

Individualism, Diversity, and Tradition
United States Embassy Bandar Seri Begawan

Cover: **Muhammadi Zuhai Karamanli** "The Shamsa" 2000. Watercolor, 15 x 15 in. (38,1 x 38,1 cm)

Introduction

My wife Thea and I welcome you to the Residence of the U.S. Ambassador to Brunei Darussalam and to this exhibition of contemporary American art entitled *Individualism, Diversity, and Tradition*.

The words in the title of this exhibition describe three of the great strengths of U.S. society. The United States has long been defined by its respect for individual freedom of expression and the diverse nature of its multicultural society. Yet even as individual Americans pursue their own unique and innovative ideas, they do so with an abiding respect for their ethnic and cultural traditions as well as those of their fellow citizens.



The works on display in this exhibition were chosen to represent that spirit. They were created by artists from widely varied ethnic backgrounds who have roots in many different parts of the United States – the Midwest, the East and West Coasts, and the South. They work in ceramic, bronze, oil paint, watercolor, fiber, and mixed media on washi paper. For inspiration they draw on their local environments and on a wide range of traditions, including Islamic Tezhip illumination, Raku, Ikat weaving, and Japanese

Sashiko embroidery, among others. The one skill they have in common is a talent for incorporating traditional concepts into personal and innovative artistic visions, marking their work with a freshness and creativity that defines it as quintessentially American.

We are grateful to all the artists who made their works available for this exhibition, and to the staff members of the ART in Embassies Program of the United States Department of State who helped organize it, in particular Curator Imtiaz Hafiz. We hope you enjoy viewing these selections of contemporary American art. As you do, please take a moment to reflect on how the characteristics of these works – the individual freedom of expression, the diversity, and the respect for tradition that they represent – continue to underpin the strength and vitality of the United States of America, now and into the future.

Handwritten signatures of Emil Skodon and Thea Skodon in black ink.

Ambassador Emil Skodon and Mrs. Thea Skodon

Brunei Darussalam, October 2006

The ART in Embassies Program

The ART in Embassies Program (ART) is a unique blend of art, diplomacy, and culture. Regardless of the medium, style, or subject matter, art transcends barriers of language and provides the means for the program to promote dialogue through the international language of art that leads to mutual respect and understanding between diverse cultures.

Modestly conceived in 1964, ART has evolved into a sophisticated program that curates exhibitions, managing and exhibiting more than 3,500 original works of loaned art by U.S. citizens. The work is displayed in the public rooms of some 180 U.S. embassy residences and diplomatic missions worldwide. These exhibitions, with their diverse themes and content, represent one of the most important principles of our democracy: freedom of expression. The art is a great source of pride to the U.S. ambassadors, assisting them in multi-functional outreach to the host country's educational, cultural, business, and diplomatic communities.

Works of art exhibited through the program encompass a variety of media and styles, ranging from eighteenth century colonial portraiture to contemporary multi-media installations. They are obtained through the generosity of lending sources that include U.S. museums, galleries, artists, institutions, corporations, and private collections. In viewing the exhibitions, the thousands of guests who visit U.S. embassy residences each year have the opportunity to learn about our nation – its history, customs, values, and aspirations – by experiencing firsthand the international lines of communication known to us all as art.

The ART in Embassies Program is proud to lead this international effort to present the artistic accomplishments of the people of the United States. We invite you to visit the ART web site, <http://aiep.state.gov>, which features on-line versions of all exhibitions worldwide.

Lucy Arai | born 1956

Lucy Arai uses a Japanese running-stitch embroidery and quilting technique called *sashiko*, which she transforms through experimentation and innovation to create a unique art form.

Instead of its characteristic white running stitches of complex patterns sewn on deep indigo-dyed cotton fabric, Arai hand sews *sashiko* into mixed media compositions with sumi ink, gilding, and handmade papers. *Sashiko* flourished during Japan's last feudal era (17th-19th centuries) in the Northern provinces. Arai learned the technique while apprenticing under her uncle in Japan. The artist's innovative approach to *sashiko* com-

bines her Japanese and Western art background by using handmade papers for collage and sculpture.

Arai received her Master of Fine Arts degree in 1983, and Graduate Certificate of Museum Practices in 1985, from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 1979, from the University of South Carolina, Columbia.



Photo by Richard Sargent

Untitled | undated

Mixed media: washi paper, sumi ink, indigo pigment, thread, gilding, 27 x 33 in. (68,6 x 83,8 cm).
Courtesy of the artist, Washington, D.C.



Photo by Richard Sargent

Untitled | undated

Mixed media: washi paper, sumi ink, indigo pigment, thread, gilding, 27 x 33 in. (68,6 x 83,8 cm).
Courtesy of the artist, Washington, D.C.

Muhammadi Zuhul Karamanli | born 1968

Muhammadi Zuhul Karamanli writes, "I am very proud to be a part of a scrupulous and full-spirited upholding of this hallowed tradition of Islamic illumination. As the Quran is most sacred to me, participating in the centuries old, classic tradition of *Tezhip* gives me a great sense of satisfaction."

Tezhip is a Turkish word for illumination which originates from the Arabic term meaning "working with gold." The primary aim of the *Tezhip* art form is to embellish the Quran and to be a tribute to the beauty of nature. The *Tezhip* art form uses decorative motifs including stylized floral and animal designs, geometric shapes, chain and interlacing patterns, and calligraphic lettering. Both the embellishments and miniatures that relate stories employ bright colors and gold or silver paint.

Muhammadi Zuhul Karamanli was classically trained in the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul, Turkey, before she moved to the United States. Her paintings reflect her creativity, classical training in *Tezhip*, and her exposure to modern and contemporary art. Her works are a cross pollination of the East and West as well as the traditional and modern.



The Shamsa | 2000
Watercolor, 15 x 15 in. (38,1 x 38,1 cm) framed
Courtesy of the artist, Morristown, New Jersey

The Firuze | 2005
Watercolor, 24 x 36 in. (61 x 91,4 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Morristown, New Jersey



Betsy Stirratt | born 1958

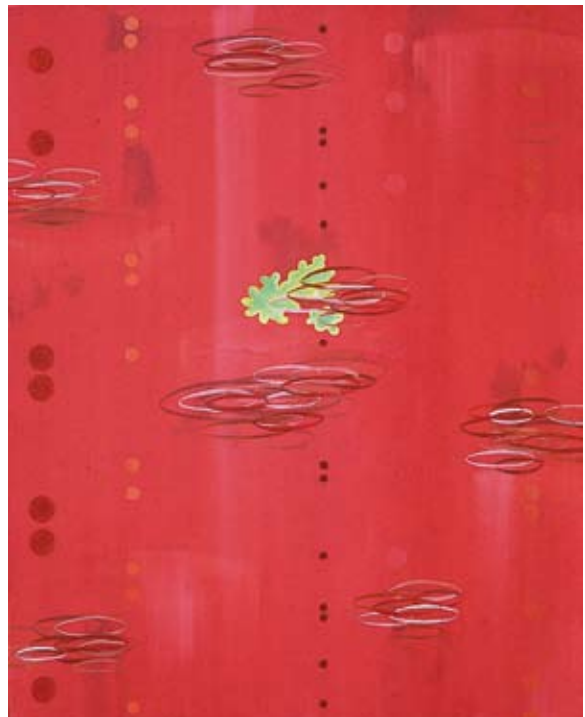
"I am interested in ideas about excess, and the work is designed to possess measured luxury, voluptuousness and desirability. The process of composing layers of organic forms and lush color grounds additively culminates in the finished painting. The layers recall both micro and macro views of esoteric organisms, creating a sensuous surface and providing an end result of delicate beauty that vaguely references the living."

Betty Stirratt received her Master of Fine Arts degree in 1983 from Indiana University, Bloomington, and her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 1980 from Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge. Her works are in the collections of the Kinsey Institute, Bloomington; Indiana University Art Museum, Bloomington; the South Bend Regional Museum of Art, South Bend; and Fort Wayne Museum of Art, Fort Wayne, all in Indiana.



Glide | 2004

Oil on panel, 40 x 30 in. (101,6 x 76,2 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Bloomington, Indiana



Depth | 2004

Oil on panel, 20 x 16 in. (50,8 x 40,6 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Bloomington, Indiana

Recoil | 1998

Bronze, 19 ½ x 13 x 4 in. (49,5 x 33 x 10,2 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Newfield, New York



Gary Weisman | born 1952

Gary Weisman is a teacher and sculptor of life-size figures and animals, “notable for their energetic musculature and rich, patinated surfaces.” He built his own foundry where he uses the lost-wax process in casting his work. Weisman has been on the faculty as a professor of sculpture at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia since 1986. He is a member of the National Sculpture Society, and is noted for his close attention to detail.

Many of Weisman’s works are in public spaces, including the Outdoor Sculpture Plaza for the City of Duluth, Minnesota, and PepsiCo/Elmira College in New York. Weisman studied at the Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois, from 1973 to 1974, and at Columbia University in New York City, where he received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 1976.

Source: *Who’s Who in American Art, 2003-2004*
American Arts Quarterly, Winter 2004

Candone Wharton | born 1950

Candone Wharton is best known for her intricate Raku pottery with beautiful metallic, gold luster glazes. Wharton creates hand-built vessels that are uniquely carved with basket weave and block print designs. Each piece has a pinched or slab base with added textured coils and rims to complete the design. Of the influences upon her work she says, "My education is American, the firing technique is Japanese, the glaze influences are from Morocco, and the forms are inspired by ancient architecture and vessels."

Wharton received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of Georgia. She lived in Sweden for five years, with the Cuna Indians in Panama for one year, and in Ibiza, where she had her first studio. For fifteen years Wharton made this island in the Mediterranean her home, and developed many of the techniques she uses today. Recently she relocated to Daytona Beach Shores, Florida, where she is in the process of setting up a new studio.



Untitled | 2006

Ceramic, 13 x 15 x 15 in. (33 x 38,1 x 38,1 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Daytona Beach, Florida

C.T. Whitehouse | born 1950



Life Force | undated

Bronze, stone

14 x 39 x 4 in. (35,6 x 99,1 x 10,2 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Cedarburg, Wisconsin



Barb's Choice, undated

Bronze, stone

12 x 18 x 5 in. (30,5 x 45,7 x 12,7 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Cedarburg, Wisconsin

C.T. Whitehouse's sculpture articulates a minimalist approach to allow the viewer to experience the nature and beauty of the material itself beyond the mere construction of the object. Whitehouse has had a long and varied career in the arts, first as a gallery owner and director. In 1993 he left the gallery business to work in the art foundries of Oregon, where he developed the skills to bring his creative ideas to form.

In his artist's statement Whitehouse writes, "The intent of my work with bronze is simply to express the nature and beauty of the material itself. Use of simple forms frees the viewer to see the qualities of bronze without concern for subject or detail. Minimal use of finishing techniques allows a closer connection to the casting process – the pouring of the metal at a temperature of over 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit. I hope, that when holding one of my forms, the viewer will look beyond the initial interest and feel the timeless beauty and power of bronze."

Mary Zicafoose | born 1950

Mary Zicafoose's tapestries and rugs blend cultural icons and symbols with a contemporary hand, creating powerful visual statements in fiber. She sees her work as a blend of both the energy and technique of the High Andean schools of weaving and those of the cultures of the Southwestern United States. From living in both countries Zicafoose writes: "I have been touched by the particular chemistry of the earth and its elements and the powerful forces of spirit, man and nature unique to each geographic location. My work is about the earth, its lineages, its tribes, its cycles."

Zicafoose has worked, traveled, and taught throughout the Americas. A largely self-taught weaver, she received her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana. Her graduate studies included the Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois, and the University of Nebraska. She credits her courage at the dye pot to the influence of painter Mark Rothko and her designs to every textile she has seen and touched.



Star Crossing | 2004
Ikat weaving, 68 x 40 in. (172,7 x 101,6 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Omaha, Nebraska



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