

U.S. Embassy Residence Belmopan, Belize ART IN EMBASSIES EXHIBITION



BARBARA TAKENAGA *Aztec III*, 2006

Acrylic on linen, 70 x 60 in. (177.8 x 152.4 cm)

Courtesy of the artist and Gregory Lind Gallery, San Francisco, California

Introduction

The ART in Embassies, Belmopan exhibition is an artistic celebration of hope. Miriam-Webster's dictionary defines hope as "the desire, accompanied by expectation of, or belief in, fulfillment." While such optimism is crucial to any culture or nation, it is particularly welcome in the face of all that challenges our world today. Of course, such a theme presents what is perhaps an unanswerable question: what does hope look like? Broadly speaking, for the artists who have so generously loaned their work to this exhibition, hope emerges in the form of rich and brilliant color. Whether the sentiment is expressed through meditations on nature – like Katherine Allen's multi-layered, imaginary botanical fiber pieces and Kuzanna Ogg's vibrantly colored, flattened abstract mango trees – or observations on ancient and traditional art forms – like Michael Rhode's woven wool tapestries, Sohan Qadri's abstract monochromatic paintings, and Rasika Reddy's evocative portrayals of various cultures from different ages, one cannot help but conclude that while persistently full of color, hope looks different to everyone. And regardless of any particular aesthetic direction, an act of creativity, in and of itself, is an act of great hope and optimism. We extend our deep gratitude to these remarkable artists, not only for their contributions to this exhibition, but for their striking expressions of an idea so crucial for all of humanity.

— *Claire D'Alba, Assistant Curator*

ART in Embassies



Established in 1963, the U.S. Department of State's office of ART in Embassies (ART) 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, ART curates temporary and permanent exhibitions for the representational spaces of all U.S. chanceries, consulates, and embassy residences worldwide, commissioning and selecting 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 ART's presence in more countries than any other U.S. foundation or arts organization.

katherine k. allen | 1953

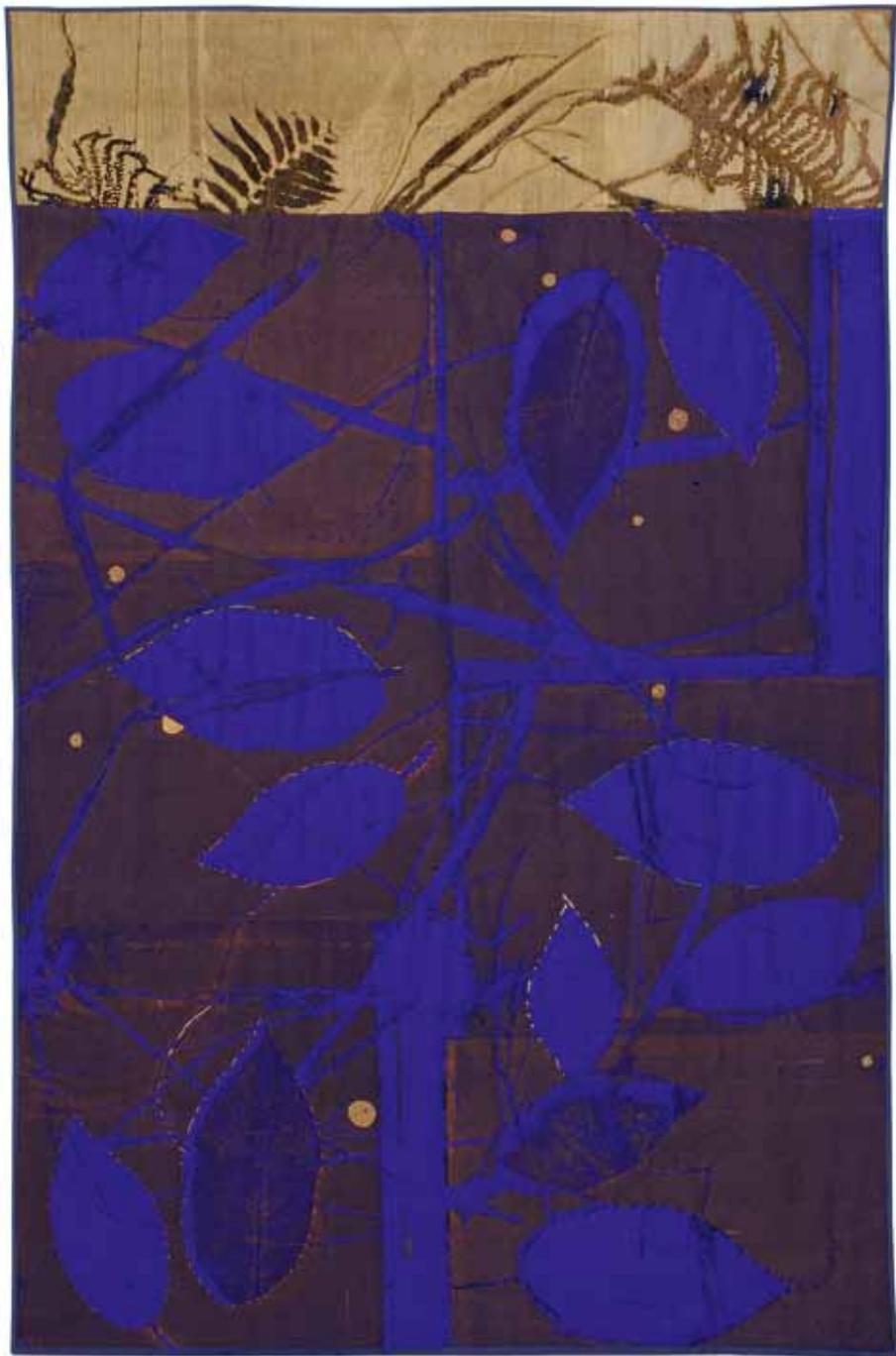
“My artworks are a meditation on Nature. I am interested in evoking the keenly joyous moments, celebratory gestures and expressive colors I find in the natural world. In my own tropical garden I grow all of the plant materials used in my creative process. I like knowing that I am both conceptually and actually partnering with Nature when making my art.

I begin each new artwork with a plain piece of silk or cotton. I prepare the cloth for printing by splashing, staining, and painting with water based pigments. Without too much advance planning I then cover the fabric with shapes and lines using raw materials from my garden in a stencil printing process. Overprinting using Screen Print Inks in consecutive layers results in a dense and complex surface. By design I am never in complete control of this process so that an unpredictable and surprising effect occurs each time. Shapes and lines result from the falling splash of color and tossing of leaf or string. These ‘marks of the moment’ capture a beautiful physical logic. I try to preserve this residue of the process as much as possible in my finished artwork. I feel an important philosophy of harmony is communicated through a comingling of these gestures of the human body and the natural forms of the garden.

I use cotton threads stitched into silk to connect the intimacy of domesticity and personal touch to a wider cultural context. With this thread I am adding marks of time and touch as well as clarifying the serendipitous rhythms developed during the printing process. My goal is to combine nature’s graceful gestures, colors and shapes to create art that nourishes mind, eye and spirit.”

— Katherine Allen

<http://katherineallen.org>







kuzana ogg | 1971

“The home of my great-grandparents is graced by a gigantic mango tree. As a child, I was taken by my grandmother to visit her mother and siblings there. While eating iced cakes and cucumber sandwiches, I used to gaze into the mango tree, marveling at its depth, breadth and multitude of growing leaves and ends. I watched this tree flower, fruit and feed the community with several thousand mangos per year. It also housed hundreds of wild parakeets, beautiful moths and butterflies.

The first pieces in this series are lush in color and complex in form. As the work progresses, the paintings become monochromatic with symbolic punctuations of color. The latter part of the series contains more abstract work: shapes are compressed and simplified, while color is flattened. These paintings share a contemplative quality celebrating change and growth as experienced in nature and humanity.”

— Kuzana Ogg

<http://kuzanaogg.com>





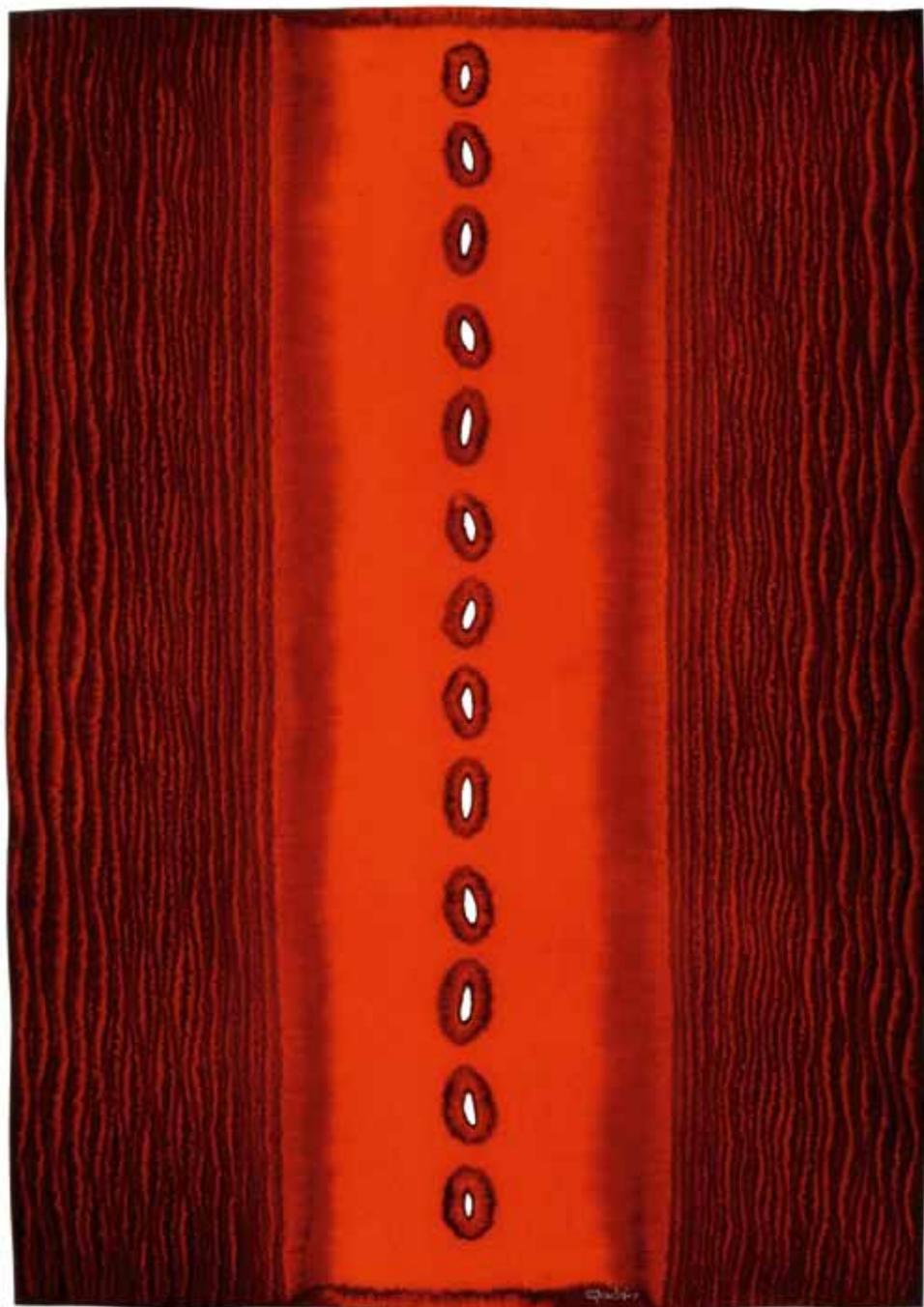




sohan qadri | 1932

Sohan Qadri can be described as a Tantric painter – a modern Tantric painter to be sure. Born in 1932 in Punjab, India, Qadri began his quest for his true self through Tantric yoga and spent long periods of time silently meditating in remote temples in the Himalayas and Tibet. His isolation propelled his urge to paint. He received his Master of Fine Arts degree in 1960 from the Government College of Art in Simla, India, but soon discovered that academic trappings were not for him. Shortly after his first exhibition in 1965, he left India for the West. In Qadri’s work, there is a tranquil coexistence of binary opposites – male and female, known and unknown, physical and spiritual. Although he clearly has Western influences, such as Mark Rothko and Clyfford Still, his work is uniquely Eastern. Heinrich Boll, the 1972 Nobel Prize winner in literature, has said that Qadri, “with his painting liberates the word meditation from its fashionable taste and brings it back to its proper origin uninfluenced by Western propaganda, misunderstandings, and corruptions.”

Qadri’s paintings are monochrome surfaces with structural effects that, in their repetition, convey the rhythmic expressions of color energies. The vibrations created by these energies are endless and break the boundaries between the inner space of the image and the external space of the viewer. In their pulsations, the colors allow for a meditation in which those who experience space seek to become space itself. As Qadri has said, “The narrowness of space has posed a great problem to me. Phenomenal life can hardly be lived within a few known dimensions.” Qadri’s work has to be experienced; the viewer must surrender to it. In front of his work, the viewer is confronted with the silence within himself. The work does not direct; one must direct oneself. This intuitive experience speaks all languages and knows no formal boundaries. Social activist and art critic Suneet Chopra summed it up by saying, “With its dispersion of and concentration of energy, it far excels expressionist abstractions whose aggression is their main force of attraction.”





rasika reddy

“My artwork deals with the metamorphosis of different cultures in the Indian Context. I overlay various images of religious objects from different religions with layers of color and decoration, which appear to obliterate each other, each trying to assert itself over the other.

Every society builds and expands on the traditions of another. Even if the intention is to destroy an earlier tradition, it cannot obliterate it completely. In fact our present day culture bears witness to the amalgamation of different traditions accumulated and assimilated over time.

The final image, I hope, tries to find a unique and intriguing balance of change over time in any given society.”

— Rasika Reddy

Rasika Reddy is an artist based in Summit, New Jersey. She was born in India and educated in both India and England. It was while living in England that Reddy decided to pursue her passion for art, drawing from her own background to create a visual language that is evocative of an eastern culture. She believes that visual art is an underutilized medium for understanding other cultures. The amalgamation of various cultures over the centuries has become the main subject of Reddy's paintings, in which she uses many layers of different cultural images and icons to portray a coming together of different worlds.

<http://rasikareddy.com>



michael f. rohde | 1943

“Working in the medium of woven textiles, I use my tools to observe and comment on what I see. These observations come from news of world events, travels and study of ancient and traditional art forms. By employing simple, iconic geometry and strong colors, there is room left to contemplate what is not there and not explicitly stated. Recent pieces of work over the last several years have addressed the impact of human and natural causes on the homes and lives of people. Yet, without the foreknowledge of what is behind the creation of these images, the works stand as objects of quiet beauty: begun with white yarns of wool, silk, linen and other fibers, I add my own dyes to achieve a range colors and contrast not available in commercially dyed materials. Like a painter, I mix my own colors to create something new.”

— Michael Rohde

www.michaelrohde.com

barbara takenaga | 1949

Barbara Takenaga's paintings, which include acrylic on linen and wood panel, evoke provocative connections to everything from ancient Tibetan mandalas to photographs of deep space, and represent a complex interplay of dualities that inhabit both the cosmos and human imagination. The exquisite tension between depth and surface, microcosm and macrocosm, and creation and destruction is rendered in multilayered visual narratives. Her art utilizes a striking yet spare lexicon of dots, lines, circles, and undulating wave patterns of varying scale nested within each other. A repetitious sequence of bright, pulsing circles of color radiate hypnotically from a densely packed center of incandescent dots.

The explosive epicenters of Takenaga's pieces are set against dark, infinite space, allowing for a number of polarities: known and unknown, order and entropy, flat decorative detail and spiraling depth. As the particles are drawn toward the far off center, Takenaga conveys a sense of the cosmic and the nighttime sky.

Takenaga's work references the trompe l'oeils of op art, the internal logic of fractals, and the mathematical quandaries of infinite regression. In a radiant and often psychedelic network of forms and colors, she expertly delineates the idiosyncratic relationship of abstract painting to science and nature.

www.gregorylindgallery.com



Captions

page 3 KATHERINE K. ALLEN **The Sweetest Hours**, 2007

*Acrylic paint and screen print inks on silk, two layers, machine stitching, 51 x 33 in. (129.5 x 83.8 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Fort Lauderdale, Florida*

page 4/5 KATHERINE K. ALLEN **Summer Luxury**, 2010

*Acrylic paint and screen print inks on silk, two layers, machine stitching,
52 x 104 in. (132.1 x 264.2 cm). Courtesy of the artist, Fort Lauderdale, Florida*

page 7 KUZANA OGG **Blossoming Mangos Yellow**, 2006

*Oil on canvas, 40 x 30 in. (101.6 x 76.2 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Santa Fe, New Mexico*

page 8/9 KUZANA OGG **Worli 11:30 AM**, 2007

*Oil on canvas, 24 x 48 in. (61 x 121.9 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Santa Fe, New Mexico*

page 10 KUZANA OGG **Rasila**, 2009

*Oil on canvas, 36 x 36 in. (91.4 x 91.4 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Santa Fe, New Mexico*

page 12 SOHAN QADRI **Yatra V**, 2006

*Ink and dye on paper, 48 x 36 in. (121.9 x 91.4 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Sundaram Tagore Gallery, New York, New York*

page 13 SOHAN QADRI **Untitled**, 2006

*Ink and dye on paper, 48 x 36 in. (121.9 x 91.4 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Sundaram Tagore Gallery, New York, New York*

page 15 RASIKA REDDY **Untitled**, 2009

Mixed media on canvas, 42 x 34 in. (106.6 x 86.3 cm). Courtesy of the artist, New York, New York

page 17 MICHAEL F. ROHDE **Indra's Net**, 2007

*Wool, resist dyed with indigo, 43 x 39 ½ in. (109.2 x 100.3 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Westlake Village, California. Photo Andrew Neuhart*

page 19 BARBARA TAKENAGA **Aztec III**, 2006

*Acrylic on linen, 70 x 60 in. (177.8 x 152.4 cm)
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Acknowledgments

ART in Embassies thanks Ambassador Vinai Thummalapally and Mrs. Barbara Thummalapally for the active role that they played in the creation of this exhibition, and for their guidance, enthusiasm, and commitment to the project.

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Published by ART in Embassies
U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C.
June 2011