



Sierra Leone

Permanent Collection of the
Embassy of the United States
Freetown



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The permanent art collection for the U.S. Embassy in Freetown is an amalgamation of paintings, photographs, sculpture, watercolors, and works on paper by African-American, American and African artists who are directly influenced by Sierra Leone, West Africa, and the landscapes and culture of the American South; where many West Africans and specifically Sierra Leoneans were transported when they arrived in the United States.

In one way or another, many of the works specifically connect to the Gullah people of South Carolina, Georgia,

and northern Florida. Gullahs are West African descendants who continue to speak a Creole language which is a form of English influenced by several West African languages. Gullah artists' work is diverse in style, subject matter, and medium. Yet artists intertwined with the Gullah people such as Julia Cart, Alice R.H. Smith, Jonathan Green, Dorothy Montgomery, and Thomas Mack, consistently refer, either through representation or abstraction, to the landscape surrounding them and the people who embody their Gullah roots.

Rich with West African influence, the works

imbued with Gullah culture remind us of Sierra Leone. The Sierra Leonian sculpture such as the Kissi currency and the Mende Bundu mask and the works by the contemporary Freetown artists such as Julius Parker 's brilliantly colored batiks resonate with the spirit of a unified people.

We hope you will enjoy this collection and its celebration of the cultural connection between Sierra Leone and the United States.



"I have been making photographs in Sierra Leone for more than a decade. My work there began with freelance assignments for various state ministries and international agencies. Traveling throughout the country, I documented projects in rural development, public health, and education. On many of these trips, I was fortunate to witness appearances by paramount chiefs at public functions and celebrations. The chiefs, clothed in elaborate gowns and frequently accompanied by musicians, dancers, always commanded attention. Fascinated by the drama and pageantry, I decided

to photograph paramount chiefs during such formal occasions whenever I had the opportunity."

VERA VIDITZ-WARD



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The works of Julia Cart, Jonathan Green, Alice R.H. Smith, and several other artists in this exhibition celebrate the rich Gullah culture native to the Sea Islands off the coast of South Carolina and Georgia.

The Gullah people, who have occupied this remote area for over three centuries, are descendants of West African slaves. Due to the remoteness of the Sea Islands and their isolation from other populations, the Gullahs have preserved their ancestors' African traditions, language, and myth with great continuity.

Julia Cart documents the vanishing past of the South Carolina Lowcountry. She has dedicated her time in the field to historic preservation. Many of her images portray scenes and structures that have fallen to the ravages of time, neglect, and development.

JULIA CART







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Martha Jackson Jarvis's work refers to the deities, myths, and culture of Africa. The artist sees great "immediacy and humanity" in African art. The African concept of ashes or energy pulses through Jarvis' early works and informs her later, large-scale public art installations. Through all of her art, Jarvis seeks to create "those kinds of in-between places where light, reflection, textures, and form all merge to make this unknown thing happen. This unknown thing has to do with energy and life and force, and it speaks to each of us in a different way. It's what I grasp for."

**BASED ON
SCULPTURE INTERVIEW**

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Dorothy Montgomery, a South Carolina native, based her Gullah Boatman quilt on the long cabin pattern. The appliqué of the man rowing on a blue background depicts the spiritual, "Michael Row the Boat Ashore," symbolizing the slave oarsman often heard singing in Gullah as he traveled in a bateaux along the water.

The song symbolizes the origin of the Gullah language, a Creole blend of other languages: the branches representing America, the trunk representing Africa/West Indies and the roots representing English.

PENN CENTER



Thomas Mack, born on St. Helena Island, summons his African roots through his vibrantly colored patchwork quilts made from a blend of “Kinte” cloth, indigo patterns and burlap textured squares. African American quilting is a long-standing tradition in many Gullah families. When reminiscing about his own upbringing, Mr. Mack said, “Gullah and quilting go way back. That was a family thing. At the end of the evening after supper, everybody would sit around the fireplace and play some part in quilt making.” As a quilt maker, he has woven his ancestral history into his own version of Gullah quilt making.

Mack’s design in Patchwork Indigo symbolizes the history

of the Gullah people who worked on many indigo plantations in the south in the early eighteenth century. The slaves had meager possessions and often used burlap for their clothing and bedding, among other uses on the plantations. African American quilts are a living memory for today’s Gullah people, telling the stories of the struggles and survival of their ancestors.

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While Jonathan Green's work appeal and perspective are truly modern and cosmopolitan, Green looks to the familiar images of his ancestral home in Gardens Corner, South Carolina for the subjects of his paintings.

In his art Green draws upon his own intimate personal experiences, steeped in the traditions of family, community and life in the Low country of South Carolina. Each of his paintings is a testament to the motivating power of place and the enduring qualities of culture.

JONATHAN GREEN



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At thirty-four years of age, Radcliffe Bailey has already created an exceptional body of work. The artist works by patterning together vintage photographs, objects he collects, and painted words and maps in a multi-layered narrative which explores the history of African Americans, as well as Bailey's own personal history and influences. These elements are held together by his mastery of formal balance, rhythm and vivid color. His more recent work has progressed into the realm of sculpture and site-specific installations.

SOLOMON PROJECTS



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Studio painting with its hypnotic hold on its dreamer produces images that bridge the gap between conscious and unconscious thought. In the slippery hands of facts my eyes are blinded by the light after so much darkness. The value of color fusion, the importance of composition, the ability to see and record three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional plane is intoxicating. I smile to myself with joy in my heart because these are the things of which dreams are made.

JAMES BRANTLEY



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Based on skills and an aesthetic passed down through several generations, the Gee's Bend quilts have been highly praised for raw beauty, bold geometry and sophisticated color sense. Mary Lee Bendolph comes from a strong tradition of quilt-making. She was born in 1935 in Gee's Bend, a small rural community enclosed on three sides by a sharp bend in the Alabama River. She is the keeper of Gee's Bend's memories.

CAROLINA ARTS

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Works in the Exhibition

Plates

- 1 Vera Viditz-Ward
Paramount Chief Teresa Vebbi, 1986–91
Toned, gelatin silver print
- 2 Vera Viditz-Ward
Paramount Chief Alimamy Salifu Mansaray,
1986–91
Toned, gelatin silver print
- 3 Vera Viditz-Ward
Paramount Chief Madame Mamawa Sama,
1986–91
Toned, gelatin silver print
- 4 Vera Viditz-Ward
Paramount Chief Alimamy Sorie II,
1986–91
Toned, gelatin silver print
- 5 Vera Viditz-Ward
*Paramount Chief Gandhi Sahr Negekia
and Consort*, 1986–91
Toned, gelatin silver print



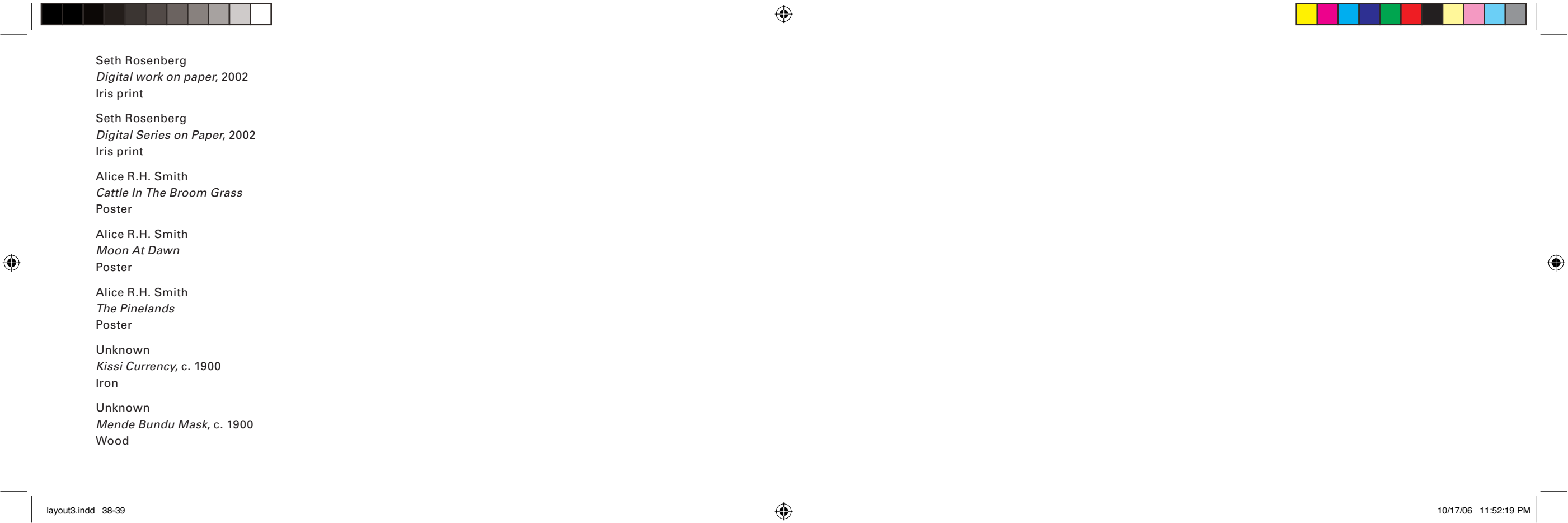
- 6 Vera Viditz-Ward
Paramount Chief Bai Yosso Kholifa, 1986–91
Toned, gelatin silver print
- 7 Vera Viditz-Ward
Paramount Chief Mustapha Ngebeh, 1986–91
Toned, gelatin silver print
- 8 Vera Viditz-Ward
Paramount Chief Foday Kai, 1986–91
Toned, gelatin silver print
- 9 Vera Viditz-Ward
Paramount Chief Bai Kurr Sanka, 1986–91
Toned, gelatin silver print
- 10 Vera Viditz-Ward
Paramount Chief Sama K. Banya, 1986–91
Toned, silver gelatin print
- 11 Vera Viditz-Ward
Paramount Chief Fyra Morlu Jabba, 1986–91
Toned, gelatin silver print
- 12 Vera Viditz-Ward
Paramount Chief Yelli Tham, 1986–91
Toned, gelatin silver print



- 13 Vera Viditz-Ward
Paramount Chief Kondeh Saio Sesay, 1986–91
Toned, silver gelatin print
- 14 Vera Viditz-Ward
Paramount Chief Madame Yatta K. Saffawah II, 1986–91
Toned, silver gelatin print
- 15 Vera Viditz-Ward
Paramount Chief Manga Salifu Samuma, 1986–91
Toned, silver gelatin print
- 16 Julia Cart
*Oaks at Dixie Plantation, Hollywood,
South Carolina*, 1999
Quadtone carbon pigment print
- 17 Julia Cart
Praise House, St. Helena Island, South Carolina, 1995
Quadtone carbon pigment print
- 18 Julia Cart
*Boneyard Beach #5, Bull Island,
South Carolina*, 2005
Edition 2/5
Quadtone carbon pigment print



			
 19 Julia Cart <i>Framptons Inlet, Edisto Island, South Carolina</i>, 1992 Edition 2/5 Quadtone carbon pigment print 20 Martha Jackson Jarvis <i>Arc of the Southern Sun</i>, 1989 Ceramic, wood, and copper 21 Dorothy Montgomery <i>Gullah Boatman</i> Fiber 22 Thomas Mack <i>Patchwork Indigo Print Quilt</i> Fiber 23 Jonathan Green <i>Still Blue</i>, 2006 Oil on canvas 24 Radcliffe Bailey <i>By Night</i>, 2003 Edition of 7 Color etching with handpainting layout3.indd 36-37	25 Radcliffe Bailey <i>Indigenous</i>, 2003 Edition of 7 Color etching with hand painting 26 James Brantley <i>Hope Springs Eternal</i>, 2005 Acrylic on ragboard 27 James Brantley <i>Voyager III</i>, 2002 Acrylic on canvas 28 James Brantley <i>The Survivor</i>, 2005 Acrylic on canvas 29 Mary Lee Bendolph <i>Past and Gone</i>, 2005 Color etching 30 Mary Lee Bendolph <i>Lonnie Holly's Freedom</i>, 2005 Edition, 50 Color etching	 James Brantley <i>Just Looking over your Shoulder</i>, 2005 Acrylic on canvas Colby Caldwell <i>How to Survive Your Own Death (29)</i>, 2004 Edition 2/5 Archival ink-jet print mounted on wood and waxed Colby Caldwell <i>How to Survive Your Own Death (39)</i>, 2004 Edition 2/5 Archival ink-jet print mounted on wood and waxed Julia Cart <i>Cows, St. Helena Island, South Carolina</i>, 1995 Edition 3/5 Quadtone carbon pigment print Eric Mack <i>TRT-03</i>, 2005 Mixed media on canvas	 Eric Mack <i>BBGG-2976</i>, 2005 Mixed media on canvas Julius Parker <i>Untitled</i>, 2005 Batik Julius Parker <i>Untitled</i>, 2005 Batik Julius Parker <i>Untitled</i>, 2005 Batik Seth Rosenberg <i>Digital Series on Paper</i>, 2002 Iris print Seth Rosenberg <i>Digital Series on Paper</i>, 2002 Iris print Seth Rosenberg <i>Digital Series on Paper</i>, 2002 Iris print 10/17/06 11:52:19 PM



Seth Rosenberg
Digital work on paper, 2002
Iris print

Seth Rosenberg
Digital Series on Paper, 2002
Iris print

Alice R.H. Smith
Cattle In The Broom Grass
Poster

Alice R.H. Smith
Moon At Dawn
Poster

Alice R.H. Smith
The Pinelands
Poster

Unknown
Kissi Currency, c. 1900
Iron

Unknown
Mende Bundu Mask, c. 1900
Wood



The NEC group of the ART in Embassies Program of the US State Department's Office of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO) curated, commissioned, and installed the permanent art collection in August, 2006. The Interior Design, Planning, and Furnishings Division of OBO also participated. Special thanks to Joseph Opala and Vera Viditz-Ward for their assistance.

