

An abstract painting featuring a warm, golden-brown background. The composition is dominated by a large, thin green circle on the left side. A horizontal line of five small, dark circles is positioned near the top left. On the right, there is a grid-like structure with vertical black lines and horizontal lines in shades of blue and green. A dark, irregular shape is visible in the center-right area. The overall style is gestural and expressive, with visible brushstrokes and a rich, textured surface.

United States Embassy Mbabane
ART in Embassies Exhibition

Elsa Gebreyesus

Vantage Point (detail), 2011

Acrylic on canvas, 40 x 30 in. (101.6 x 76.2 cm)

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Myrtis, 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 a: "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
Former Secretary of State

Introduction

I am honored to share with you this exhibition of American art at the Residence of the U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Swaziland. The exhibition seeks to embody the goals of the ART in Embassies program – to intrigue, educate, and connect people through the visual arts, while sharing the rich cultural history of the United States. The themes of this exhibition speak to the inspiration and resilience of people who embrace life against all the odds, respect human labor, and revere creativity in all its forms.

The majority of the artists are women who embody the determined spirit of creators and survivors. Krisanne Johnson's black and white photographs of women living with HIV/AIDS in Swaziland are a testament to the power of choosing life and maintaining faith. Joyce Owens' work expresses the complexities of race, freedom, and the American dream. The importance of our connections through family and history are strikingly captured by Maya Freelon Asante. And the sheer beauty of color, shape, and composition are poignantly manipulated in the works of Elsa Gebreyesus, Alice Barber, and Robin Chandler.

Joseph Dixon's iconic image of a turn of the century Native American mother and child underscores the commonality of our human experiences. Anthony Wells' moving work of healing and compassion is based on the story of Anarcha, a slave woman who survived years of unanesthetized medical experiments during the 1840s. And Jacob Lawrence's ode to builders is a befitting tribute to the value of all work. The power of ritual, rebirth, resistance, and positive effort evident in all these works reflects the struggles of people everywhere to give their lives meaning and dignity.

These themes resonate with the people of America as much as those in Swaziland and remind us that in our diversity there is much that binds us. I hope you enjoy this exhibition and are as inspired by the artists as I am. I extend my deepest gratitude to the artists for their generosity in lending these beautiful works to grace the American Ambassador's Residence, as well as to ART in Embassies for assembling them, and the staff of Embassy Mbabane for their assistance in installing the exhibition.

Makila James

Ambassador of the United States of America

Mbabane, April 2013

Maya Freelon Asante | 1982

"In 2005 I discovered a stack of brightly colored tissue paper tucked away in my grandmother's basement. After unfolding the tissue, I noticed that water leaked onto the paper and left an intricate stain. This event inspired a shift in my creative process. A few weeks after I started working with tissue paper, Hurricane Katrina began bearing down on the Gulf Coast and I witnessed 'water moving color' literally, the power of nature, and the neglect of a nation. The sheer magnitude of the destruction and the remaining marks of flooding struck a direct connection to my artwork.

Over the past five years I have worked with 'bleeding' tissue paper, witnessing its deterioration. In and out of water, ripped and pieced back together, thrown, stepped on, forgotten and remembered. The union of the tissue fragments is rooted in my familial quilt-making heritage and the tradition of preservation and resourcefulness. Each piece speaks to me as a memory of existence and resilience. Independently, a torn piece of paper seems like a scrap of trash, but once unified with others, the force is overwhelming. Reflecting on the beauty and diversity of the African diaspora, my Tissue Paper Sculptures scale the wall and demand attention. Fragments of familiar faces stare down from above and beam with strength and solidarity.

Tissue Ink Monoprints are created by saturating the tissue paper with water, thus releasing the ink from the fiber; the tissue is then pressed on to a heavy weight paper, which absorbs the bright ink permanently. Much like a discarded cocoon from an emerging butterfly, the Tissue Paper Sculptures give birth to the Tissue Ink Monoprints. This sacrifice is honored as the ephemeral paper hangs freely on the wall with power and dignity. The Tissue Ink Monoprints represent a recorded history of formation, which pays homage to the stains it now bears.

As an artist, I contemplate global issues of war, poverty, waste, ageing and beauty, searching for what fuels our desire to preserve or protect. Giving reverence to my ancestors and



Relatively Distant, 2010

*Tissue ink mono/photo print, 20 x 15 in. (50.8 x 38.1 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Morton Fine Art, Washington, D.C.*

meditating on the beauty of now, my art represents the freedom to create challenging work with an objective of universal peace and understanding. The peace starts with the community in which I'm sharing my work; interaction is ever present and essential."

— Maya Freelon Assante

Alice Baber | 1928-1982

Alice Baber began painting at the age of eight, later studying art at Lindenwood College for Women in St. Charles, Missouri, and Indiana University, receiving a Master's degree in 1951. She also traveled worldwide, exhibiting in India, Iran, Japan, and throughout Latin America. She studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Fontainebleau, France, and lived in Paris throughout the late fifties and sixties. Baber was a member of the March Gallery on Tenth Street in New York City and was art editor of *McCall's* magazine. She was also a writer and a teacher, teaching painting at the University of California in both Santa Barbara and Berkeley, and serving as artist-in-residence at the University of New Mexico's Tamarind Institute in Albuquerque.

Baber was instrumental in organizing exhibitions of women artists at a time when women were still struggling to gain prominence in the international art world. Among the exhibitions she curated was *Color, Light, and Image* in 1975 in New York at the Women's Interart Center, a show of artists from around the world in recognition of the United Nations' International Women's Year.

Baber's legacy is honored at the Baber Midwest Modern Art Collection of the Greater Lafayette Museum of Art in Indiana, and the Alice Baber Memorial Art Library in East Hampton, Long Island, New York. Her paintings are in major museum collections around the world. Baber's work is recognized for its luminous, abstract shapes, particularly in stained canvases filled with clear, radiant color. Her compositions often consist of multiple round or ovoid shapes.

www.annexgalleries.com/artists/biography/104/Baber/Alice



Turn of the Wheel of Sound — I, undated
Watercolor, 36 ½ x 28 ½ in. (92.7 x 72.4 cm)
Gift of the Estate of Alice Baber to ART in Embassies, Washington, D.C.



Jaguar Sees the Frog, 1977
Watercolor, 36 ½ x 28 ½ in. (92.7 x 72.4 cm)
Gift of the Estate of Alice Baber to ART in Embassies, Washington, D.C.

Robin Chandler

"I am a visual artist, poet, educator, and motivational speaker for the arts globally for more than 30 years. For the last decade I have experimented with multimedia applications and digital technology to explore studio production and 2 and 3-D projects. As a collage artist, I use my own sketches, hand cut 'drawings,' photographs, digitized images, and papers to construct traditional and digital collage works, some large scale. My technique – 'drawing with scissors' – uses scissors to cut preliminary sketches freehand, rather than pencil. A recent series – *The Seven Valleys* – is a meditation on spiritual journeying produced in France at La Muse Artist residency in 2009. In 2010, my work as a collage artist – *Capoeira* – became the book cover of *Women, War, and Violence: Personal Perspectives and Global Activism* (Palgrave), a book I co-edited. In addressing issues of identity, my poem *Siouxjewgermanscotblack (Cherokee)* has been published in *Other Tongues: Mixed Race Women Speak Out* (Inanna Publications, Inc., 2010) Frequently my visual works also have accompanying collages to expand the social commentary impact and alert audiences to a particular theme.

I approach creative production as the mergence of traditional and new electronic media in which a traditional medium, such as collage, can be merged with contemporary computer technology formats and applications. As a mature artist, crossing media boundaries, as well as trans-national boundaries, hybridity motivates my passion for visual documentation through autobiography and 'visual memoir.' My own racial hybridity is mirrored in both my techniques and thematic approach.

Crossing disciplines, I also combine work as a social scientist and artist in lecturing and published works. I believe that artists, given their creative gifts, have a special responsibility and role as global citizens and that the artists are cultural diplomats. Since the late 1980s, my work has focused on themes of peace, freedom, and



Conjure Tree, 1991

Collage on Masonite, 20 ½ x 18 ¾ in. (52.1 x 47.6 cm)

Courtesy the artist, Boston, Massachusetts

using art to inspire, stimulate, and promote thinking concerning unity and peace-building from the local to the global... My themes cover the issues of peace-making, transcultural heritage, and science-oriented imagery not originally produced by computer programs. I have revisited my artistic roots through residencies for the past three decades in sites in the U.S., South Africa, and, in the summer of 2009, in the south of France."

— Robin Chandler

Joseph K. Dixon | 1856-1926

The Blackfoot were fiercely independent, nomadic, and very successful warriors whose territory stretched from the Yellowstone River of Montana, and from the Rocky Mountains and along the Saskatchewan River.



A Blackfoot Travois, c. September 15, 1913

Archival pigment copy print from original photograph
26 ¼ x 30 ¼ in. (66.7 x 76.8 cm)

Courtesy of the William Hammond Mathers Museum,
Indiana University, and ART in Embassies, Washington, D.C.

A **travois** is a frame made of long wooden poles from which a load bearing platform or netting is suspended. The frame is attached to an animal, which drags the load behind it.

Wanamaker Collection of Photographs of American Indians

The Wanamaker Collection consists of over 8,000 images of American Indians made between 1908 and 1923 by Joseph K. Dixon. These individuals represented over 150 tribes. The primary ethnographic and historical value of the collection is as a record and reflection of American Indian life in the first decades of the twentieth century. By the sheer quantity of photographs, the collection presents a wide view of Indian life, including several dimensions of culture change (documenting clothing decoration, dance styles, etc.), economic status (relative wealth/poverty), and acculturation/participation in the non-Indian world, including the military.

Beginning in 1908, Rodman Wanamaker, scion of Philadelphia's Wanamaker department store family, sponsored a series of "Expeditions to the American Indian" that were headed by Joseph K. Dixon, head of the store's education department. That year, the expedition journeyed to Crow Agency, Montana, to produce a motion picture of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's epic poem, *The Song of Hiawatha*. In addition, Dixon made photographs in and around their camp on the Little Big Horn, including shots of the second annual Crow Fair, and of Crow Agency. In 1909 Dixon and his staff returned to Crow Agency, where they gathered eminent Indian chiefs and important men from nearly every Indian reservation in the United States to participate in a Last Great Indian Council. Additional photographs were made in and around Crow Agency, including portraits of Indian survivors of the Battle of the Little Big Horn, which took place on June 25, 1876.

Beginning in 1909, Dixon and the Wanamakers became actively involved in the American Indian policy reform movement. They worked towards the building of a National Indian Memorial, which was dedicated in February 1913. Later that summer, Dixon and his staff travelled to over 150 reservations cross the country carrying a "Declaration of Allegiance" seeking citizenship for the unenfranchised American Indians.

www.indiana.edu/~mathers/home/collections/photos/reading2.html

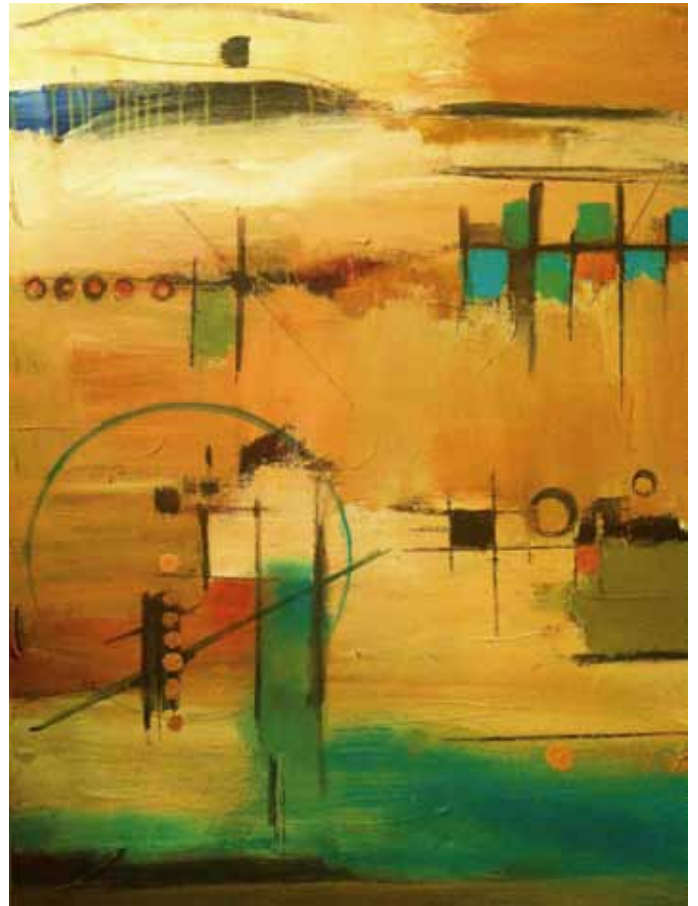
Elsa Gebreyesus

Elsa Gebreyesus lived in Ethiopia, Kenya, and the United States before going on to receive her Bachelor of Arts degree from Brock University in Ontario, Canada. After Eritrea won its independence from Ethiopia, she lived there for five years, working as a project officer with an indigenous women's organization. After leaving Eritrea, Gebreyesus again came to the U. S. where she has been pursuing her career and her

lifelong passion for art. In addition to her work and art, she also volunteers with organizations involved in human rights issues, especially in Africa. She continues to learn from artists she admires, and has been greatly influenced by modernist painters from both Africa and the West. Gebreyesus currently lives with her husband and two children in Fairfax, Virginia.



Holding Memories, 2008
Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 36 in. (121.9 x 91.4 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Myrtis, Baltimore, Maryland



Vantage Point, 2011
Acrylic on canvas, 40 x 30 in. (101.6 x 76.2 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Myrtis, Baltimore, Maryland

Krisanne Johnson

Krisanne Johnson grew up in Xenia, Ohio. She graduated with a degree in journalism from the University of Colorado, Boulder, and pursued postgraduate work in visual communication at Ohio University. In 2006 she began her career as a freelance photographer, based in New York City. Johnson has been working on long-term personal projects about young women and HIV/AIDS in Swaziland and in South Africa's post-apartheid youth culture.

Johnson's work has been awarded by World Press Photo, Pictures of the Year International, and the Best of Photojournalism. In 2009 she received the Getty Images Grant for Editorial Photography for her project *I Love You*

Real Fast (about young women and HIV/AIDS in Swaziland), and in 2011 she received the W. Eugene Smith Grant for Humanistic Photography. Johnson's fashion work was also exhibited at the International Center of Photography's group show *Weird Beauty: Fashion Photography Now* as part of the center's year-long fashion series.

Johnson's work has appeared in *The Fader*, *D2 (Norway)*, *D la Repubblica delle Donne*, *L'espresso*, *Io Donna*, *US News & World Report*, *TIME*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The New York Times*, among many other publications.

www.krisannejohnson.com



Krisanne Johnson

Untitled, August 2007

Digital, pigment print on Hahnemuhle Fine Art Pearl Paper, 13 x 19 in. (33 x 48.3 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Brooklyn, New York



Krisanne Johnson

Untitled, October 2008

Digital, pigment print on Hahnemuhle Fine Art Pearl Paper, 13 x 19 in. (33 x 48.3 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Brooklyn, New York



Krisanne Johnson

Untitled, February 2010

Digital, pigment print on Hahnemuhle Fine Art Pearl Paper, 13 x 19 in. (33 x 48.3 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Brooklyn, New York



Krisanne Johnson

Untitled, March 2011

Digital, pigment print on Hahnemuhle Fine Art Pearl Paper, 13 x 19 in. (33 x 48.3 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Brooklyn, New York

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 on his own life and that of his peers who migrated from the American South to the North. His vivid canvases typically have bold planes of color and symbolic elements of the African-American heritage of struggles, aspirations, and accomplishments. His paintings are a unique blend of sensibilities – part narrative mural painting, part social realism, and part modernist abstraction.

In 1946 Lawrence began teaching at Black Mountain College in North Carolina at the invitation of famed artist-teacher

Josef Albers. He also taught in New York at the Art Students League, New School for Social Research, Pratt Institute, and in Maine at the Skowhegan School. In 1971 Lawrence 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, he continued to paint subjects that referred to racial and social issues of African-Americans. He devoted himself to commissions, especially for murals and limited edition prints, to benefit non-profit organizations, including New York's Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. In 1999, the year before Lawrence's death, he and his wife, painter Gwendolyn Knight, established a foundation to create an art center in Harlem named for Lawrence.



Builders, 1995
Lithograph on Rives BFK gray paper
18 x 24 in. (45.7 x 61 cm)
Courtesy of DC Moore Gallery,
New York, New York

Joyce Owens | 1947

"American Landscape addresses my core issue, race, germinating during my Ragdale Fellowship. An anonymous girl from the turn of the 20th Century, several decades after the abolition of slavery, she illustrates the American dream; she may grow like the vegetation around her if the road to success is level and fair."

Joyce Owens is a painter who also creates sculptural works and masks. Owens earned a Master of Fine Arts degree from Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut. Her main influences there were Lester Johnson and Bernard Chaet. Others who guided her at Yale were Willie Ruff, musician, and artists William Bailey and Al Held. Her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree was conferred by Howard University, Washington, D.C., where Owens studied with preeminent African American artists and scholars, including David Driskell (the historian and curator of the Bill and Camille Cosby Collection), the late Lois Mailou Jones (an internationally known painter), Ed Love (sculptor

and Owens's mentor until Love's premature death), historian and painter Dr. James Porter, and printmaker and painter James L. Wells. California artist Leo Robinson was an important guide during her undergraduate years, as was Lloyd McNeill.

Owens has taught studio painting and drawing classes at Chicago State University, Illinois, since 1996, while also maintaining an active exhibition career. Since 2002 she has been a member of the Advisory Committee for the Department of Cultural Affairs Chicago Artists Month. She consults with the Chicago Artists Coalition, and is on the Advisory Board of Woman Made Gallery in Chicago. Owens is an associate editor for *The Journal of African American History*, and remains active as an independent curator and frequent juror.

www.joyceowens.com



Joyce Owens

American Landscape, undated
Painting with three dimensional
elements, 40 x 30 in. (101.6 x 76.2 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Chicago, Illinois

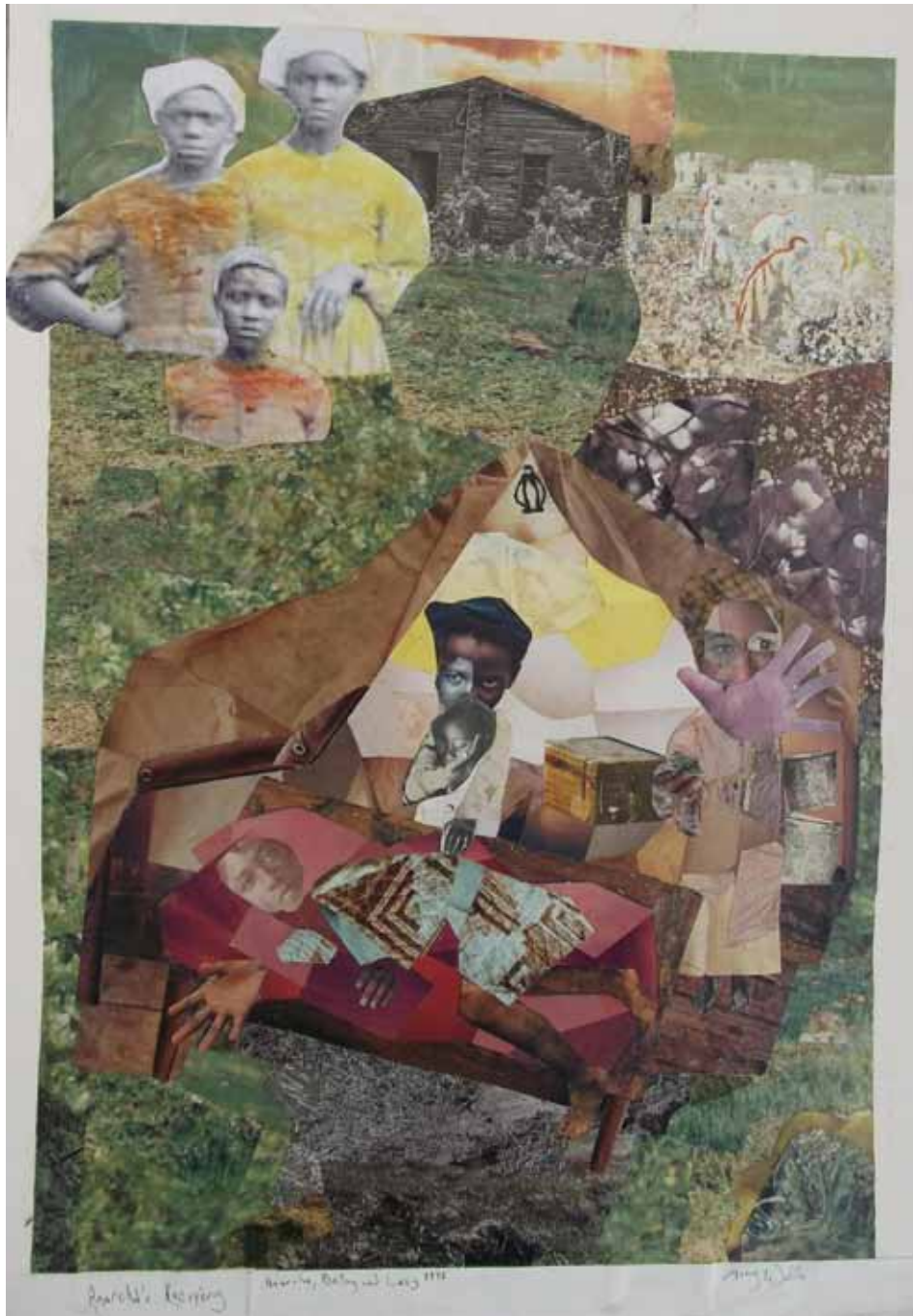
Anthony Wells



"I am a self taught artist. I try to make my collages take the form of music in its movement and harmony within its structure and color schemes. I tell stories of what I have experienced or attempt to capture the aesthetic and spiritual essence of a moment or embodiment of experience. The manipulation of old magazines, books and image sources allowed me to pull my media from other peoples' refuse, which inspires resourcefulness. Most of my collages are made up of several hundred separate pieces of paper with carefully chosen image, color and structural properties. Although making my collages may take time, I become immersed and allow things to be revealed to me as much as I deliberately construct them. The end product attempts to draw you into it and spend time reciprocally."

— Anthony Wells

Out of Nowhere, undated
Collage, 29 x 22 in. (73.7 x 55.9 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Saint Albans, New York



Anthony Wells

Anarcha's Recovery, undated

Collage/mixed media

20 x 14 in. (50.8 x 35.6 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Saint Albans, New York

(Anarcha was a slave woman on the Westcott plantation outside Montgomery, Alabama, who was the subject of repeated experimental gynecological surgeries performed without anesthetic by Dr. Marion Sims.)

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