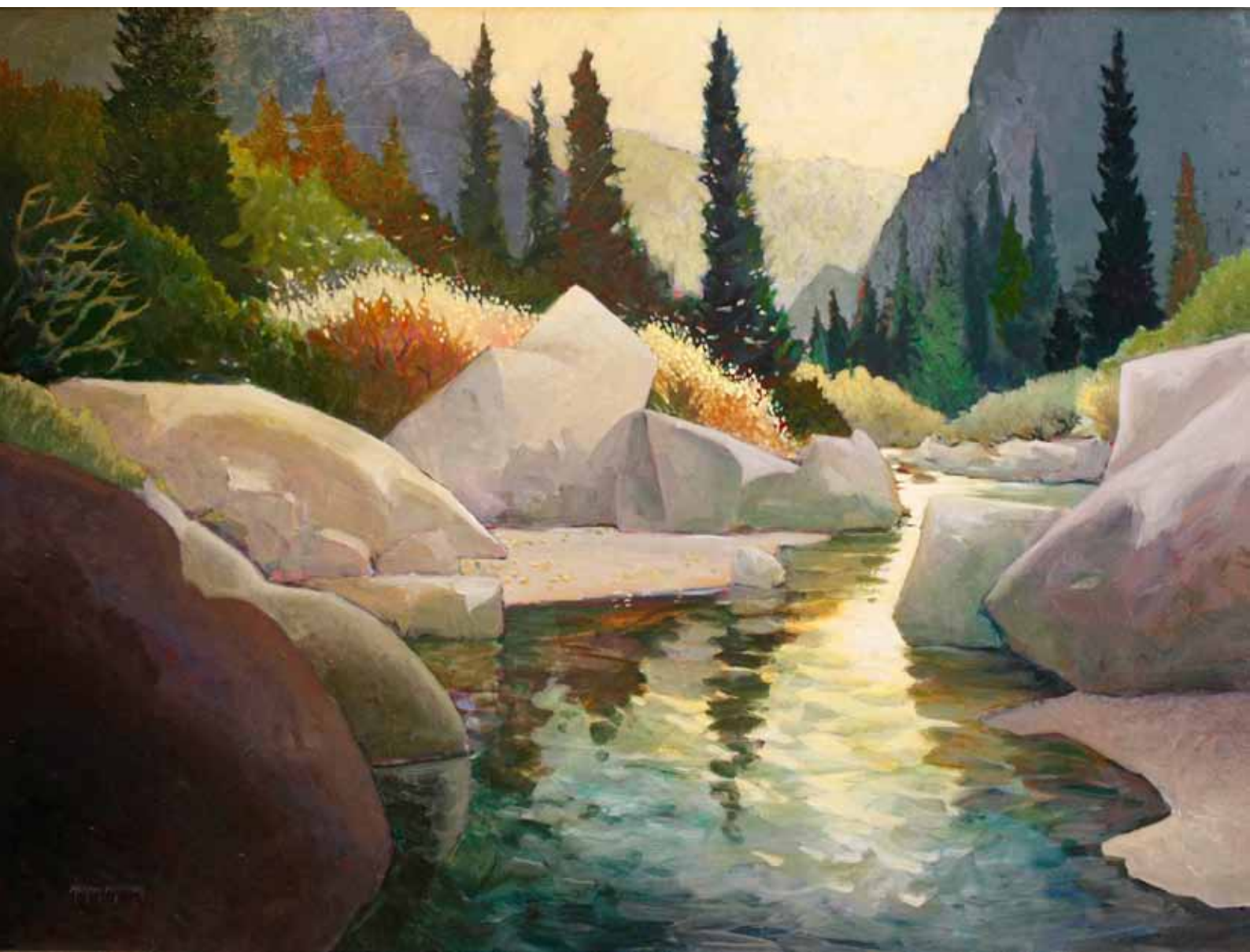
Over the years, Schlicting has won major awards in many painting competitions, both nationally and internationally, as well as being one of the finalists for the prestigious Grumbacher Artist of the Year award. His paintings hang in over 2,500 public, corporate, and private collections around the world. He makes his home in Portland, Oregon, and spends his summers at his studio/gallery, the Hawk Creek Gallery, on the Oregon coast.



Timbuktu, 2008. *Acrylic on canvas, 28 x 66 in. (71.1 x 167.6 cm). Courtesy of the artist, Portland, Oregon*



Tuareg, 2010
Acrylic on canvas
47 x 31 in. (119.4 x 78.7 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Portland, Oregon



Upstream, 1994. Acrylic on canvas, 36 x 48 in. (91.4 x 121.9 cm). Courtesy of the artist, Portland, Oregon



Beautiful Thief, 2008
Acrylic on canvas
48 x 31 in. (121.9 x 78.7 cm)
Courtesy of the artist,
Portland, Oregon

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