

ART in Embassies Exhibition

United States Mission
to the North Atlantic
Treaty Organization
Brussels, Belgium



COVER

Helen Zughait

The George Washington Monument, 2000

Giclée print, 30 x 20 in. (76,2 x 50,8 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Washington, D.C.

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>.

Pluralism in America

No matter what you may think of the United States of America, it is that and more.

America is not just one thing. It is a reflection of the world. It is the ever-evolving expression of the hopes, aspirations and failings of free people. It is an ideal, a nation based on ideas and values, not blood and soil. It is the creation of people representing all the world's cultures, languages, and ethnicities who chose to build a new way of life by establishing a new form of government. It is the creation of their descendants, who grew up with – and continually help to re-shape – a unique identity.

One can never see the same America twice. It is dynamic. Ideas, people, and events constantly form and re-shape the nation. The United States of today is not that of yesterday – or of tomorrow.

Our country's strength is its pluralism and its cultural convergence. Whether one is a new immigrant or from an ancient strain of an old family; white, black, brown, male, female, young, old; Native American, European-American, African-American, Asian-American, Latin American, or any other American – all are equally American. All treasure a creed of tolerance and equality. Our United States stand as a source of hope, because our nation can be whatever we make of it. It is the boldest experiment of government of, by, and for a free people.

It has never been perfect, nor will it ever be. But the United States is always ready for improvement, ready for renewal, striving to become that *more perfect* union.

This selection of art displayed at Truman Hall was chosen to represent the great pluralism of the United States of America. Artists of distinctly different backgrounds and from different parts of the country have created works depicting America as they see it. What unites their art is a passion for the America they know, the America that allows them the freedom to express themselves, and that collectively represents us all.

Our starting point for the exhibition is *The George Washington Monument* by Helen Zughuib, a Lebanese-American artist living in Washington, D.C. In her rendition, we see not only the familiar sight of the monument, surrounded by flags, but we see it in startlingly bright colors and patterns that imbue the image with the exuberance every American feels about the hope that comes from freedom.

Next are two works by another Arab-American artist, Kinda Hibrawi, of Syrian descent. Hibrawi's use of Arabic calligraphy and references from the Koran, combined with sweeping colors and radiant light, form a unique fusion of her Middle Eastern upbringing and American adulthood. She notes that it is important to capture both her American and Syrian cultures in her art as "it represents who I am."

Poison Ivy Pump, by Corinne Okada, explores a completely different aspect of the American experience. Okada's heritage is Japanese-Hawaiian, and her works are inspired by family stories of plantation-era Hawaii, in which her grandparents and father grew up and remembered so fondly. Her sculpture is made of recycled candy wrappers from Russian, Chinese, and Japanese food! Not only does this reflect the ethnography of America's Pacific coast, it represents the environmentalist culture current there as well, using recycled food wrappers at a time when so much of the world's attention is being paid to global warming and other environmental issues.

Yet another aspect of the American experience is presented in Joyce Owens' extraordinarily powerful images of African-Americans, painted on three found wooden boxes. These paintings are based on photographs taken by W.E.B. DuBois for an exhibition he put together on *The American Negro* for the 1900 Paris World's Fair (Exposition Universelle). As Owens herself notes, while we naturally think of slavery and its far-reaching consequences, there is more depth to African-American history than just that, a depth we can build on when we know the history.

Pluralism in America

The pluralism of American society has engendered the uniqueness of its character. *Tilted Warhols*, by Greg Constantine, born in Windsor, Ontario, Canada, and *Baseball Park*, by Ralph Fasanella, the son of Italian immigrants, capture images that are both familiar and iconically American – something we very much wanted in the exhibition: the faces of movie stars known around the globe and the Great American Pasttime are as universally identifiable as American as the Statue of Liberty.

Likewise, as I am originally from Pennsylvania and Karen is from California, we wanted artwork that highlights the East and West Coasts of the country, and indeed, we believe, two of the most beautiful states of the Union.

Phil Dike, a leader of the California watercolor movement, lived across the street from Karen when she was growing up in Claremont, California. Dike taught at Scripps College and worked for Walt Disney as an instructor and landscape artist on such films as *Fantasia* and *Snow White*. Dike's wife Betty, depicted in *Hello Summer: Paradise Hotel*, was Karen's frequent baby-sitter. His *Surge of the Sea* is remarkable for its bold shapes that can really only be absorbed from a distance.

I grew up in southeastern Pennsylvania, of mostly German, English, and Irish descent. This part of the state has small towns, gentle hills, covered bridges, antique shops, and farmland. Philadelphia was the capital city for the Continental Congress – the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were written there. To those who grew up in Philadelphia, Benjamin Franklin is a local hero. It seemed he established the first of everything in the United States – the first hospital, first insurance company, first fire department, and so on. He was also our first diplomat.

Along Pennsylvania's Brandywine River, amid the strikingly beautiful farmland, a famous Revolutionary War battle, the "Battle of Brandywine," took place. A great tradition of craftsmen and artists – including three generations of Wyeths – also grew up in that area. Karl Kuerner's three paintings in the ex-

hibition capture vividly my memories of the look and feel of growing up in Pennsylvania, from moonlit nights to Amish buggies to a snowy winter.

Finally, perhaps the most unusual item in the exhibition is a piece of folk art representing my hometown. *The Hatboro Quilt*, by the Crooked Billet Women's Club, was inspired by my mother, Thelma Volker, and her friend, Barbara Haas. It was made to celebrate the bicentennial of the United States in 1976. Forty-two women sewed one square each to make a quilt depicting several landmarks in and around Hatboro, that have both a historical and, for me, a personal significance – from the Union Library (one of the oldest in the nation) to the Pennypack Elementary School (which I attended) to the Memorial Pool (where I was a lifeguard) and the "Duck Crossing" sign on Horsham Road, opposite the Old Mill Inn. By giving those who see it a glimpse into the life of a small town in Pennsylvania, the quilt is itself an ambassador, showing the character of our country and something of the people who live there.

Together these works of art help remind all who see them of what the United States is as a country, not just of her foreign policy. Above all, the United States of America is a nation built on unshakeable democratic values, constructed and maintained by people who uniquely combine a mixture of their personal or family origins with their identity as citizens of our United States.

And indeed, when put this way, it reminds one of NATO itself, where I serve as Ambassador – an Alliance of nations that share a common set of democratic values, and work together to build a better, safer future.

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. On the left is a stylized signature that appears to be 'Kurt Volker'. On the right is a signature that appears to be 'Karen Volker'.

Ambassador Kurt Volker and Mrs. Karen Volker

Brussels, May 2009

Helen Zughaib 1959



Helen Zughaib is a painter living and working in Washington, D.C. since 1985. She uses gouache and ink on board. Her subjects range from national monuments to portraits of her two cats. She uses color and pattern to define a new sense of space and perspective. Through her work, she hopes to bring pleasure and joy to the viewer.

Zughaib has explained: "I was born in Beirut, Lebanon and lived mostly in the Middle East until I came to America to study art at Syracuse University. Having this background, I experienced both the differences and similarities of these two great cultures.

After moving to Washington, DC, some of my first painted impressions were of these amazing monuments that I saw, one of which is depicted here, the George Washington Monument. I was so moved by the significance of the ideals that these monuments represent, not only for Americans, but also for visitors from around the world who come to see them. Through my paintings of these monuments, I hope to refocus attention to the important ideals that make America so unique and special."

www.hzughaib.com

The George Washington Monument, 2000
Giclée print, 30 x 20 in. (76,2 x 50,8 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Washington, D.C.

Kinda Hibrawi 1978



La Illah Ila Allah – There Is Only One God, 2008

Acrylic on canvas, 30 x 70 in. (76,2 x 177,8 cm). Courtesy of the artist, Huntington Beach, California

Kinda Hibrawi's art is a passionate journey of femininity, spirituality, and cultural convergence. Of Syrian descent, she grew up between Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon, and the United States. Her formative years in the Middle East gave her the opportunity to study the power of the Arabic language in all of its art forms. Through her studies she began to expand on the ancient tradition of Arabic calligraphy by giving it a modern twist. As an Arab American, she felt the need for her art to reflect the rich-

ness of the Middle East coupled with Western diversity. She has successfully intertwined East and West and is exposing audiences to the beauty and mystique of this historic art form. She noted in an interview with curator Ayse Turgut: "It is also important for me to focus on the positive rather than the violence of the Middle East as is so often portrayed by the media."

www.kindahibrawi.com • www.ayseturgut.com

Kinda Hibrawi



Asma Allah Al Husna – 99 Names of God, 2008

Acrylic on canvas, 24 x 36 in. (61 x 91,4 cm). Courtesy of the artist, Huntington Beach, California

Corinne Okada



Photo Credit: George R. Young

Poison Ivy Pump, 2008

Wire, kozo paper, Chinese, Japanese, and Russian food wrappers
16 1/2 x 5 x 8 in. (41,9 x 12,7 x 20,3 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Cupertino, California

“My works are sculptural compilations that mix the precious with the mundane to reveal the beauty and value in the seemingly valueless. The pieces playfully pay homage to my immigrant Japanese Hawaiian ancestors’ humble lives on sugar plantations and bring to light the cascade of cultures they experienced through sharing food, clothing, and myths.

Shoes are symbols of mobility and immobility depending on their functionality and design, and can be symbols of status and gender. Constructed of Asian food wrappers, my sculptural shoes reflect on the intersection of cultures through food and clothing. They also play with the class association of shoes, for while they appear to be the heels of high society, they are a collage of humble materials that would find reuse and utility in the plantation culture of Hawaii’s past.”

www.okadadesign.com

Joyce Owens 1947



“These paintings are dramatic renditions of the black middle class men and women shown in photographs during the Paris Exposition in 1900, only thirty-five years after Emancipation from American slavery. W.E.B. DuBois assembled the collection to overcome racial stereotypes that we still fight today.

Although not a secret, this historic segment of the American population is not widely acknowledged; the focus is instead on slavery and slaves, the poor and destitute, whom I also address in my work.

There is a depth to our African American ancestry that we can build on, if only we know the history; the wooden box is a symbol that can both hold the truth and tell the truth. I utilize my drawing and painting skills to represent these people, our family heirlooms.

The works range in size and the boxes have various depths. They are found, purchased, and handmade wood boxes. I show them singly, but preferably in groups. They stack or hang from the wall. They cross the boundaries of sculpture and painting. The medium is acrylic paint. The variations described defy stereotyping, as do most people.”

www.joyceowens.com

Out of the Box Series: Woman in White Skirt, 2007

Acrylic on found wood box

16 ¾ x 10 ½ x 3 ½ in. (42,5 x 26,7 x 8,9 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Chicago, Illinois

Joyce Owens



Out of the Box Series: Man in White Collar/Striped Tie, 2006

*Acrylic on found wood box
24 X 13 3/4 X 4 1/2 in. (61 X 34,9 X 11,4 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Chicago, Illinois*



Out of the Box Series: Woman in Shirdress, 2005

*Acrylic on found wood box
20 1/2 X 12 1/2 X 4 in. (52,1 X 31,8 X 10,2 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Chicago, Illinois*

Gregory Constantine 1938



“The recent artworks entitled *Tilted Images* are an attempt to investigate, invade, and even violate the concept of the traditional picture plane. The receding or tilted back image and its attached illusions of frame fragments in perspective complement the metaphysical entrance into a universe beyond the imaginary but understood surface. The actual physical museum-like frame on one edge of the artwork initiates this progression from our space into the picture space. These frame fragments are a consistent element in my work since 1985 when the *slices of art* were first conceived and created.

The familiar art historical references are pivotal and necessary factors provided for the viewer in order to dialog with the paintings. It may be noted that some of these references have been associated throughout their existence in particular with the phenomenon of the picture plane and the philosophical aspects of illusionism.”

www.gconstantine.com

Tilted Warhols, undated

Acrylic on canvas, 46 x 27 x 7 in. (116,8 x 68,6 x 17,8 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Berrien Center, Michigan

Ralph Fasanella 1914-1997



Baseball Park, 1974. *Silk screen*; Edition 190/250, 31 X 43 1/2 in. (78,7 X 110,5 cm). Courtesy of ACA Galleries, New York, New York

Ralph Fasanella was born in New York City to a working class family. At the age of thirty, while a union organizer for the United Electrical Workers of the CIO (Congress of Industrial Organizations, a federation of unions that organized workers in the United States and Canada from 1935 to 1955), he began to paint. Without formal art training, Fasanella painted the lives of the people around him. A chronicler of history, he recorded major political

and social events of our time. His colorful canvases, crowded with people, buildings, newspaper headlines, and scenes of everyday life are intricate and vibrant. Disillusioned with the unions and corporate America, he painted to get closer to his roots.

www.acagalleries.com

Phil Dike 1906-1990

Phil Dike was born and raised in southern California. In 1923 he was awarded a scholarship to study at the Chouinard Art Institute in Los Angeles, and received instruction from E. Tolles Chamberlin and Clarence Hinkle. He continued his art education in New York City, studying with George Bridgman, Frank Vincent DuMond, and George Luks. After returning to California in 1929, Dike began teaching at the Chouinard Art Institute and was one of the first artists to develop what became known as the California Style of watercolor painting.

In the early 1930s Dike continued teaching and painting and took further studies in Paris. His watercolors were being exhibited in museum shows throughout the U.S., and he was receiving wide acclaim and numerous awards. By 1935, he was also working at the Walt Disney Studios where he taught art and color theory while working on animated films. Among the many classic films he worked on were *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Fantasia*, and *The Three Caballeros*. In 1938 Dike served as president of the California Water Color Society.

After World War II, Dike left Disney and went back into teaching and painting full time. He and Rex Brandt formed the highly successful Brandt-Dike Summer School of Painting and during regular school months, he taught at the Chouinard Art Institute. It was at this time that Dike's watercolors became more modern looking. He began using calligraphy in very creative ways and incorporating geometric abstractionist ideas into his work.

Gordon T. McClelland and Jay T. Last, *California Watercolors 1850-1970*, Hillcrest Press, Inc., Santa Ana, California, 2002.

www.calart.com/Data/Artists/Phil_Dike.asp

Phil Dike



Hello Summer; Paradise Hotel, 1967

Watercolor. 22 x 30 in. (55,9 x 76,2 cm)

Courtesy of the Dike Family Trust, San Clemente, California

Phil Dike



Surge of the Sea, 1960

Oil on canvas, 32 x 48 in. (81,3 x 121,9 cm)

Courtesy of the Dike Family Trust, San Clemente, California

Phil Dike



Swallows in Flight, undated

Watercolor, 22 x 30 in. (55,9 x 76,2 cm)

Courtesy of the Dike Family Trust, San Clemente, California

Karl J. Kuerner III 1957

Karl J. Kuerner was born in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, to Karl and Margaret Kuerner, third generation farmers. His artistic talent was recognized and nurtured at a young age by Carolyn Wyeth, sister of Andrew Wyeth and a renowned artist in her own right.

Kuerner grew up surrounded by artists and the task of painting. From the age of seven he watched Andrew Wyeth paint some of his greatest works at the Kuerner Farm, Karl's family homestead for three generations, and a major source of inspiration for more than 1,000 of Wyeth's works (including several portraits of Karl's grandfather), and eventually over 300 of Kuerner's own works.

As Karl matured artistically, Andrew Wyeth took a keen interest in the young painter and took him under his wing, mentoring and teaching him for more than three decades. Wyeth said of Kuerner, "I have always emphasized to Karl that an artist must paint what he loves . . . and Karl has been painting that which he loves for nearly forty years now. His work is inspiring and deeply introspective . . . it exhibits a strong honest quality that comes from deep within and touches the ordinary in a profound way."

Kuerner is an exceptional painter of great restraint, deeply immersed in the teaching and influence of his mentors, but also very absorbed and moved by his farming traditions and Pennsylvania ancestry.

www.kuernerart.com/bio



Corn Fed, 1997. Oil on canvas, 24 x 76 in. (61 x 193 cm). Courtesy of the artist, Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania

Karl J. Kuerner III



Runners, undated
Oil on canvas, 45 1/2 x 25 1/2 in. (115,6 x 64,8 cm)
Courtesy of Richard McClellan, Claymont, Delaware

Karl J. Kuerner III



Canopy, 2000. Oil on canvas, 69 x 57 in. (175,3 x 144,8 cm). Courtesy of the artist, Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania

Crooked Billet Women's Club

This quilt depicts historic sites and buildings in Hatboro, Pennsylvania, Ambassador Kurt Volker's hometown. Hatboro is a small Pennsylvania town, founded in the early 1700's on the road from Philadelphia to New York. The town was originally called "Billet" or "Crooked Billet" after the "Crooked Billet Inn," established by one of its first settlers, John Dawson, a hat maker from England. The town was officially re-named Hatborough in 1740. It has a number of historic landmarks, including Loller Academy (now serving as the Borough Hall), the Old Mill, and the Union Library.

The quilt was created in 1976 by the now disbanded Crooked Billet Women's Club as part of a successful effort to save Hatboro's historic Loller Academy from demolition. It has hung on display in the Borough Hall ever since. One of the members who helped organize the quilt-making was Volker's mother, Thelma, whose square is *Village Players*. Ambassador Volker donated a number of NATO items to Hatboro, including photos, a facsimile of the original twelve-party treaty, and a 50th anniversary flag, to be displayed in the Hall lobby while the quilt is on exhibition in Brussels.



www.millbrooksociety.org

www.pitrone.com/library

Hatboro Quilt, 1976

Fiber, 108 x 108 in.

(274,3 x 274,3 cm)

Courtesy of the Borough
of Hatboro, Pennsylvania

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