
Variations: 7 Artists 7 Media

This *Variations: 7 Artists 7 Media* exhibition introduces seven contemporary American artists, with wide ranging styles and techniques, to The Gambia. Media range from mixed media with encaustic to fused glass. Many of the artists represented here also blur the lines between art and craft, which is a trend in contemporary art.

Encaustic painting, as employed by Betsy Eby in her mixed media work *Savannah 006*, is a technique dating back to the 4th century BC. Molten beeswax, pigment, and damar varnish create lush and active surfaces, rich in textural interest. The horizontal format suggests a landscape, fairyland, or a slide under an electron microscope.

The technique of Judith Conway's kiln-formed pressed glass sculpture, *Autumn Lights*, is from the opposite end of the chronological scale. She is herself an innovator in this medium. This piece is part of a series called *Seasons and Celebrations*, which celebrates the ephemeral phenomena of nature and her elements. Conway's work speaks of rich textures and distinct shapes that make up the changing landscape.

In her monoprints Mary Virginia Langston explores aspects of the changing seasons through the tobacco-growing and harvesting process. Geometric shapes with organic textures and surfaces are juxtaposed, and their placement varied and rearranged in these four pieces from the series *Tobacco Curing*.

Black Ireland, an oil painting on linen by Eric Aho, also takes its inspiration from nature and the artist's sense of time and place. Mr. Aho is a professor of art as well as a painter, as are three of the other artists represented here.

The dynamic, clean, curving lines of Penelope Barringer's untitled hand-colored lithograph swirls with energy. Her work is created through the long, indirect process of working on a lithographic stone or plate, refining her drawing through multiple proofs, and then transferring the image to paper using a printing press. Marcia Jestaedt's ceramic tile *Weave Your Will* is also the result of a long, multi-stepped process often requiring several months. Clay tiles are cut and shaped, glazed, fired, and refired to create rich, lustrous surface effects with an Asian inspiration.

Finally, we are transported to a place of other worldly matters in the mixed media painting of Felicia Belair-Rigdon. *The Echo Between* brings together disparate images of childhood memories, a sense of history, images of angels, master paintings, bones and twigs, applied to a surface that is reworked with waxes and clay, unifying the various elements.

Clearly these artists represent media that range from ancient techniques to methods using the most modern technology. They have created a wide array of textures and surfaces that give a sense of physical substance to the language of visual images. Translations into Mandinka, Fula, or Serahule are not needed. We look and find relationships, contrasts, and messages. We thank these artists and their galleries for the generous loans of their work that we may all enjoy these visual *Variations*.

Ambassador and Mrs. Joseph Stafford

Banjul
July 2005

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.

Eric Aho (born 1966)

Eric Aho studied printmaking at the Central School of Art and Design in London in 1997, and received a Bachelor of Arts degree from the Massachusetts College of Art in Boston in 1988. He completed his graduate work at the Lahti Art Institute in Finland supported by a Fulbright Fellowship in 1991-92, and an American-Scandinavian Foundation grant in 1993. He has been



Black Ireland, 2000
Oil on linen, 36 x 36 in. (91,4 x 91,4 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Saxtons River, Vermont,
and Reeves Contemporary, New York, New York

Penelope Barringer (born 1946)

Penelope Barringer has created and shown lithographs and monotype prints in the Washington, D.C. area for more than thirty years. She has shown her prints in numerous solo, invitational, and juried shows, and now exhibits her work at the Torpedo Factory Art Center in Alexandria, Virginia.

In 1983 Barringer co-founded, Discovery T Graphics Atelier, Inc., a printmaking workshop in the Torpedo Factory that provides classes and working space for area printmakers. Over the past twenty years she has taught lithography, etching, and monotype classes for the Art League, Inc., as well as offering specialized intensive workshops in etching, monotype, and collage techniques.

She previously worked as Assistant Printmaker at the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

a visiting artist at the Burren College of Art in County Clare, Ireland; the Ballinglen Arts Foundation in County Mayo, Ireland; the Wier Farm National Historic Trust in Connecticut; Colgate University in Hamilton, New York; the National College of Art in Oslo, Norway; and the University of Art and Design in Helsinki, Finland.

Aho's paintings have been included in numerous one person and group exhibitions, including at the Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art in Ridgefield, Connecticut; the Fleming Art Museum at the University of Vermont; the Oulu City Art Museum, Finland; the Fitchburg Art Museum in Massachusetts; the Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire; the Philadelphia Art Alliance, Pennsylvania; and the Florence Griswold Museum in Old Lyme, Connecticut.

Aho received the Julius Hallgarten Prize in 1998, and the John Koch Award for Painting in 2000 from the National Academy Museum in New York City. Over the past several years, his work has been supported by grants and fellowships from the Pollock-Krasner Foundation; the Vermont Arts Council; the National Endowment for the Arts; the American Scandinavian Foundation; the Finlandia Foundation; the Ballinglen Arts Foundation; and the Vermont Community Foundation.

He taught painting at the Putney School in Vermont, from 1989 to 1998, as well as the Theater Academy of Finland in Helsinki; the University of Lapland in Rovaniemi, Finland; the National College of Art and Design in Oslo, Norway; the Harvard Graduate School of Design, Cambridge, Massachusetts; Colgate University; and St. Paul's School in Concord, New Hampshire.



Untitled, 1999
Hand colored lithograph, 26 x 33 in. (66 x 83,8 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Arlington, Virginia

Barringer earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Syracuse University, New York, in fabric design in 1968. She began printmaking in 1972, learning the

craft through study and collaboration with numerous teachers.

Judith Conway

"*Autumn Lights* comes from a series of glass sculptures called *Seasons and Celebrations*, which examines and celebrates the ephemeral phenomena of unique light and colors, rich textures, and harsh starkness that make up what we think of as the seasons of the year – the seasons of our lives. Using the medium of kiln-formed glass, I strive to capture the shapes and colors, the unique lighting and moods of nearby landscapes caught in a brief glimpse during a specific time of the year. My background in horticulture and my strong belief in the importance of our stewardship of our land are compelling forces in my work."



Conway has worked with glass professionally for over twenty-five years. Over time she has studied in France, Germany, and throughout the United States with a succession of accomplished instructors. Conway has taught the art of glass making since 1979, and in 2001 she opened the Vitrum Studio in Maryland, where she works in warm, or fused, glass, and teaches classes and workshops.

Autumn Lights, 2002
Fused glass, 23 x 17 x 7 in.
(58,4 x 43,2 x 17,8 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Beltsville, Maryland

Betsy Eby (born 1967)



Savannah 006, 2004
Encaustic with mixed media on panel
36 x 38 in. (91,4 x 96,5 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Winston Wachter Fine Art,
Seattle, Washington

Betsy Eby works in encaustic, a painting medium that dates back to the 4th Century BC. Eby's mixed-media material is composed of molten beeswax, pigment, and damar varnish. She manipulates the viscosity then engages in torching, spattering, dripping, and layer-

ing her material. She utilizes broad spreading knives throughout most of the process, and then later uses a brush to draw a line or a specific drip onto the outermost layer on the surface. Not only is Eby addressing the formal structure of composition and color within a transparent medium as unforgiving as watercolor, she must balance this with the dimension of the wax itself, the way wax obfuscates color and buries a gesture, all the while building to a finished surface that glistens like poured resin. It is a process of constant push and pull. The resulting paintings are uniquely transparent, with lush and active surfaces that are simultaneously sensual and contemplative.

Eby was born in Seaside, Oregon, in 1967. She earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in art history, with an emphasis in ancient Greek, Roman, and Asian antiquities, from the University of Oregon, Eugene. While interning at the University Museum, she was influenced by Asian landscape paintings, as well as by the Northwest master works she catalogued. After graduation, she lived briefly in Tokyo, and was deeply influenced by Japanese history and culture.

Eby currently lives and works in Seattle, Washington. Her studio is nestled into Seattle's industrial port neighborhood and overlooks the Puget Sound, the Olympic Mountain range, and Seattle's busy harbor.

Marcia Jestaedt (born 1935)



Weave Your Will, undated
Ceramic tile, 38 x 28 x 1 in. (96,5 x 71,1 x 2,5 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Bowie, Maryland

Marcia Jestaedt has been working with clay since 1970, and with Raku firing since 1972. Her work is characterized by rich lustrous glazes, and designs that have an Asian inspiration. It consists mostly of hand-formed tiles that are etched with floral and geometric images, then glazed in a painterly manner, combining colors to achieve the depth and shading needed to impart a three-dimensional quality.

Jestaedt received a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Maryland, College Park, in 1973, majoring in studio arts and teaching for a number of years. Her work is in many collections, including the George Walker Vincent Smith Art Museum, Springfield, Massachusetts; and the Southern Railway Building, Washington, D.C. She is the recipient of grants from the Friends of the Torpedo Factory, Alexandria Virginia; the Prince George's Arts Council, Maryland; and the Maryland State Arts Council. She has been a resident artist at the Torpedo Factory in Alexandria, Virginia, since 1983.

Mary Virginia Langston (born 1945)

Mary Virginia Langston says of her artwork: "I make art to try to understand things I cannot understand in any other way, to get in touch with feelings that are not reachable in words. I make art to capture memories – recall past visions."

Growing up on a farm in Winterville, North Carolina, Langston recalls the excitement of color and texture, as watermelon and cucumbers were made into pickles; the growing of flowers – the way line, color, size, placement, and weight could influence an arrangement; and



Tobacco Curing #1, 1998
Monoprint, 26 x 18 1/4 in. (66 x 46,4 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Washington, D.C.

Tobacco Curing #2, 1998
Monoprint, 26 x 18 1/4 in. (66 x 46,4 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Washington, D.C.

Tobacco Curing #3, 1998
Monoprint, 26 x 18 1/4 in. (66 x 46,4 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Washington, D.C.

Tobacco Curing #9, 1998
Monoprint, 26 x 18 1/4 in. (66 x 46,4 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Washington, D.C.

the privilege of watching close up the planting, harvesting, and curing of tobacco – the care, knowledge, skill, faith, and combined effort that is a way of life for farming communities.

Tobacco farming has its own language and way of measuring time. Langston continues to reflect on the tobacco-growing process and its place in our history. She writes, "I am transferring methods and observations teamed there to a painting/art making process. There had to be a real sense of color and feel for tobacco farming. 'Priming' the tobacco from the field when it was the right color, achieving and maintaining the temperature at the right level in the barn and for the appropriate time at each increment to achieve the most desirable color and texture. I allow these visual

and kinetic memories to determine the choices I make as I paint."

Langston graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, in 1968, and studied art at the Corcoran School of Art, Washington, D.C., from 1984 to 1988 and in 1990.

Langston has had many solo exhibitions, including at the Danville Museum of Fine Arts and History, Virginia (2003), and the Greenville Museum of Art, North Carolina (1988). Her work is represented in the public collections of the Contemporary Art Museum of Montecatini, Dino Scalabrino Academy, Montecatini, Italy; the Greenville Museum of Art, North Carolina; and the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C.

Felicia Belair-Rigdon

The paintings of Felicia Belair-Rigdon have evolved through a concentration on collage as a medium, incorporating marbled papers, book pages, and found pieces of wood into her approach. In these works Belair-Rigdon is inspired by early childhood experiences – the Church, and theater.

Belair-Rigdon was born in Washington, D.C., and grew up in Alexandria, Virginia. Upon completion of high school, she lived in Stockholm, Sweden, and traveled extensively throughout Europe. She was a student of graphic design at Konstfackskolan, where she learned classical drawing from plaster casts. Returning to the United States, she attended Parsons School of Design in New York City, and graduated from Richmond Professional Institute (RPI, then a branch of the College of William and Mary; now the Virginia Commonwealth University) with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. Graduate painting classes were taken at the Corcoran School of Art, in Washington, D.C.

Her work has been shown in Washington, D.C. at the Corcoran Gallery of Art's Hemicycle Gallery; the Virginia Museum of Fine Art, Richmond; the Baltimore Museum, Maryland; and the Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, Virginia.



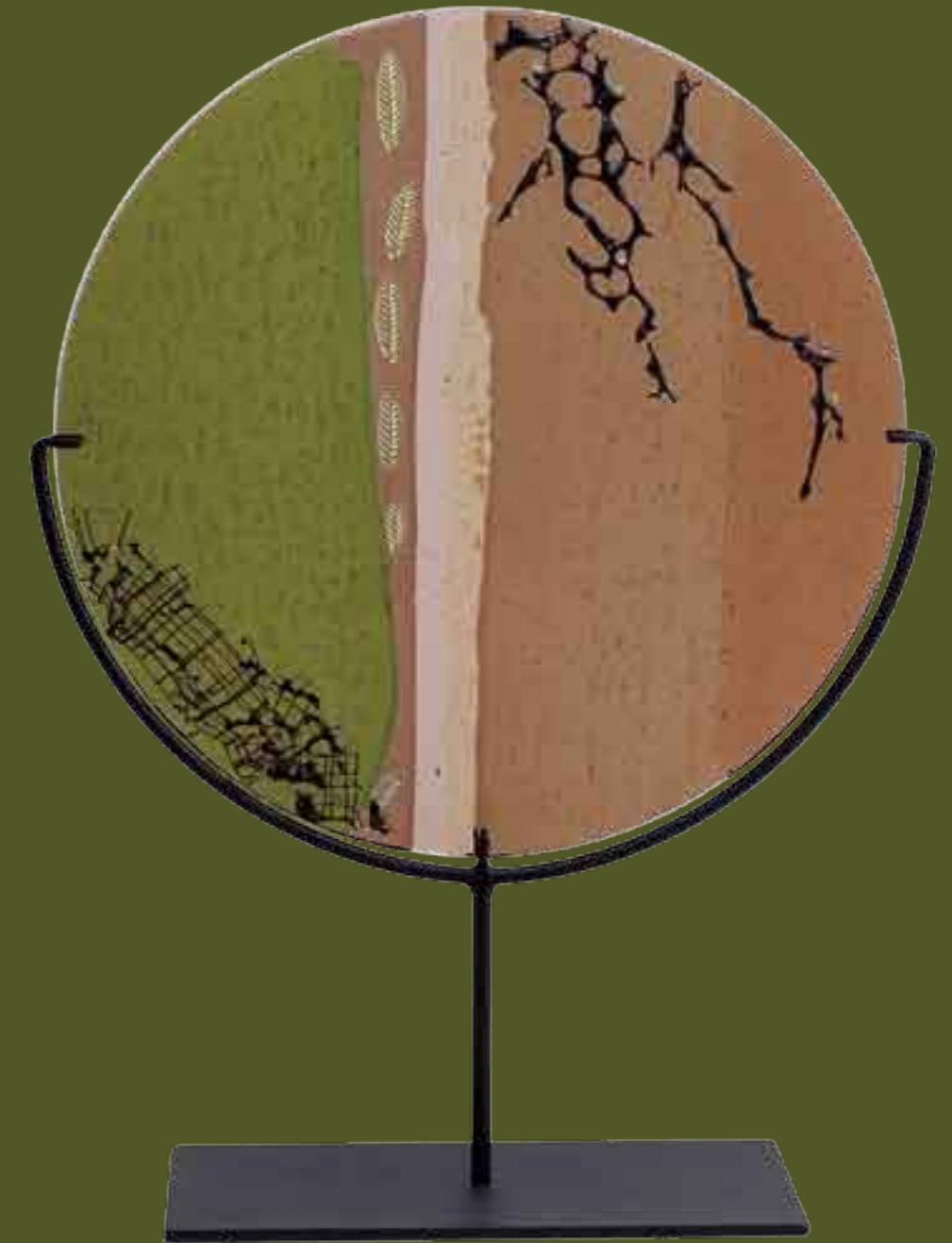
The Echo Between, undated
Mixed media, collage, and painting, 52 x 35 in. (132,1 x 88,9 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Alexandria, Virginia



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