

United States Embassy
Freetown
Sierra Leone

ART in Embassies Exhibition



Cover:

JACOB LAWRENCE

Revolt on the Amistad, 1987

Serigraph

43 x 33 in. (109,2 x 83,8 cm)

Courtesy of Francine Seders Gallery, Seattle, Washington

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the U.S. Ambassador's Residence, and to our exhibition of American art. Art speaks a universal language that evokes different responses from different viewers. Whether the reaction to a work is positive or negative, art can stimulate dialogue and build bridges between cultures. The opportunity to see the works of creative Americans in our home gives our guests a window into the diversity of the United States and a way to initiate conversation that crosses borders – both cultural and geographic.



We are delighted to participate in the U.S. Department of State's ART in Embassies Program, which made this exhibition possible. Working with ART curator Imtiaz Hafiz, we chose a selection of art work that emphasizes and celebrates the diversity that exists in the United States. That diversity is expressed through the ethnicity of the artists themselves, their subjects, and the media through which they work. The artists include women, a Gullah descendant, African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans, European Americans, and Native Americans.

The works in the exhibition express features of life in the United States, and what it means to be an American, depicted through the eyes of artists who trace their roots from all over the world. Through a variety of media, including photographs, paintings, and sculpture, the art tells the story of the history of the United States, and explores interpersonal, geographic, familial, and spiritual relationships.

The works represent the diverse peoples who play a role in making the United States the dynamic country it is, from art depicting Native Americans and their rich traditions, to more contemporary works by African American artists. The photographs of Edward Curtis depict aspects of Native American life and lore, including the music, dance, and dress of more than eighty of North America's native nations. Wayne Wildcat, an

artist from the Creek Tribe, has portrayed the natural dignity and grace of Native Americans, and his painting, *Crow Child*, is one of our favorites. In fact, we like it so much it was also part of our exhibition in the American Ambassador's Residence in Maseru, Lesotho. Likewise we have kept outstanding, contemporary African American painter Robert Freeman's *Gardenia Garden*, which portrays contemporary life in America.

To celebrate the connections between Sierra Leone and the United States that were formed more than a century ago, we have also selected works that represent the history and culture of Sierra Leone. Jacob Lawrence, a famous African American artist, explores the symbolic elements of the African American heritage of struggles, aspirations, and accomplishments. His piece, *Revolt on the Amistad*, depicts the historically significant uprising led by a slave from Sierra Leone that had a far-reaching impact on both the United States and Sierra Leone. The revolt influenced the course of American history and the development of Afro-American culture, while, in Sierra Leone, it led to the inauguration of American missionary activity that trained many members of the elite group whose descendants initiated the nationalist movement to achieve independence from colonial rule. Artist Rawn McCloud explores the culture of the Gullah of the Sea Islands of South Carolina, whose people were descendants of African slaves, and the importance of rice and indigo cultivation to the establishment of their culture.

It gives us great pleasure to provide access to these American works of art to our friends in Sierra Leone. We are grateful to the ART in Embassies Program and the generous contributors and artists who make this program possible.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "June Carter Perry". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

June Carter Perry
Ambassador

Frederick Perry
Foreign Service Officer, Retired

Freetown, January 2008

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 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.

Edward S. Curtis ■ 1868–1952

Edward Curtis, later called by some Native American tribes Shadow Catcher, was born in 1868 near Whitewater, Wisconsin. In 1874 the Curtis family moved to La Sueur County, Minnesota. Curtis built his first camera at the age of twelve and taught himself to expose and develop film and to make photographic prints. By age seventeen he was working as an apprentice photographer in St. Paul, Minnesota. His later photographs would have a profound impact on the imagination of all America. Requiring for its completion more than thirty years, one and a half million dollars, and the assistance of a vast array of patrons, researchers, scientists, editors, master craftsmen, interpreters, sympathetic creditors, tribal elders, and medicine men, Curtis' *The North American Indian* was published between 1907 and 1930. Comprised of twenty volumes, with more than twenty-two hundred photogravures, the book created a photographic and ethnographic record of more than eighty of North America's native nations.

In the field, Curtis instituted his own methodology, "the twenty-five cardinal points," to amass information on all areas of Indian life and lore, including vocabulary, political and social organization, religious customs, dwellings, food gathering and preparation, geography, games, music and dance, dress, weights and measures, and birth, marriage, and death customs.

This photo illustrates Iron Breast, a Piegan man from the Blackfeet tribe from Montana. Iron Breast is attired in the costume of the Bull Society – an independent company of male elders formed in 1820 to perform certain song and dance rituals.

~ Library of Congress



Iron Breast, Piegan, c. 1900

Contemporary digital photograph of platinum print
22 x 18 in. (55,9 x 45,7 cm)

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.,
Edward S. Curtis Collection, cph 3g08930; Courtesy of the ART in Embassies
Program, Washington, D.C.



Edward S. Curtis

Curtis writes in *The North American Indian* (1907–1930), Volume 2, of Mosa, “her eyes are those of the fawn of the forest, questioning the strange things of civilization upon which it gazes for the first time.”

~ Library of Congress

Mosa, Mohave, c. 1903

Contemporary digital photograph of platinum print
22 x 18 in. (55,9 x 45,7 cm)

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs
Division, Washington, D.C., Edward S. Curtis
Collection, cph3g08920; Courtesy of the ART in
Embassies Program, Washington, D.C.



Edward S. Curtis

Owing to their composite nature, the Jicarillas are a peculiarly interesting group. Too small in numbers to resist the cultural influence of other tribes, and having been long in contact with the buffalo hunters of the Great Plains, as well as in close touch with the pueblo of the Taos with its great wealth of ceremony and ritual, it is not surprising that the Jicarillas, in life and ceremony, have been deeply influenced by adjacent tribes.

~ Library of Congress

Vash Gon, Jicarilla, c. 1904

Contemporary digital photograph of platinum print
22 x 18 in. (55,9 x 45,7 cm)

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.,
Edward S. Curtis Collection, cph3g08803; Courtesy of the ART in Embassies Program,
Washington, D.C.



Edward S. Curtis

Piopio-maksmaks, according to *The North American Indian*, Volume VIII, pages 20–21, is “the son of the Piopio-maksmaks, who as Principal Chief of the Walla Walla, negotiated a treaty with Governor Isaac I. Stevens [Washington’s first territorial governor] in the Walla Walla Valley in 1855. The father was killed while a captive of the Oregon volunteers, and the son thereafter lived permanently among the Nez Perces, having married a woman of that tribe. Piopio-maksmaks possesses an unusually strong face, and his remarkably piercing eye betokens a man possessing the courage characteristic of his family and tribe.”

~ Library of Congress

Piopio-maksmaks, Walla Walla, c. 1905

Contemporary digital photograph of platinum print
22 x 18 in. (55,9 x 45,7 cm)

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division,
Washington, D.C., Edward S. Curtis Collection, cph3g08809;
Courtesy of the ART in Embassies Program, Washington, D.C.

Robert Freeman ■ born 1946

“As an African American artist I feel that it is important to produce positive images of people of color. The past visual history of people of color has been for the most part governed by others outside of our race. The opportunity for Black artists to tell their own stories is one that I participate in and celebrate. These prints are just one story about life, love and human social nature. They attempt to show a slice of the human condition through the medium of the print.”

Robert Freeman earned both a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree and a Master of Fine Arts degree from Boston University, and in 1997 received the school's Distinguished Alumni Award. Freeman has shown his work extensively throughout the United States. He is currently Artist-in-Residence at Noble and Greenough School in Dedham, Massachusetts.



Geranium Garden, 2000

Giclee print

28 ½ x 25 in. (72,4 x 63,5 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts

Ernest Gilbert ■ born 1942

Ernest Gilbert's introduction to art came from his father, Ernest C. Gilbert, Sr. who was a painter and whittler. Gilbert's interest began early in grade school with painting scenes for school plays and landscapes. Carving started with a bi-winged airplane then on to boats and animal heads. In 1974 an industrial accident left him disabled, and art became part of his rehabilitation. His first professional piece was a large totem, which generated a great deal of interest from the community and from Rebecca Hoffburger, founder of the American Visionary Art Museum in Baltimore, Maryland.

In 1988 Gilbert became a student of sculpture at Prince George's Community College in Maryland. His works are either based on social sentiments or family relationships, presenting the human form or facial features in abstraction. Gilbert writes, "I try to only suggest the form rather than clearly defining it. I try to use a range of thoughts and visions to create rhythms in my figures. I use a range of thoughts and dreams from my unconscious to my hands, then to my preferred medium, wood. To take a piece of wood and then create a sculpture with dignity is the objective."

Endangered Species, undated
Wood
59 x 24 x 14 in. (149,9 x 61 x 35,6 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Capital Heights, Maryland



Gloria C. Kirk ■ born 1944

This group of collages, The Heritage Series, is a result of Gloria Kirk's use of photographs, many from circa 1865, which were discovered in her mother's effects after she died in 2001. These iconic pieces create a cultural symbolism, by incorporating images of nineteenth century men, women, and families. Kirk writes, "they stimulated my passion to give them voice... to portray family histories. Too often we have no effective way of telling the story of those who have gone before us; those we loved as children, or those we never knew, but learned of their histories later. This art form is the best way for me to portray the link, the thread that runs from the past, through the present to the future."

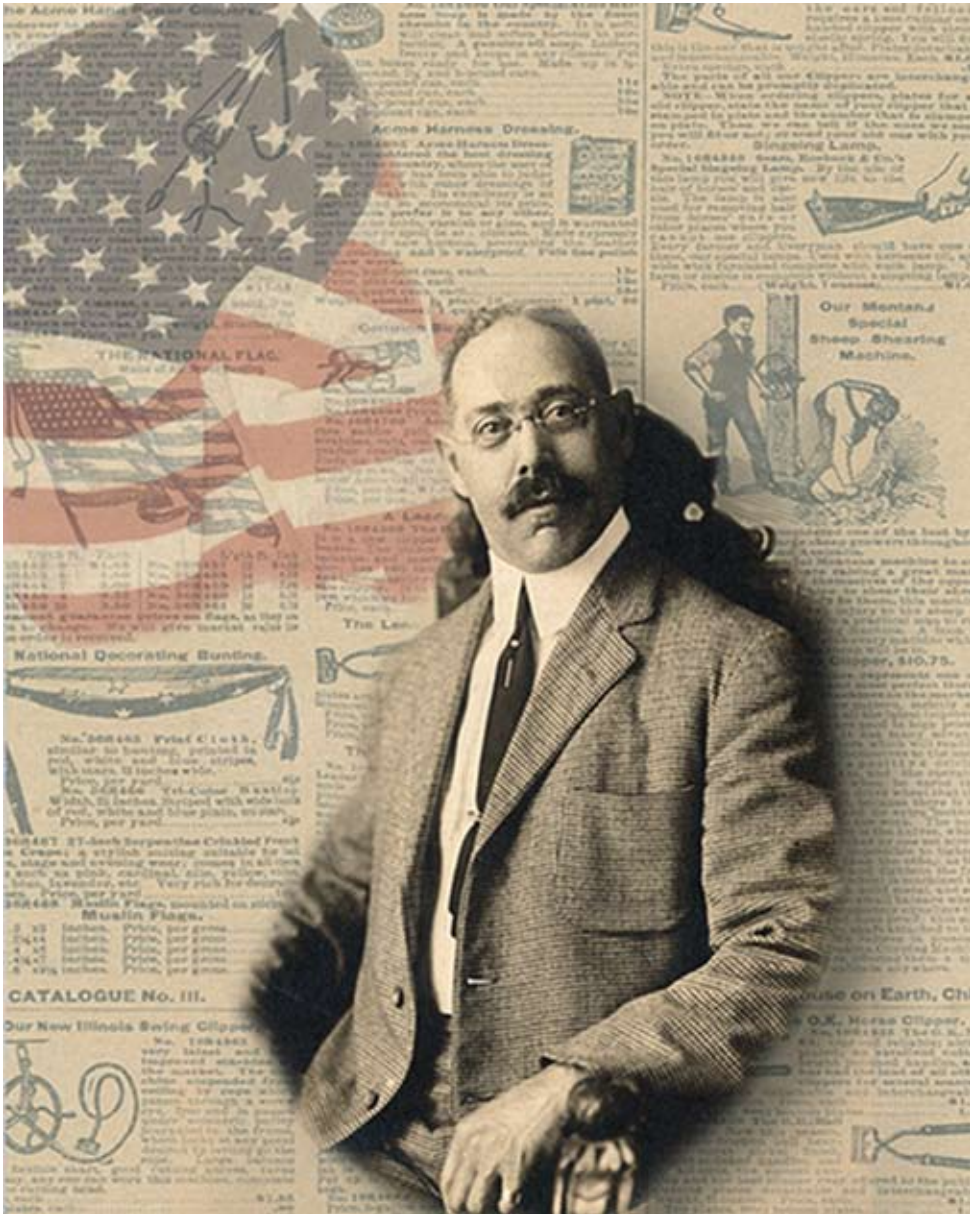


Postcards and Pansies, undated

Digitally collaged photograph
18 x 20 in. (45,7 x 50,8 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Washington, D.C.

Gloria C. Kirk



Man of Honor, undated
Digitally collaged photograph
20 x 16 in. (50,8 x 40,6 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Washington, D.C

Gloria C.
Kirk



AYA, undated
Digitally collaged photograph
16 x 20 in. (40,6 x 50,8 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Washington, D.C.

The background used for this image is one Kirk photographed of women working in sugar cane fields. AYA is the Ghanaian Adinkara symbol for the fern. It is representative of endurance, independence, defiance, great difficulties, perseverance, and resourcefulness.



Gloria C. Kirk

In the southern states of the United States, an aunt, mother, or grandmother always sat in the window watching over the children as they played outside in the yard. They were always there to ensure no harm came to “their children”. The background used for this image is a shotgun house, which is a narrow, rectangular domestic residence, usually no more than 12 feet wide, with doors at each end. It was the most popular style of house in the southern United States from the end of the Civil War (1861–65), through the 1920s. The style was developed in New Orleans, but the houses can be found as far away as Chicago, Illinois; Key West, Florida; and California. The term “shotgun house” is often said to come from the saying that one could fire a shotgun through the front door and the pellets would fly cleanly through the house and out the back door. The name’s origin may actually reflect an African architectural heritage, perhaps being a corruption of a term such as to-gun, which means “place of assembly” in the southern Dahomey, Fon area of what is now the West African country of Benin.

Watching Out, undated
Digitally collaged photograph
25 x 16 in. (63,5 x 40,6 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Washington, D.C.

Jacob Lawrence ■ 1917–2000

Jacob Lawrence, who lived much of his life in lower Manhattan, was a great American modern painter whose subjects were history and urban life. Born in Atlantic City, New Jersey, Lawrence is best known for his narrative series of tempera paintings based upon his own life and that of his African-American contemporaries who migrated from the South to the North. His vivid canvases typically have bold planes of color and symbolic elements of the African-American heritage of struggle, aspiration, and accomplishment. Lawrence's paintings are a unique blend of sensibilities – part narrative mural painting, part social realism, and part modernist abstraction.

In 1946 Jacob Lawrence began teaching at Black Mountain College in North Carolina at the invitation of artist Josef Albers. He also taught in New York City at the Art Students League, New School for Social Research, and Pratt Institute, and in Maine at the Skowhegan School. In 1971 he became a professor of art at the University of Washington in Seattle, where he retired in 1986 as professor emeritus. Throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, Lawrence continued to paint subjects that referred to racial and social issues of African-Americans.



Revolt on the Amistad, 1987
Serigraph
43 x 33 in. (109,2 x 83,8 cm)
Courtesy of Francine Seders Gallery, Seattle,
Washington

Revolt on the Amistad depicts the July 1, 1839 revolt aboard a Cuban ship called the *Amistad* in which fifty-three slaves tried to secure their freedom while being transported from Africa to a Caribbean plantation. They had been kidnapped by Portuguese slave hunters mostly from the neighborhood of the Colony of Sierra Leone and sold to Spanish slavers. The leader of the slaves was Sengbe Pieh, a young Mende man, but popularly known in U.S. history as Joseph Cinque. While attempting to return to Cuba following the successful revolt, the *Amistad* was seized by the U.S. brig *Washington*, and the Africans were imprisoned in nearby New Haven, Connecticut. They eventually received their freedom in 1841, after two years' internment in the United States awaiting the verdict of the courts regarding their "revolt."

The celebrated *Amistad* Case is an episode in U.S. history that is far better known in America than on the other side of the Atlantic. But the incident had a far-reaching impact on both sides, influencing the course of American history and especially the development of Afro-American culture. In Sierra Leone, the case led to the inauguration of American missionary activity that trained many members of the elite group that led the nationalist movement to achieve independence from colonial rule.

~ *The Amistad Revolt*, Arthur Abraham, <http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/amistad>

Sangram Majumdar ■ born 1975

In talking about his paintings and drawings, Sangram Majumdar writes, "Mostly I am intrigued by the mental walls we erect to separate ourselves from one another, physically, mentally, and across cultures." Born in Calcutta, India, Sangram Majumdar moved to the United States at a young age. Following his high school education, he applied to two art schools on a whim at the last possible moment, deciding to pursue art seriously and to temporarily set aside his interest in computers and writing. He received his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in illustration from the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, in 1999 and in 2001 received his Master of Fine Arts degree from Indiana University, Bloomington. After graduating Majumdar began teaching at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. In 2003 he joined the full time painting faculty at Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, Maryland.

~ www.sangrammajumdar.com



Crowd, undated
Oil on canvas
24 x 24 in. (61 x 61 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Baltimore, Maryland

Rawan McCloud ■ born 1955

Rawan McCloud writes in his artist's statement, "currently my focus has been on relationships – interpersonal, geographical, familial as well as spiritual. I have been exploring my relationship to the Sea Islands outside of Charleston, South Carolina, to the gradual evaporation of the Gullah culture there, and to the importance of rice and indigo cultivation to the establishment of that culture. My aim is to express an attitude of hope and optimism, not just for people of color, but also for all people."

McCloud received his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from California State University. His unique imagery incorporates elements of Yoruba, African, and ancient sculpture. Symbols and patterns combine with subtle effects of color and design. Bringing together several influences including nature, literature, and jazz, the artist seeks to communicate the wonder and beauty of people overcoming obstacles and moving forward in a positive and spiritual direction.

By **Gullah Gate**, undated

Acrylic on wood panel
12 x 36 in. (30,5 x 91,4 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, and Avisca Fine Art, Marietta, Georgia



Freddie Styles ■ born 1944

A native of Georgia, Freddie Styles is a committed abstractionist, although references to nature have been at the center of his paintings and collages throughout his long career. He is an avid gardener, and the distinction between this passion and his passion for making art is blurred – each symbiotically informing the other. Styles presses layers of crinkled and then inked fax paper (the old-fashioned coated type) onto gessoed paper. The height of the paper mount and the strips of fax paper create a vertical armature on which to build his compositions. Metallic inks are applied as well, which create another layer of depth to the works. His forms are reminiscent of organic vegetation, but his interpretation of the organic world stripped down to its essential vascular structure is not meant to be literal.

Styles is a graduate of Morris Brown College in Atlanta, Georgia. He has served as an artist-in-residence at Clark Atlanta University, Clayton State University, and Spelman College, all in Georgia. Museum group exhibitions include the High Museum in Atlanta, and the Telfair Museum of Art in Savannah, Georgia. His work can be found in public and private collections which include Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, Spelman College Museum of Art, Clark Atlanta University, and the Paul Jones Collection, all in Atlanta.

Study in Black, White and Silver Group A No.1, 2007

Acrylic and mixed media on rag paper
38 x 30 in. (96,5 x 76,2 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, and Avisca Fine Art, Marietta, Georgia



Ruben Ubiera ■ born 1975

Born in the Dominican Republic in 1975, Ruben Ubiera was educated in drawing, painting, and art history by his uncle, a self-taught artist and art teacher, priest, and principal of his school. At the age of fifteen, Ubiera moved with his family to the Bronx, New York, where he was influenced by the graffiti art that surrounded him. Ubiera later moved to Salem, Massachusetts, where he won silver and gold medals in the *Boston Globe's* Scholastic Awards, a Union Latino Scholarship, and a full-tuition Fernando Botero International Scholarship to the Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale,

Florida. Ubiera writes in his artist's statement, "I love art. Graffiti, typography, photography, print ... the medium does not matter. The fact that I skateboard every day keeps me close to the streets, the cosmopolitan city with all of its wonders and aberrations, the life of a Latino in the United States, and any piece of popular culture that comes to mind. What I really like to paint is portraits, using collages to describe people and the history that got them to where they are today, [in a] mix of hard graphic shapes, typographic elements with anthropomorphic surrealistic images."

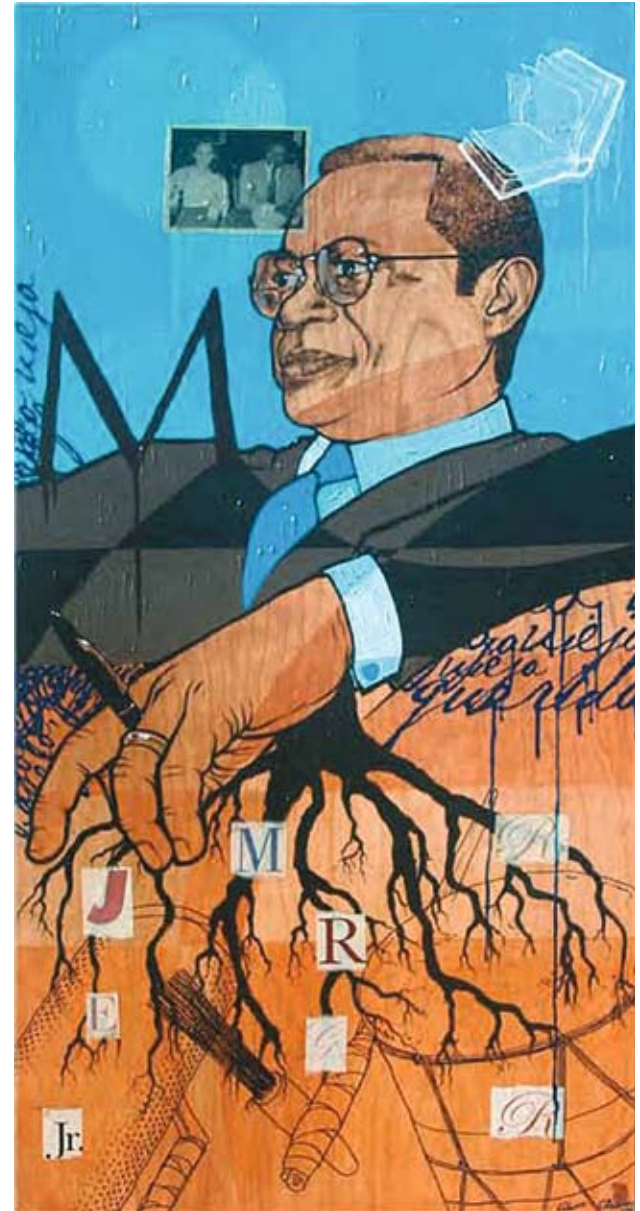


Junior a Los 30, Junior at 30,
undated
Acrylic, paper, ink, and newsprint
on wood
24 ½ x 48 in. (62,2 x 121,9 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Weston,
Florida

Ruben Ubiera



Mecho, undated
Acrylic, ink, and newsprint on wood
48 x 30 in. (121,9 x 76,2 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Weston, Florida



Mi Querido Viejo, My Dear Old Man, undated
Acrylic and newsprint on wood
60 x 24 1/2 in. (152,4 x 62,2 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Weston, Florida

Wayne Wildcat ■ born 1955

“My paintings ask the viewer to witness a portrait, like this Native American child from the Crow tribe, who stands before you now. It is important that Indigenous people be seen in all their natural dignity and grace. In my large paintings, I often blend realistic portraits into an ideological landscape. I paint portraits and history, often forgotten moments and people of history, lasting issues, and fate dramas. I have painted all my life and am self taught. It is a testament to the power of art that this Native American Crow child is in Freetown, Sierra Leone. My dad was full blood Native American Indian, Euchee (Creek rolls), a tribe removed from the southeastern United States to the center of the United States (now Oklahoma) on the Trail of Tears.”

~ www.WayneWildcat.com



Crow Child, 2002

Oil on Masonite

48 x 36 in. (121,9 x 91,4 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Wildcat Studio, Lawrence, Kansas

Norman Wyatt ■ born 1975

Norman Wyatt earned his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in visual communications, art, and design from Virginia State University, Petersburg. Wyatt believes his technique and style are most influenced by Gustav Klimt and the impressionists. He starts his paintings by applying layers of acrylics on paper or canvas and then uses his own unique weathering technique to reveal various shades and textures. Finally, he adds details via stamping, pen and ink drawing, and dry brushing.



Untitled Landscape III, undated
Mixed media on paper
24 x 30 in. (61 x 76,2 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, and Avisca Fine Art,
Marietta, Georgia

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Freetown

Frederick M. Perry, *Senior Foreign Service (Ret)*
Jennifer Mullarkey, *Acting General Services Officer*
Lontria Beale, *Ambassador's Office Management Specialist*
Danna Van Brandt, *Public Affairs Officer*
Ola Criss, *Management Officer*
Elizabeth Susie Pratt, *Deputy Chief of Mission*
Dirk Rettberg, *Facilities Maintenance Manager*
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