

United States Embassy Port Moresby
Papua New Guinea



ART IN EMBASSIES EXHIBITION

Welkam long haus bilong mipela. Welcome.

It is with great pleasure that my husband Ted Dieffenbacher and I invite you to share this exhibition of the works by fine American artists at the Ambassador's residence in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. Designed by the local firm of Higgin Lloyd & Partners in 1979, the contemporary California shed style house reflects American residential architecture of the period. Thus it has the feel of many twentieth century houses which seem to hang off the cliffs above the Pacific coast of the United States. Its glass walls create an open, transparent atmosphere filled with light and make the most of the spectacular vistas and sunsets of beautiful Port Moresby Bay.

Papua New Guinea and the United States, both multi-cultural nations, are joined by the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean. With that thought, I sought works by artists from my home state of Washington, in the Pacific Northwest, to share with you a view from the other side of the ocean.

Washington State, like Papua New Guinea, is a geological world unto itself, ranging from rain forests, to still-erupting volcanoes, to high desert, to rolling wheat fields and deep gorges similar to the Grand Canyon in the American southwest. *Cottonwoods of the Palouse*, a dramatic triptych, and *Deepest Gorge* by Rita Robillard, portray landscapes of the area of eastern Washington where I grew up. *Untitled #1* and *Untitled #2*, works by my sister, photographer Nancy Rowe, evoke vivid memories of our family life.

It is a real privilege to exhibit *Supermarket Flora*, a work by the great American painter Jacob Lawrence, one of our most famous African-American artists. Lawrence was also a professor of art for many years at the University of Washington in Seattle. Reminding us of the remarkable marine life of the Pacific region, *Long-nosed Hawkfish* and *Turtles of Bora Bora* are underwater photographs by Michelle Westmorland, a frequent visitor (from her home in Seattle) to Papua New Guinea and other Pacific island nations. Laurie Thal and Lia Kass are also artists active in the west. Their stunning blown glass piece, *Cobalt Ruby Frit Eagles*, dynamically depicts the majestic bald eagle, symbol of America, which soars above the open plains and mountains of the western United States.



The final three works are by Anthony Soppelsa, who quite remarkably completed them while carrying a rifle and back pack as a soldier in Papua New Guinea during World War II. *New Guinea Landscape* and two paintings entitled *Study for New Guinea Landscape* will seem familiar to anyone who has traveled even a little bit outside Port Moresby. Although surrounded by the chaos, confusion, and carnage of war, Soppelsa chose to depict and remember scenes of the awe-inspiring beauty of Papua New Guinea.

While visiting this exhibition, take a look from our living room across Port Moresby Bay. Besides the beauty of the waves crossing the reef, the various shades of blue, and houses on stilts above the water, you will see on the

distant hill Government House, where General Douglas MacArthur established his headquarters during the war. On this, the 65th anniversary of the landing of U.S. troops in Papua New Guinea, Mr. Soppelsa's work stands as a reminder of the strong historic relationship between Papua New Guinea and the United States, and as a tribute to American and Papua New Guinean soldiers who fought for the freedom of both our nations.

We would like to thank the ART in Embassies Program staff, in particular curator Robert Soppelsa (son of the artist), for his creativity and insightful ideas in creating this exhibition. And, of course, we would like to express our deep appreciation to the gifted and diverse artists who graciously lent their works for our entire tenure here. We are truly grateful and honored for the privilege of displaying this exhibition in our home.

Leslie Rowe *Teddie E. Dieffenbacher*

Leslie Rowe and Ted Dieffenbacher

Port Moresby
September 2007

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.

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 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 and silkscreen prints 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 Josef Albers. He also taught in New York City at the Art Students League, New School for Social Research, 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 and 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, for which *Supermarket Flora* was created. In 1999 the year before Lawrence's death, he and his wife, painter Gwendolyn Knight, established a foundation to create an art center named for Lawrence in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City.



95/104

Paul Jarrow—1997

Supermarket Flora, 1997

Silkscreen on paper

30 x 22 3/4 in. (76,2 x 57,8 cm)

Courtesy of the ART in Embassies Program,
gift of the Foundation for Art and Preservation in Embassies,
Washington, D.C.

Rita J. Robillard (born 1944)

Rita J. Robillard received her Master of Fine Arts and Bachelor of Arts degrees from the University of California at Berkeley, and attended Cooper Union in New York City prior to moving to the West Coast. She has taught at the University of California at Davis, the San Francisco Art Institute (California), Rhode Island School of Design, and Washington State University, and is currently a professor at Portland State University (Oregon).

Robillard's artwork ranges from traditional painting and printmaking to new-genre installations and videos. The *Cottonwoods of the Palouse* scrolls, for example, are produced on Tyvek, a composite chemical product. The golden edges of the scrolls are mechanically screen-printed and the tree images are drawn on Japanese Gampi paper, then fixed to the Tyvek with dry-mounting tissue. The work contrasts early travel-book engravings of the "new world" or Arcadia with the realization of immigrants' dreams in the imprints of architecture and urban design. In the midst of astounding natural beauty, Robillard observes, people create a sense of belonging through their interventions in the landscape.

The artist's mixed-media work has been included in a hundred museum and gallery exhibitions, in Santiago, Chile, at the Museum of Contemporary Art; Sao Paulo and Curitiba, Brazil; Tokyo, Japan; Hangzhou, China; London, England; and Lacoste, France. Her work is included in over twenty public collections, including the Portland Art Museum; Yale University Library (New Haven, Connecticut); The National Academy of Art, China; and Museu da Gravura, Curitiba, Brazil. Robillard has served on the board of the College Art Association as chairman of the Visual Arts Committee, and as a member of the Executive Committee. She also served on the Editorial Board of the *Art Journal*.

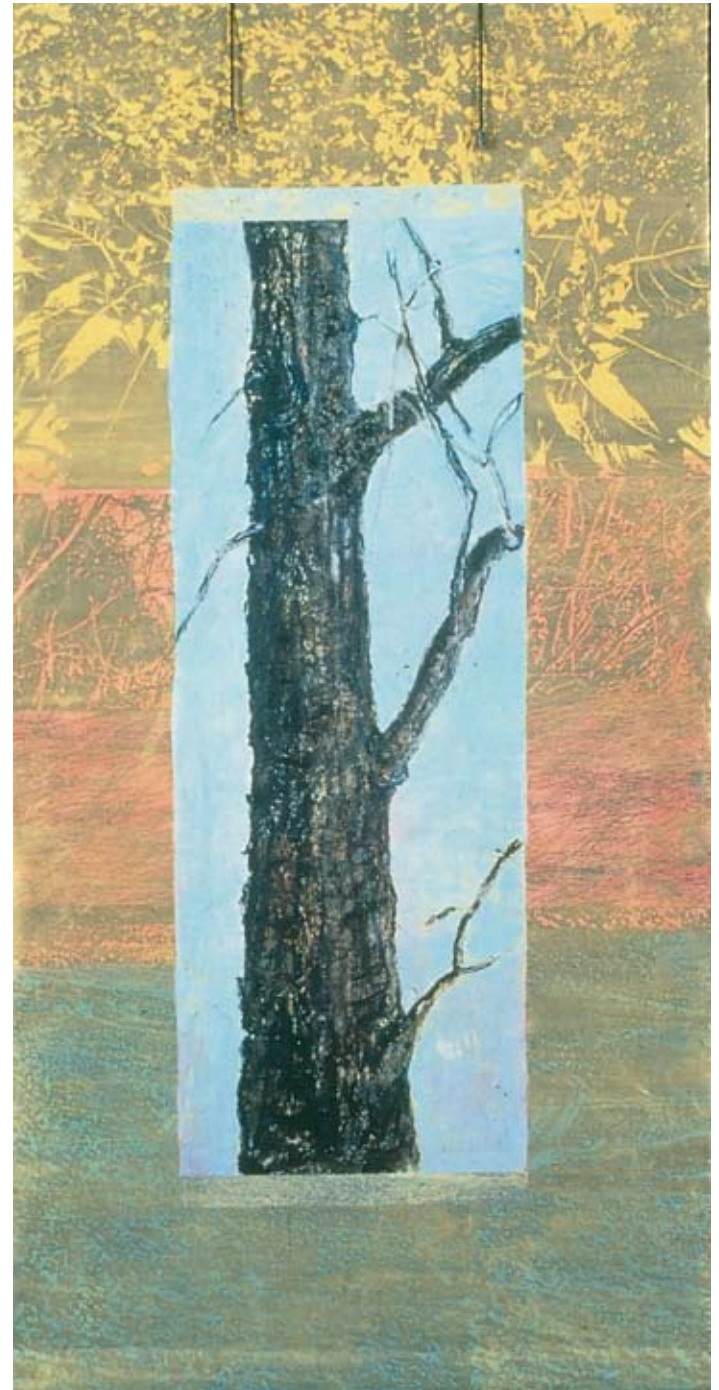
www.pdx.edu



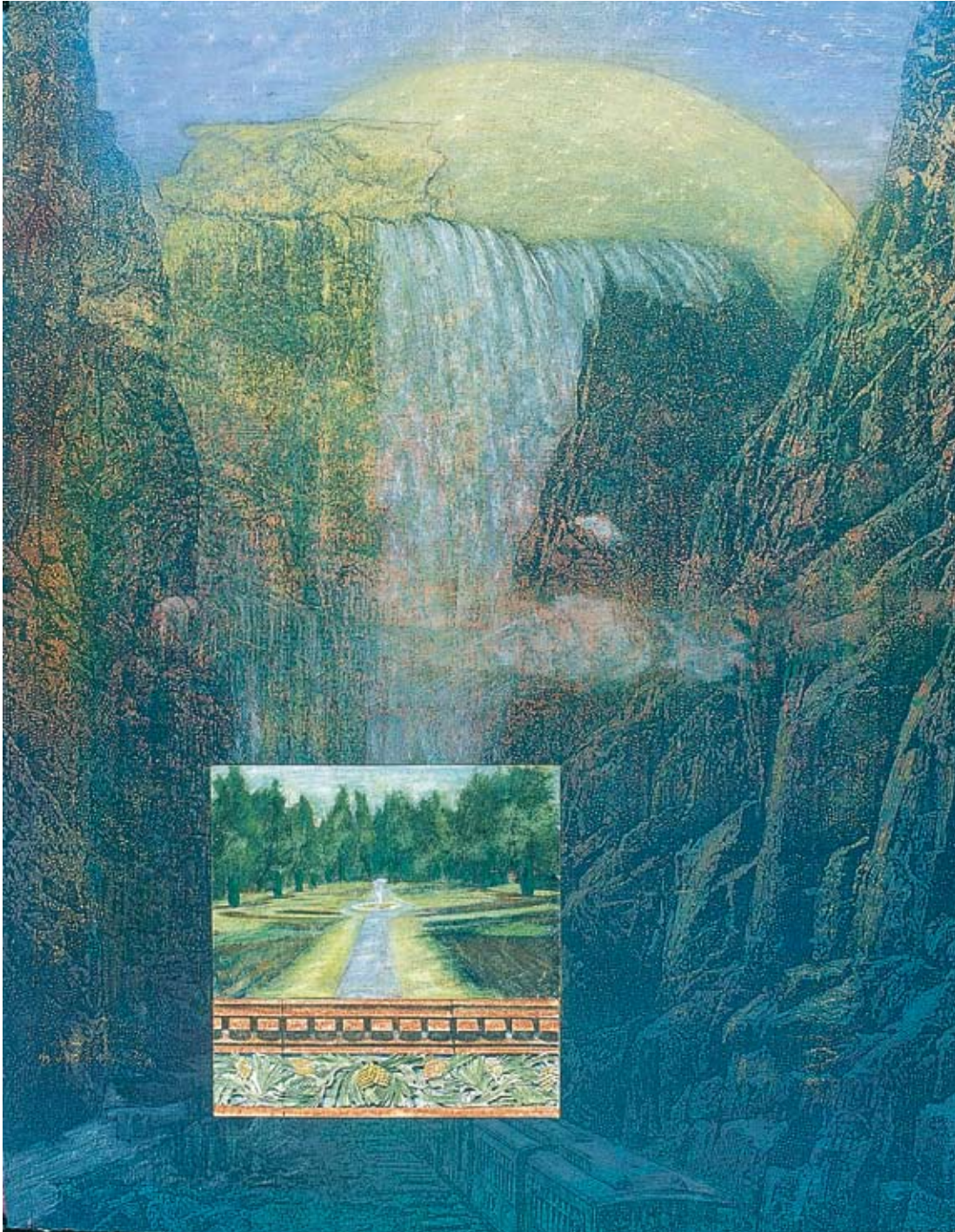
Cottonwoods of the Palouse II, 1994
Scroll on Tyvek printing and drawing
72 x 36 in. (182,9 x 91,4 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Portland, Oregon



Cottonwoods of the Palouse I, 1994
Scroll on Tyvek printing and drawing
72 x 36 in. (182,9 x 91,4 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Portland, Oregon



Cottonwoods of the Palouse III, 1994
Scroll on Tyvek printing and drawing
72 x 36 in. (182,9 x 91,4 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Portland, Oregon



Deepest Gorge, 2000
Mixed media on paper
17 x 13 in. (43,2 x 33 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Portland, Oregon

Nancy Rowe (born 1954)

Nancy Rowe was born in eastern Washington state in 1954, and lived there most of her life until moving to western Washington (Seattle) in 1992. She received a Master of Fine Arts degree in photography from Washington State University in 1991. Her photographs have appeared in galleries and museums in Idaho and Washington.

Of her work, Rowe says that "I have always been enamored with the ability of formal elements specific to the photographic medium (including compression of space, blur derived from motion, disparate focus associated with depth of field, contrasts of shadow and light, cropped subject matter, and multiple exposure) to alter subject matter as experienced by the eye. My work usually contains some combination of these elements, informed by the innovations of the modernist photographers working in Europe in the early part of the 20th century, whose work I greatly admire. My subject matter often comprises self portraiture, shadow and actual likenesses of loved ones, architectural structures (intact and ruined), historic photographs, and flowers. With respect to content, my photographic work is essentially a visual 'diary,' a pieced-together expression/representation of the flux of self and personal experience over time. The two photographs in this collection represent early periods of my work and feature the shadowed representation of human presence (*Untitled # 1*) and photomontage (*Untitled # 2*). Both photographs are black and white silver prints; additionally, *Untitled # 2* is a hand-colored photomontage. My recent work is in the color film/print format."



Untitled #1, 1987
Black and white silver print
12 7/8 x 8 in. (32,7 x 20,3 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Seattle, Washington

Untitled #2, 1991
Black and white silver print; hand-colored photomontage
16 x 11 5/8 in. (40,6 x 29,5 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Seattle, Washington



Anthony J. Soppelsa (born 1919)

"These paintings are the result of my fascination with mountains, instilled in me by stories my Alpine-born father told me in my youth. While serving in the U.S. Army Air Corps in 1944, I was posted in Papua New Guinea near Nadzab, between the Markham River Valley and the Owen Stanley Mountains. From my camp, I could see a wildly beautiful valley which featured a solitary, spectacular green mountain, like an emerald in the jungle. I hoped to capture its essence in paint on canvas or paper some day. These paintings represent my efforts."

Anthony J. Soppelsa

A graduate of Youngstown State University, A.J. Soppelsa has exhibited his paintings at the Cleveland Museum of Art (Ohio); the Butler Institute of American Art in Youngstown, Ohio; the Canton Art Museum (Ohio); in galleries at Cleveland State University, Youngstown State University; and in private collections.



New Guinea Landscape (Markham Valley: Nadzab), 1964

Acrylic on canvas

20 x 40 in. (50,8 x 101,6 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Parma Heights, Ohio



**Study for New Guinea Landscape #2
(Dark Valley), 1955**
Watercolor on paper
14 x 20 in. (35,5 x 50,8 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Parma Heights, Ohio

**Study for New Guinea Landscape #1
(Markham Valley: Nadzab), 1955**
Watercolor on paper
9 x 15 in. (22,8 x 38,1 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Parma Heights, Ohio



Laurie Thal (born 1953) and Lia Kass (born 1964)

Laurie Thal moved to Jackson, Wyoming, in 1975, after graduating from the Art Institute of Chicago (Illinois). She packed her car and moved west, hoping for a lifestyle that would allow her to practice her craft and enjoy the outdoor western environment. She started her own studio that year, refining her skills over time, working to create timeless, classic vessels of simple beauty. "I never thought I'd be able to make a living blowing glass," Thal said. She's done more than that, however; she was commissioned by Hillary Clinton, then First Lady, to create a unique glass ornament for the White House Christmas tree in 1997. In 2002 her work was featured at the Governor's Capital Art Exhibition, an honor given to only fifty artists across the state of Wyoming each year. She also received the Wyoming Arts Council Fellowship Award for 2002. Her work is exhibited in galleries and museums throughout the country.

Lia Kass was born in 1964 in Chicago and raised mainly in Boston. After high school she was awarded an art scholarship to Washington University in St. Louis (Missouri), where she studied briefly before proceeding further west. Kass is largely self-taught and has used extensive wanderings in the wilderness as her classroom. Her background is primarily in fine art painting and drawing, focusing on the figure, landscape, and portrait. The artist's work is inspired by her love of nature, open spaces, and feel for the elements. It has been exhibited and sold primarily in the western United States as well as published in environmental and eclectic publications.

In 2002 renowned hot glass artist Laurie Thal invited Kass to collaborate by creating unique surface designs to embellish her blown glass pieces. Kass uses multi-level sand carving techniques to create softly shaded imagery and sometimes sculpts and reshapes the lip of a work.

www.thalglass.com



Cobalt Ruby Frit Eagles, undated
Glass
Courtesy of the artists, Jackson, Wyoming

Michele Westmorland (born 1950)

Michele Westmorland is a full-time freelance photographer who has created a vast and varied library of imagery from around the world. Her skills in underwater photography have been recognized by a large community of divers and non-divers alike. Her topside photography includes wildlife, landscape, and the culture of exotic locations.

Westmorland has recently brought to light the story of Caroline Mytinger, an artist who documented the headhunting cultures of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands in the 1920s. Her most recent project, *Headhunt Revisited*, was featured in the April 2006

issue of *Smithsonian Magazine*. Westmorland's first marine life book, *Ocean Duets*, released in 2006, looks at the relationships of marine creatures that share our world.

"I became passionate about photographing the underwater world some 20 years ago. It was on a dive trip in 1991 to Papua New Guinea that I developed a new passion for the people and the amazing culture of this island nation."

www.westmorlandphoto.com





Turtles of Bora-Bora, 2006
Photograph on canvas paper
15 x 24 in. (38,1 x 61 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Bothell, Washington

Long-nosed Hawkfish, 2006
Photograph on canvas paper
15 x 24 in. (38,1 x 61 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Bothell, Washington

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