

Art in Embassies Exhibition

United States Embassy Reykjavik



Chris Mesarch

Harmoniums II

undated

Mixed media

21 x 39 x 3 in. (53.3 x 99.1 x 7.6 cm)

Courtesy of the artist

Somerville, Massachusetts

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."

"For over fifty years, Art in Embassies has played an active diplomatic role by creating meaningful cultural exchange through the visual arts. The exhibitions, permanent collections and artist exchanges connect people from the farthest corners of an international community. Extending our reach, amplifying our voice, and demonstrating our inclusiveness are strategic imperatives for America. Art in Embassies cultivates relationships that transcend boundaries, building trust, mutual respect and understanding among peoples. It is a fulcrum of America's global leadership as we continue to work for freedom, human rights and peace around the world."

— John Forbes Kerry
U.S. Secretary of State

<http://art.state.gov>

American Fire & Ice

Welcome to the official residence of the U.S. Ambassador to Iceland. I am excited to share with you my exhibition of artworks in a variety of media that I have brought together in my home, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of State's office of Art in Embassies (AIE). The exhibition is entitled, *American Fire & Ice* as a tribute to Iceland's nickname, "The land of fire and ice."

Even before stepping foot in Iceland for the first time, I was well aware of Iceland's active volcanoes and living glaciers for which the nation is best known. As I worked to shape this exhibition, I looked for a way to connect my American heritage to Iceland. In doing so, I realized that the fire and ice in Iceland, in a way, also represent its lengthy winter and short summer. Winter with its long, cold, and white crawl through the year – much like the movement of a glacier; and summer, with its quick, intense burst, that is reminiscent of the many volcanic eruptions in Iceland's history. The two, however, balance each other, and that is what I have tried to do with this exhibition.

As a long-time resident of Cambridge, Massachusetts, just outside of Boston, I have had experience with long and snowy winters – much like those that are experienced here in Iceland. To balance the white of winter, I decided I needed to find a way to bring into my home the bright colors the season lacked. To do this, I tapped the work of Massachusetts-based artists Chris Mesarch and Caleb Neelon, both of whom I have known for quite some time. The works of these two artists bring refreshing color contrasts to winter's white that I can proudly say come from my hometown.

The colors of these two artists represent very different connections to the fire I hope to encapsulate in this exhibition. While Chris' fan work has drawn inspiration from Japan, another volcanic nation, her pieces reference ideas and images developed at her home in Somerville, Massachusetts. Caleb's street art represents raw inspiration he has found in the United States through an art form that gained a worldwide foothold first in the U.S. Street artists are often said to have harnessed the fire inside that in the past would not have had an outlet. The form is not only being embraced, but celebrated.

American Fire & Ice

The glasswork of Alex Gabriel Bernstein represents the ice in this exhibition. Hailing from my father's hometown of Asheville, North Carolina, Alex inspired me with his unique glass pieces that reminded me of some of the most beautiful winter landscapes I have seen in Iceland. His work also notes the interesting juxtaposition of Iceland's glaciers, with one piece representing the volcanoes, such as Eyjafjallajökull, that lie festering beneath their icy covers waiting to remind the world of their presence, and the other showing the inherent beauty of the glaciers themselves and the centuries old stories they can tell.

American Fire & Ice is completed with two pieces of Americana that are close to my heart. The photographs of the legendary Babe Ruth in a Boston uniform are here to show you both my love of baseball, but also of my beloved Boston Red Sox. I believe there is nothing more American than baseball, and so I chose a well-known representative of the sport's history to give you a glimpse into our national pastime.

It has been an exciting process to pull together this exhibition to give you a glimpse into my home and my heritage. Through the development of several ideas we ultimately selected these pieces that I believe serve as a great representation of the long history shared between the United States and Iceland. I hope you enjoy your visit, the exhibition, and the small pieces of fire and ice I have brought together for you.

Takk fyrir!

Ambassador Robert Cushman Barber

Reykjavik
April 2016

Alex Gabriel Bernstein
1972



Half Moon

undated
Glass, 13 x 21 x 3 in.
(33 x 53.3 x 7.6 cm)
Courtesy of the artist,
Asheville, North Carolina

Large Amber Spring

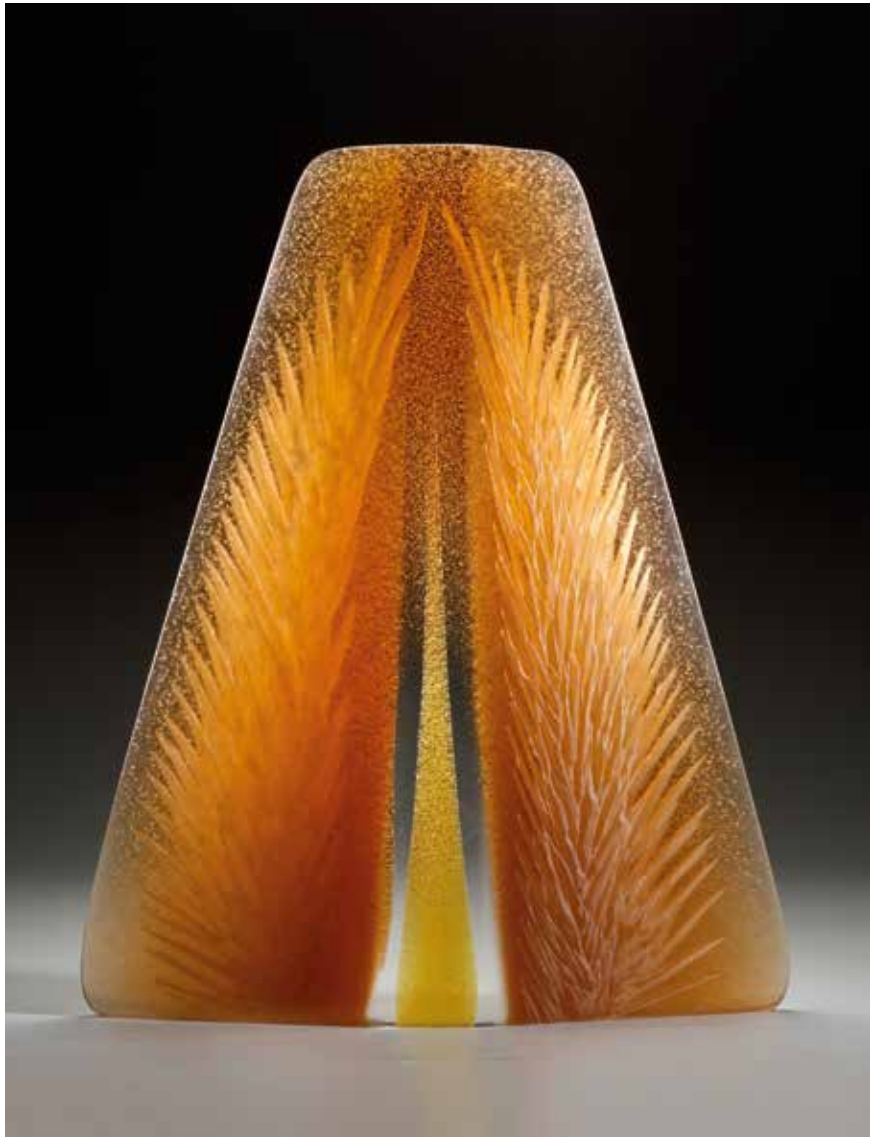
undated

Glass, 26 x 22 x 3 in. (66 x 55.9 x 7.6 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Asheville, North Carolina

Alex Gabriel Bernstein literally grew up in a family of glass artists so it is no surprise that he decided to pursue the art of glass as his career. He has spent time as head of the glass department at the Worcester Center for Crafts in Massachusetts, and has also taught at the Cleveland Institute of Art (Ohio), Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT, New York), The Studio at the Corning Museum of Glass (New York), Penland School of Crafts (North Carolina), and Pilchuck Glass School (Stanwood, Washington). Bernstein returned to his hometown of Asheville, North Carolina, in 2007 to set up his studio and focus on creating sculpture full time.

Bernstein holds a Master of Fine Arts degree in glass sculpture from the School for American Crafts at RIT. He has recently mounted solo shows at Chappell Gallery in New York, Sandra Ainsley Gallery in Toronto, and Prism Contemporary Glass in Chicago. He is also represented at SOFA New York, SOFA Chicago, and PalmBeach3 by Chappell Gallery. His work is held in many collections, including those of the Corning Museum of Glass, Glasmuseum Frauenau in Germany, the Burchfield Penney Art Center in Buffalo, Rochester Institute of Technology, Mellon Financial Corporation, Wachovia Corporation, and the Bascom Louise Fine Art Gallery.





Chris Mesarch 1948

"I usually create some sort of order in my pieces to create a structure within which to work. That is why I was so drawn to fan making and why I went to Japan to learn how to make folding paper and bamboo fans. I was a fan maker for fifteen years, painting, making, and showing my fans. Gradually I went from small folding fans to large-scale, fan-shaped wall pieces. I still use the order and restrictions of the folds as a point of reference. Within that order I can explore many different kinds of ideas and images. I also have painted many diptychs, again using the boundaries imposed by having two halves work off each other similar to the way I used the folds of the fan."

Restless Nature

undated

Oil on paper, 26 1/2 x 22 in. (67.3 x 55.9 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Somerville, Massachusetts



My Life as a Fanmaker VII

undated
Mixed media, 20 x 38 x 4 in. (50.8 x 96.5 x 10.2 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Somerville, Massachusetts

3 fold fan

undated
Mixed media, 19 x 29 x 3 in. (48.3 x 73.7 x 7.6 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Somerville, Massachusetts



My Life as a Fanmaker

undated
Mixed media, 12 x 22 x 3 in. (30.5 x 55.9 x 7.6 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Somerville, Massachusetts



Harmoniums

undated
Mixed media, 21 x 39 x 3 in. (53.3 x 99.1 x 7.6 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Somerville, Massachusetts



Harmoniums II

undated
Mixed media, 21 x 39 x 3 in. (53.3 x 99.1 x 7.6 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Somerville, Massachusetts



Harmoniums III

undated

Mixed media, 36 x 20 x 3 in. (91.4 x 50.8 x 7.6 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Somerville, Massachusetts



Harmoniums IIV

undated

Mixed media, 16 x 36 x 2 in. (40.6 x 91.4 x 5.1 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Somerville, Massachusetts

Caleb Neelon 1976

As a thirteen year old in February of 1990, Caleb Neelon visited family friends in small town Germany with his mother and took a side trip to Berlin. For Neelon, the sight of the newly opened Berlin Wall, covered in graffiti and murals was a revelation. By the mid-1990s, Neelon was immersed in the global graffiti scene under the name SONIK. He traveled constantly and developed a vivid, homespun, and raw style of mixed media painting. He freely crossed boundaries between graffiti, murals, and what would soon be referred to as street art. At the same time, he wrote in depth articles for graffiti fanzines. As the years passed, these publications evolved into art and popular culture magazines, trade books, and feature films.

Caleb Neelon's bright, folksy works, frequently incorporating nautical and quilting motifs, can be seen in gallery and museum exhibitions and on walls around the world. In addition to visiting artist talks and programs, Neelon's work ranges from cultural diplomacy projects through the U.S. State Department, curatorial advisory work at museums, and projects bringing artwork to hospitals, to public artwork projects in over thirty countries around the globe. Neelon regularly writes for national magazines and has authored over a dozen books, among them the landmark 2011 HarperCollins release *The History of American Graffiti*, co-authored with Roger Gastman, and the 2014 AMMO Books retrospective *Ed Emberley*, co-authored with Todd Oldham. He lives and works in Cambridge, Massachusetts, with Ellen, daughter ZZ, and French bulldog Ferdinand.

www.calebneelon.com

Binary Code Alphabet

2014

36 x 48 in. (91.4 x 121.9 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Cambridge, Massachusetts







Morse Code Alphabet (diptych)

2014
24 x 36 in. (61 x 91.4 cm) each panel
Courtesy of the artist, Cambridge, Massachusetts

Unknown Photographer



Babe Ruth and Boston Teammates

between 1914 and 1919
Photograph from digitized negative
12 x 20 in. (30.5 x 50.8 cm)
Courtesy of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.

George Herman "Babe" Ruth, Jr. (February 6, 1895 – August 16, 1948) was an American baseball player who spent twenty-two seasons in Major League Baseball (MLB), from 1914 through 1935. Nicknamed "The Bambino" and "The Sultan of Swat," he began his MLB career as a stellar, left handed pitcher for the Boston Red Sox, but achieved his greatest fame as a slugging outfielder for the New York Yankees. Ruth established many MLB batting (and some pitching) records, including career home runs (714), runs batted in (RBIs, 2,213), bases on balls

(2,062), slugging percentage (.690), and on base plus slugging (OPS, 1.164); the latter two still stand today. Ruth is regarded as one of the greatest sports heroes in American culture and is considered by many to be the greatest baseball player of all time. He was one of the first five inductees into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1936.

Ruth's exposure to baseball began at age seven, when he was sent to St. Mary's Industrial School for Boys in Baltimore City, a reformatory

where he learned life lessons and baseball skills from Brother Matthias Boutlier of the Order of St. Francis Xavier, the school's disciplinarian and a capable baseball player. In 1914 Ruth was signed to play minor league baseball for the Baltimore Orioles but was soon sold to the Red Sox. By 1916 he had built a reputation as an outstanding pitcher who sometimes hit long home runs, a feat unusual for any player in the pre 1920 dead ball era. Although Ruth twice won twenty-three games in a season as a pitcher and was a member of three World Series championship teams with Boston, he wanted to play every day and was allowed to convert to an outfielder. With regular playing time, he broke the MLB single season home run record in 1919. After that season, Red Sox owner Harry Frazee controversially sold Ruth to the Yankees, an act that coupled with Boston's subsequent championship drought, popularized the "Curse of the Bambino" superstition.

In his fifteen years with New York, Ruth helped the Yankees win seven American League (AL) championships and four World Series championships. His big swing led to escalating home run totals that not only drew fans to the ballpark and boosted the sport's popularity but also helped usher in the live ball era of baseball, in which it evolved from a low scoring game of strategy to a sport where the home run was a major factor. As part of the Yankees' vaunted "Murderer's Row" lineup of 1927, Ruth hit 60 home runs, extending his MLB single season record. He retired in 1935 after a short stint with the Boston Braves. During his career, Ruth led the AL in home runs during a season twelve times. His legendary power and charismatic personality made him a larger than life figure in the Roaring Twenties. During his career, he was the target of intense press and public attention for his



Babe Ruth in Boston

between 1914 and 1919
Photograph from digitized negative
16 x 20 in. (40.6 x 50.8 cm)
Courtesy of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.

baseball exploits and off field penchants for drinking and womanizing. His often reckless lifestyle was tempered by his willingness to do good by visiting children at hospitals and orphanages. He was denied a job in baseball for most of his retirement, most likely due to poor behavior during parts of his playing career. In his final years, Ruth made many public appearances, especially in support of American efforts in World War II. In 1946 he became ill with cancer, and died two years later.

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