



ART in Embassies Exhibition
UNITED STATES EMBASSY GABORONE



Eli Walker **No Sugar Added With Spice**, 2010

Oil and enamel on canvas, 43 x 42 in. (109.2 x 106.7 cm). Courtesy of the artist, Baltimore, Maryland

ART in Embassies



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

AIE's exhibitions allow foreign citizens, many of whom might never travel to the United States, to personally experience the depth and breadth of our artistic heritage and values, making what has been called: "footprint that can be left where people have no opportunity to see American art."

"The ART in Embassies program reveals the rich history and cultural heritage of the United States and the communal experiences that we share with peoples of different countries, backgrounds and faiths, binding us closer together. Through its temporary exhibitions and permanent collections, the ART in Embassies program intrigues, educates, and connects – playing an ambassadorial role as important as that served by traditional diplomacy."

— Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State

Introduction

David and I feel spectacularly lucky to share our home with this ART in Embassies exhibition. One of our highest priorities here in Botswana is to reach out to young people, to better understand their aspirations and concerns, and to encourage them to become leaders and engines of growth for Botswana's future. We chose to symbolize how deeply we value Botswana's youth by selecting art for the residence from young American art students and very recent graduates. Their works bring new energy and perspective to our home and remind us daily of the powerful and insightful contributions that young people can make.

Created with the masking tape many painters use and then discard as they work, Jinhee Kang's *Trace* greets our guests at the door with an immediate surprise. It challenges some of our ideas about utility and beauty, flouts convention and celebrates what might otherwise be overlooked. Likewise, Jillian Bonahoom's *Wrapped* looks more closely at the play of light on what could otherwise be the most mundane of packaging, with the change

in perspective seeming to reveal a new ocean of possibility. These works insist that we see familiar things in new ways.

To our eyes, Kang's *Trace* and several of the other pieces in this exhibition also emphasize the idea of connection – how things are woven together, and how they can break apart or change. It is hard to think of a more appropriate theme in a diplomatic residence. Camilo Sanin's *Estructura Subyacente 211* is far more complicated than it appears at first glance, featuring layer upon layer of interconnecting planes that collectively take on surprising solidity. Likewise, Eli Walker's weaving of paint in *No Sugar Added With Spice* is especially fitting for display here in Botswana, where some of the world's most beautiful woven baskets are made. We like the way he incorporates the stuff of our everyday lives as a part of the whole – in places the canvas is stained with coffee, and the palate is inspired by the colors used in inkjet printers.

Magnolia Laurie's *with a quiet snap, I heard it* suggests the immediate aftermath of tension that has come to a breaking point. For our family, it is both playful and compelling, leaving us speculating about what will and should happen next. Jon-Phillip Sheridan's photograph, *Line of Flight*, is preoccupied with the changes created by folds and creases, and it makes us think about how experiences can transform identity.

We like the sense of community found in Victoria Greising's *a character from childhood*, in which she creates a cohesive new figure from used clothing associated with very specific personalities and experiences; and we appreciate the spirit of collaboration embodied in Eli Walker's *Spider*, which features an abstract Texas landscape that has been embellished by a local graffiti artist, who added the spider of the title based on his own instincts. These artists do not simply observe the world around them; they engage with it in a way that is central to the act of creation that produces their art.

In contrast, Christian Flynn's contemplative *Studio 683* gives us a sense of the quiet remove that can facilitate creativity. The depiction of a space so ripe with possibility, one that requires an agent to come in and take up the challenge of creation, speaks to us of the gauntlet thrown to Botswana's youth at this pivotal time in their country's history.

We delight in this exhibition every day, and extend our most sincere thanks to the artists who lent their work and to ART in Embassies. We especially want to thank curator Claire D'Alba for helping us realize and surpass our original vision. We very much hope that you enjoy the art as much as we do!

Ambassador Michelle D. Gavin
Mr. David V. Bonfili

Gaborone, Botswana
December 2011

Jillian Bonahoom

born 1986, Detroit, Michigan

Jillian Bonahoom grew up in Michigan. Having exhibited an early interest and talent in the visual arts, and being highly accident prone, she was often left out of contact sports and enrolled in extra art classes. Working in oil paint, Bonahoom has established a distinguished style and personality in her work. She earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the College for Creative Studies (Detroit, Michigan), and her Master of Fine Arts degree from American University (Washington, D.C.) Bonahoom was the recipient of the 2007 Detroit Society of Women Painters and Sculptors Scholarship, the Ethel Ford Achievement Scholarship, and the General Motors Achievement Scholarship.

Bonahoom is greatly inspired by the world of the theatre. A member of Stagecrafters, a community theatre in Royal Oak, Michigan, and an avid play-goer, the artist has participated in many community shows; she finds the atmosphere to be unlike any other. This interest and passion can be seen in many of her works. Emphasis on expression, body language, and intense color is often found within the figures she portrays.

Wrapped, 2011

Oil canvas, 48 x 48 in. (121.9 x 121.9 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Takoma Park, Maryland



Christian Flynn

born 1973, Boston, Massachusetts

“Studio 683 is one in a series of paintings that has as its subject the environment of the artist’s studio space, a subject that has also been of interest to artists such as [Casper David] Friedrich, [Henri] Matisse and [David] Hockney. The process of this painting lies in its construction as image. I was more interested in employing a depiction of interior functional space as a way to engage with the formal aspects of painting such as color, light, and space, than in the diaristic aspects of personal space (that is, the specificity of a personal narrative). The sort

of generic quality of this painting and its use of the gradient to simulate light was the foundation for my eventual move into digital processes as a means to create space.”

Christian Flynn received his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the Massachusetts College of Art and Design (Boston) and his Master of Fine Arts degree from Yale University (New Haven, Connecticut). He was recently awarded the AI Held Prize for Residency at the American Academy in Rome.



Studio 683, 2009. *Oil on linen, 64 x 84 in. (162.6 x 213.4 cm). Courtesy of the artist, Boston, Massachusetts*

Victoria Greising

born 1985, Indianapolis, Indiana

“Thinking about how we, as humans, universally interact with fabric as a material, I deconstruct and reconstruct everyday clothing, sheets, curtains, and other previously used domestic fabrics. To create forms and environments, I use the repetitive processes of tearing, cutting, tying, and sewing. My manipulation infuses the fabric with an original form and function. I intentionally use fabric and clothing that has a history – specifically collecting clothing, sheets, and scraps from people I know. Each article comes to me infused with a narrative, marks of its previous owner, and unique material characteristics – holes, stains, dried out elastic. The fact that each piece of clothing came from someone I know allows me to individually connect with the article.

Clothing serves many purposes. The first and most obvious is the need to protect the body – comfort, warmth, etc. Its primary and most essential function is the creation of an immediate shelter. Every culture, throughout history, has also used clothing to signify monumental events – wedding dresses, funeral dress, school uniforms,

military uniforms, etc. Each person, no matter what culture or country, interacts with clothing. And therefore, the subcategories of clothing become more specific, yet, are universal. As [Roland] Barthes explores in *The Language of Fashion*, clothing and its design mirror the ebb and flow of culture, both economically and politically. Clothing becomes a signifier of identity, class, culture, and historical decades. Clothing is used to indicate individuals, or create a unified group.

Clothing also serves a more personal function. Shirts, pants, sweatshirts, suits, and dresses become ‘favorites,’ and take on strong associations to the individual. The smell of the fabric or touch of the material can trigger a flood of personal memories of specific events or intimate moments. Throwing on a favorite t-shirt or keeping the sweater of someone who has passed [away], are ways of connecting to comfort and memory through material.

My recent work started as a collection project. I requested donations of clothing from anyone and everyone interested.

With no specific parameters, the donations ranged from discarded, beat up t-shirts to bridesmaid dresses, etc. Knowing that each piece was chosen by someone and specifically sent to me for my installations sets up a history and connection to the articles I am manipulating. Each piece was worn by someone, maintains a history, and tells a story – a sari from a wedding dowry, Malawian traditional dress, favorite biking shirt, clothes that don't fit because of weight loss, etc. These installations, however, are not an illustration of individual narratives. The general narrative, of collection and universal signifiers, takes precedence in the work. They quite literally are a web of narratives – mixing together, overlapping, and building on each other to create a social network and physical representation of personal connections and memories. Formal decisions – line, color, and shape – are dictated by the amount of fabric in each article. The structure of the piece is determined by the kind of fabric used – jersey, linen, cotton, polyester, etc. Depending on the type of weave, some pieces are more elastic, creating more tension, and others do not stretch.

My manipulation – deconstructing and reconstructing into an environment and space – facilitates a new interaction and evokes a sense of being surrounded, protected, and enveloped by clothing. Concepts of space in association to memory are activated in the experience of the piece. The spaces found by interacting with the installation are reminiscent of childhood forts, safe spaces – nooks, corners, attics, etc. In *The Poetics of Space*, [Gaston] Bachelard expands on the strong associations between space and memory. My installations are an embodiment of the memories associated with the donated clothing, an activation of personal memories, and creation of new associations with material and space.”

—Victoria Greising

Victoria Greising received her Bachelor of Arts degree from DePauw University (Greencastle, Indiana) and her Master of Fine Arts degree from American University (Washington, D.C.), where she was awarded the JoAnne Crisp Ellert Graduate Purchase Prize.



a character from childhood, 2011

*Previously worn children's clothing and family fabrics, wooden armature, and Poly-fil
Approximately 24 x 24 x 18 in. (61 x 61 x 45.7 cm). Courtesy of the artist, Washington, D.C.*

Jinhee Kang

born 1985, Seoul, South Korea

Jinhee Kang is a visual artist who utilizes masking tape for her paintings and installations. She is interested in using raw art materials that have been previously used and recycling them in her work.

Kang was born and raised in Seoul, South Korea. She earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at Alfred University (Alfred, New York) and Post-Baccalaureate at Maryland Institute College of Art (Baltimore). She is currently pursuing her Master of Fine Arts degree in painting and printmaking at Yale University (New Haven, Connecticut).

Next page:

Trace, 2008

*Mixed media on canvas, masking tape, and acrylic paint
46 x 58 in. (116.8 x 147.3 cm)*

Courtesy of the artist, New Haven, Connecticut



Magnolia Laurie

born 1974, Barnstable, Massachusetts

“Within my paintings and installations, the structures and systems created are illogical; they are delicate and makeshift in a way that may not endure their own weight, let alone the impending disruptions. Yet, they are made, and to me they reference the sustained need to try, to build, to create, even in the face of complete futility. They depict the instinctive, sometimes manic, and desperate human act of building and within them I am thinking about the cyclical rise and fall of civilizations.”

Magnolia Laurie earned her Bachelor of Arts degree from Mount Holyoke College (South Hadley, Massachusetts) and her Master of Fine Arts degree from Maryland Institute College of Art (Baltimore). She has had solo exhibitions at the York College of Pennsylvania; Causey Contemporary, Brooklyn, New York; and Hamiltonian Gallery, Washington, D.C., to name a few.

Next page:
with a quiet snap, I heard it, 2009
Oil on panel, 24 x 24 in. (61 x 61 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Baltimore, Maryland



Camilo Sanín

born 1985, Bogota, Colombia

Camilo Sanín was born in Bogota, Colombia and now resides in Baltimore, Maryland. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Maryland (College Park) and a Master of Arts from the Hoffberger School of Painting at the Maryland Institute College of Art (Baltimore). Sanín's paintings are subtle geometric abstractions that use line, color, and form to challenge preconceived visual ideals. By synthesizing cultural materials

from differing local realities, the artist takes deeply felt personal experiences, combines them with complex perceptual spaces, and arrives at the creation of new narratives. The interest lies in achieving equivalences through contrasting opposites and in sharing an individual language in which center meets periphery, and inclusion is clearly defined in terms of exclusion.

Next page:

Estructura Subyacente 211, 2011

Acrylic on canvas, 29 x 29 in. (73.7 x 73.7 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Baltimore, Maryland



Jon-Phillip Sheridan

born 1977, Charlottesville, Virginia

“The act of folding is a useful metaphor for the many transformations, material or metaphysical, that we encounter in life. Folding is a process of complicating matter, and of introducing structure into the formless and undifferentiated. Un-folding is not the reverse of this process but rather can be seen as a type of opening up, of a revelation of this complexity. The creases in the folds are borders between newly created forms, but they are still a single substance, part of the same piece of paper. On one level, I use this motif to investigate the material surface of the photographic print and heighten its value as an object itself. The print is like a veneer, an illusion of substance and depth embedded into the thin surface of a piece of paper. These images play on this contradiction. I fold a flat surface into a three-dimensional object and then, by photographing it, re-represent it as a flat surface. The photograph’s indexical

referent – that which is being photographed – is presented in a straightforward manner, but is given depth and atmosphere by utilizing the hyper-real effects of large format photography. I present an ambiguity of scale, depth and surface, where the images fluctuate between atmospheric illusion and a *trompe l’œil* effect where the material in the photo seems present. These images are constantly shifting between the banality of their materiality and the spectacle of their illusion.”

Jon-Phillip Sheridan received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Maryland Institute College of Art (Baltimore) and his Master of Fine Arts degree from Virginia Commonwealth University (Richmond). He has had solo exhibitions at Heiner Contemporary, Washington, D.C., and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, among other venues.



Line of Flight, edition 1 of 5, 2011
Archival pigment print, 28 x 40 in. (71.1 x 101.6 cm). Courtesy of the artist, Richmond, Virginia

Eli Walker

born 1981, Dallas, Texas

Eli Walker lives and works in Dallas, Texas. His work is heavily influenced by the Punk and Country music culture he grew up with, exhibiting alongside the rock-a-billy clubs and tattoo parlors of Dallas' Deep Ellum. As he moved around to different cities, he became involved with many emerging peers

in the DIY garage band scenes. He retains the subversive punk attitude of his youth to challenge conventions of trademark and formality. By constructing his images in a synesthetic manner, Walker invokes his disregard for classification with energy, humor and lyricism.



No Sugar Added With Spice, 2010

*Oil and enamel on canvas
43 x 42 in. (109.2 x 106.7 cm)*

Courtesy of the artist, Baltimore, Maryland



Spider, 2010. Oil and enamel on canvas, 16 x 15 in. (40.6 x 38.1 cm). Courtesy of the artist, Baltimore, Maryland

Acknowledgments

Washington, D.C.

Claire D'Alba, Curator

Jamie Arbolino, Registrar

Marcia Mayo, Senior Editor

Sally Mansfield, Editor

Amanda Brooks, Imaging Manager

Gaborone

Naomi Makgolo, Cultural Affairs Specialist

Andrew Prater, General Services Officer

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Vienna

Nathalie Mayer, Graphic Designer



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