



UNITED STATES EMBASSY SINGAPORE
Art in Embassies Exhibition

MEQUITTA AHUJA **In Back Garden I**, 2012. Oil on paper, 42 x 42 in. (106,7 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 a: "footprint that can be left where people have no opportunity to see American art."

For 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



From left to right: Mrs. Crystal Wagar, Rhys Wagar, Declan Wagar and Ambassador Kirk Wagar

Welcome to *Creations of A Nation*, an exploratory exhibition of contemporary works of art displayed throughout the U.S. Ambassador's Residence in Singapore.

From still photographs to the use of organic materials from our environment, to the use of bold colors and strong lines, *Creations of A Nation* explores the various genres and media U.S. artists use to convey messages to share with the world. The vast range of artistic expression in this exhibition seeks to underline the wide breadth of freedom of expression which exists in the United States. *Creations of A Nation* also reveals the imagery of those immigrants to the U.S. who found all manner of expression through art. Finally, this exhibition seeks to showcase the rich cultural diversity which makes up the U.S. and ultimately allows for thoughtful inspiration and gives rise to an array of contemporary art forms and formats.

CREATIONS OF A NATION

We would like to express our gratitude to the State Department's Art in Embassies program and to the artists whose generosity made it possible to bring the art works from the U.S. to you and our guests. We hope you will enjoy the journey through our exhibition as much as we do.

Ambassador Kirk Wagar and Mrs. Crystal Wagar

*Singapore
January 2015*

“I refer to my work and process as ‘Automythography,’ a variation of the term coined by author Audre Lorde. I define Automythography as a constructive process of identity formation in which nature, culture and self invention merge. Proposing art as a primary method of this process, my works demonstrate female self invention and self representation through the deployment of her own tools.

MEQUITTA AHUJA 1976

I develop my figure through three steps: performance, photography and drawing. I begin with solo performances in front of the camera, positioning myself as agent of my own depiction. I document these performances using a remote shutter control and use the resulting photographs as non fictional source material. Through my preparatory drawing process, I establish the invented elements of my work. The resulting self portraits embody a form of creative self sufficiency.

My figure traverses invented landscapes. Whether she is present or absent, the environments I paint are her domain. As an African American and South Asian American woman, my works embody a culturally complex position. I work from the vantage point of both Western and Eastern depiction, ancient and contemporary. To build the dense imagery suited to my visual and conceptual concerns, I work across artistic histories and categories, combining patterning, pictorial flatness and saturated color with large scale painting and self portraiture. My imagery harkens to the past, mythic and ancestral but never finds its direct referent.”

www.automythography.com

“I view painting and drawing as a cumulative process of time and marks. Whether using crayon, brush, palette knife, collage or printing block, I build form and surface through the accumulation of lines and strokes. The physicality of my technique is mirrored by my female protagonist’s assertive presence. She is both subject and maker of her world.”

— Mequitta Ahuja



MEQITTA AHUJA *In Back Garden I*, 2012. Oil on paper, 42 x 42 in. (106,7 x 106,7 cm). Courtesy of the artist, Baltimore, Maryland

Jack Delano was an American photographer for the Farm Security Administration (FSA) and a composer noted for his use of Puerto Rican folk material. Delano was born as Jacob Ovcharov near Vinnytsia in the Russian Empire and moved, with his parents and younger brother, to the United States in 1923. Between 1924 and 1932 he studied graphic arts/photography and music at the Settlement Music School and solfeggio with a professor from the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. After being awarded an art scholarship for his talents, he attended the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts from 1928 until 1932, where he studied illustration and continued his musical training. While there, Delano was awarded the Cresson Traveling Scholarship, with which he chose to travel to Europe, where he bought a camera that got him interested in photography.

JACK DELANO 1914-1997

After graduating, Delano proposed a photographic project to the Federal Art Project: a study of mining conditions in the Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania's anthracite coal area. He spent a month living among miners, finding himself doing the kind of documentary work that could – he thought and hoped – bring him into the FSA photography program, a program whose work had had “a profound impact” on him as art that had social import. He wrote Roy Stryker, the head of the FSA photography program in search of a job, and despite an initial setback – no openings were available – was hired in 1940, at the recommendation of the photographers Marion Post Wolcott and Edwin Rosskam. As a condition of the job, Delano had to have his own car and driver's license, both of which he acquired before moving to Washington, D.C.

He travelled to Puerto Rico in 1941 as a part of the FSA project. This trip had such a profound influence on him that he settled there permanently in 1946. With his wife Irene (a second cousin to fellow photographer Ben Shahn) he worked in the Community Division of the Department of Public Education producing films, for many of which Delano also composed the musical score. A classic in Puerto Rican cinema, *Los Peloteros*, a Puerto Rican film about poor rural kids and their love for baseball was directed by Delano as well.

www.wikipedia.com



JACK DELANO **Boy Jones and His Sister Saying Their Prayers, Green County, 1941**

Silver gelatin print, 24 x 20 in. (61 x 50,8 cm). From the Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information [FSA/OWI]. Collection of the Library of Congress

Over the past two decades, Michele Oka Doner's work has drawn sustenance from the world of nature. Her organic designs emerge from a process Oka Doner calls "evolutionary," offering a space for the individual to reflect on her forms, which blur the distinction between nature and art. Oka Doner's work is more than an aesthetic melding of naturally and unnaturally occurring shapes. Her art merges practical use of objects with the ideal of a natural spirit; she often speaks of the metaphor of the kitchen, the place where practical functions necessary for physical survival meet the powerful rituals crucial for spiritual existence. The artist is deeply and perennially concerned with "art in use," creating tools and implements of often surprising shape and size. For example, convoluted, water choreographed stalks of seaweed measuring nearly two feet in length become a set of salad servers of epic proportions. In a way she is re-introducing society to nature with the very utensils that separate humanity from its environment.

MICHELE OKA DONER 1945

Michele Oka Doner is an internationally acclaimed artist. Her works can be found in many public collections, including: the American Museum of Natural History, New York City; the Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois; The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City; the Montreal Museum of Decorative Arts, Canada; Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum in New York City; and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, to name a few.

www.marlboroughgallery.com

MICHELE OKA DONER **Birth of Adam**, 2007

Organic fibers on paper, 95 x 48 in. (241,3 x 121,9 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, New York, New York



Jim Drain was born in Cleveland, Ohio, and is currently based in Miami, Florida. Drain has exhibited extensively throughout the United States and Europe; he was awarded the Baloise Prize for his *Statements* exhibition at Art Basel in 2005, he completed a DAAD residency in Berlin in 2008, and will soon complete a site specific commission for the new U.S. embassy compound in Rabat, Morocco. His work is held in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.

JIM DRAIN 1975

Drain's work participates in a dynamic interplay between rigorous geometries and hyperactive, chaotic forms; and this pluralism becomes the primary impulse behind this body of work. Paintings are simplified and then expanded, where the stretcher constitutes both the armature and the surface of the piece. It was Drain's involvement in the highly influential Fort Thunder community in Rhode Island that first attracted the recognition of audiences, critics and institutions. A surfeit of materials once produced by the industries of Rhode Island, particularly yarn, offered an immediate material abundance for Drain to work with. This interest in textiles maintains an enduring presence in his sculptures, paintings and furniture; yet while these elements are retained, Drain's work is also characterized by constant flurries of new formal and conceptual activity.



JIM DRAIN *Manhole Painting*, 2012

Acrylic on unsized linen, 47 x 28 in. (119,4 x 71,1 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Miami, Florida, and Prism Gallery, Los Angeles, California

Curlee Raven Holton is a printmaker and painter whose work has been exhibited professionally for over twenty five years in more than thirty one-person shows and over eighty group shows. His exhibitions have included prestigious national and international venues such as Egypt's 7th International Biennale; Taller de arts Plasticas Rufino Tamayo in Oaxaca, Mexico; the Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio; and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City. His works is in many private and public collections including the Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio; the Discovery Museum of Art and Science in Bridgeport, Connecticut; the West Virginia Governor's Mansion; the Foundation of Culture Rodolfo Morales in Oaxaca, Mexico; Yale University Art Gallery, Connecticut; the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia; and the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.

As part of Holton's research and study as an artist scholar, he lectured and presented demonstrations throughout the United States and abroad in Mexico, the West Indies, and Costa Rica. He has presented over seventy public lectures on the subjects of his work, African America art, and contemporary printmaking. Additionally, he has written numerous articles and essays on art and artists that have been published in catalogues and journals. He has received awards and grants for his work and creative research. Holton's work has been described as both powerful and graceful. The breadth of his visual investigations has included traditional as well as innovative approaches to his art making process. His mastery is demonstrated in his manipulation of diverse mediums and techniques including printmaking, drawing, painting and bookmaking. His deft orchestration of often complex and difficult techniques has resulted in works of force and power that have distinguished Holton and his oeuvre.

CURLEE RAVEN HOLTON 1951

Holton earned his Master of Fine Art degree with honors from Kent State University, Ohio, and his Bachelor of Fine Art degree from Cleveland Institute of Fine Arts in drawing and printmaking. Since 1991 he has taught printmaking and African American art history at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania, and is also the founding director of the Experimental Printmaking Institute (EPI). Works produced by EPI have been included in such prestigious collections as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City; the High Museum in Atlanta, Georgia; Allentown Art Museum, Pennsylvania; and Yale University of Art Gallery in New Haven, Connecticut.

www.michellesofdelaware.com



CURLEE RAVEN HOLTON *New World Nubian*, 1993. Mixed media, 30 x 22 in. (76,2 x 55,9 cm). Courtesy of the artist, Easton, Pennsylvania

"As a native of Chicago, I have always been intrigued and inspired by the unique beauty of this city. For the last few years I have been working with different creative outlets, my favorite being painting with acrylic and digital photography.

As a self taught artist and photographer, I feel I create modern art within reach. By creating abstract works, there are no right or wrong answers – the viewer is able to make his/her own story.

NATASHA KOHLI 1985

By intentionally not receiving formal training, I feel spontaneity is able to flow without the fear of breaking rules and allows me to create my own (and then break them)."

— Natasha Kohli



NATASHA KOHLI

909, undated

Acrylic on canvas
48 x 48 in. (121,9 x 121,9 cm)

Courtesy of the artist and
the Theare Group, Chicago, Illinois

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 those 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 are a unique blend of sensibilities part narrative mural painting, part social realism, and part modernist abstraction.

In 1946 he began teaching at Black Mountain College in North Carolina at the invitation of 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 he became a professor of art at the University of Washington in Seattle, where he retired in 1986 as professor emeritus.

JACOB LAWRENCE 1917-2000

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.

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, New York, named for Lawrence.



JACOB LAWRENCE Builders – The Family, 1974

Silkscreen, 39 3/8 x 31 3/8 in. (100 x 79,7 cm). Courtesy of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C. Gift of the Foundation for Art and Preservation in Embassies



JACOB LAWRENCE *Supermarket Flora*, 1997

Silkscreen on paper, 38 x 30 in. (96,5 x 76,2 cm). Courtesy of the Foundation for Art and Preservation in Embassies, Washington, D.C.

WARREN K LEFFLER

The African American Civil Rights Movement (1955-1968) refers to reform movements in the United States aimed at abolishing racial discrimination of African Americans. On August 28, 1963, more than 200,000 demonstrators gathered in front of the Lincoln Memorial, where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. The march had six official goals: "meaningful civil rights laws, a massive federal works program, full and fair employment, decent housing, the right to vote, and adequate integrated education." Of these, the March's real focus was on passage of the civil rights law that the Kennedy administration had proposed. After the march, King and other civil rights leaders met with President John F. Kennedy, Jr. at the White House.





WARREN K LEFFLER "They're Pouring In From All Over," August 28, 1963

Digital print of black and white photograph, 12 ½ x 15 in. (31,8 x 38,1 cm). Courtesy of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, *U.S. News & World Report Magazine* Photograph Collection; LC DIG ppsca 03129

Left page:

WARREN K LEFFLER **Civil Rights March on Washington, D.C.**, August 28, 1963

Digital print of black and white photograph, 15 x 12 ½ in. (38,1 x 31,8 cm). Courtesy of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, *U.S. News & World Report Magazine* Photograph Collection; LC DIG ppsca 03130

Peter Max was born in Berlin in 1937, but his family moved to China when he was still very young. In fact the young Max would move frequently with his family, learning about a variety of cultures throughout the world while traveling from Tibet to Africa to Israel to Europe until his family moved to the United States. In America, Max was trained at the Art Students League, Pratt Institute, and the School of Visual Arts, all in New York. After closing his design studio in 1964, Peter began creating his characteristic paintings and graphic prints.

PETER MAX 1937

From visionary pop artist of the 1960s, to master of dynamic neo-Expressionism, Peter Max and his vibrant colors have become part of the fabric of contemporary American culture. In the 1960s, Max rose to youthful prominence with his now famous “Cosmic ‘60s” style, a bold linear type of painting which employed a Fauvist use of color and depicted transcendental themes. Max revolutionized art in the 1960s, just as the Beatles transformed the music of the decade. As his expressionistic style evolved, becoming more sensuous and painterly, Max’s unique symbolism and vibrant color palette have continued to inspire new generations of Americans throughout the decades.

Peter Max is a passionate environmentalist and defender of human and animal rights, often dedicating paintings and posters for these noteworthy causes. He has celebrated our nation’s principles of freedom and democracy with his famous paintings of American icons of freedom including Lady Liberty and the American Flag.

www.americanfineartgallery.com





PETER MAX **American Flag**, undated
Acrylic on canvas, 24 x 30 in. (61 x 76,2 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, New York, New York

Left page:

PETER MAX **Statue of Liberty**, undated
Acrylic silkscreen on canvas, 48 x 24 in. (121,9 x 61 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, New York, New York

Born in Sanger, California, Manuel Neri began exploring new forms and materials in sculpture and painting in the early 1950s while studying in San Francisco. It was during this period that such prominent Bay Area artists as David Park, Elmer Bischoff, and Richard Diebenkorn began to take a renewed interest in the human figure. Their efforts to combine the human form with abstract expressionist practice had a lasting influence on Neri.

MANUEL NERI 1930

Initially, Neri began sculpting in “junk” – burlap, wire, cardboard and, soon thereafter, in simple plaster. His lone female figures, often in frankly erotic or naturalistic poses, were lauded immediately, not only for their vitality and rawness, but also for being simultaneously contemporary and timeless. From the onset, Neri

Painted the “skin” of his figures with patches of bright color a conscious bow, he has said, to the painted sculpture of Marino Marini and to the ceramics of Pablo Picasso, as well as to the visceral expressionism of Willem de Kooning... Neri also created figures and abstractions on canvas and on paper... Over the past twenty years, he has sculpted in Carrara, marble even as he continues working in bronze.

Neri’s work is included in more than thirty American public collections, including those of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York City; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, California; The Corcoran Gallery of Art and the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; the Denver Art Museum, Colorado; and the San Jose Museum of Art, California. He maintains studios in northern California and Carrara, Italy.

www.hackettfredman.com

Next page:

MANUEL NERI *Axe Rust Series No. 1*, c. 1980

Charcoal and dry pigment on paper
50 1/8 x 40 3/4 in. (127,3 x 103,5 cm)

Courtesy of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.
Gift of the Foundation for Art and Preservation in Embassies



Internationally recognized self-taught artist and author Synthia Saint James was born in Los Angeles, California. Her professional career began in New York City in 1969, and her work has been used on the covers of over fifty books, including those by Alice Walker, Terry McMillan, Iyanla Vanzant, and Julia Boyd. Since 1990, Saint James has completed commissions for major organizations, corporations and individual collectors, including

SYNTHIA SAINT JAMES 1949

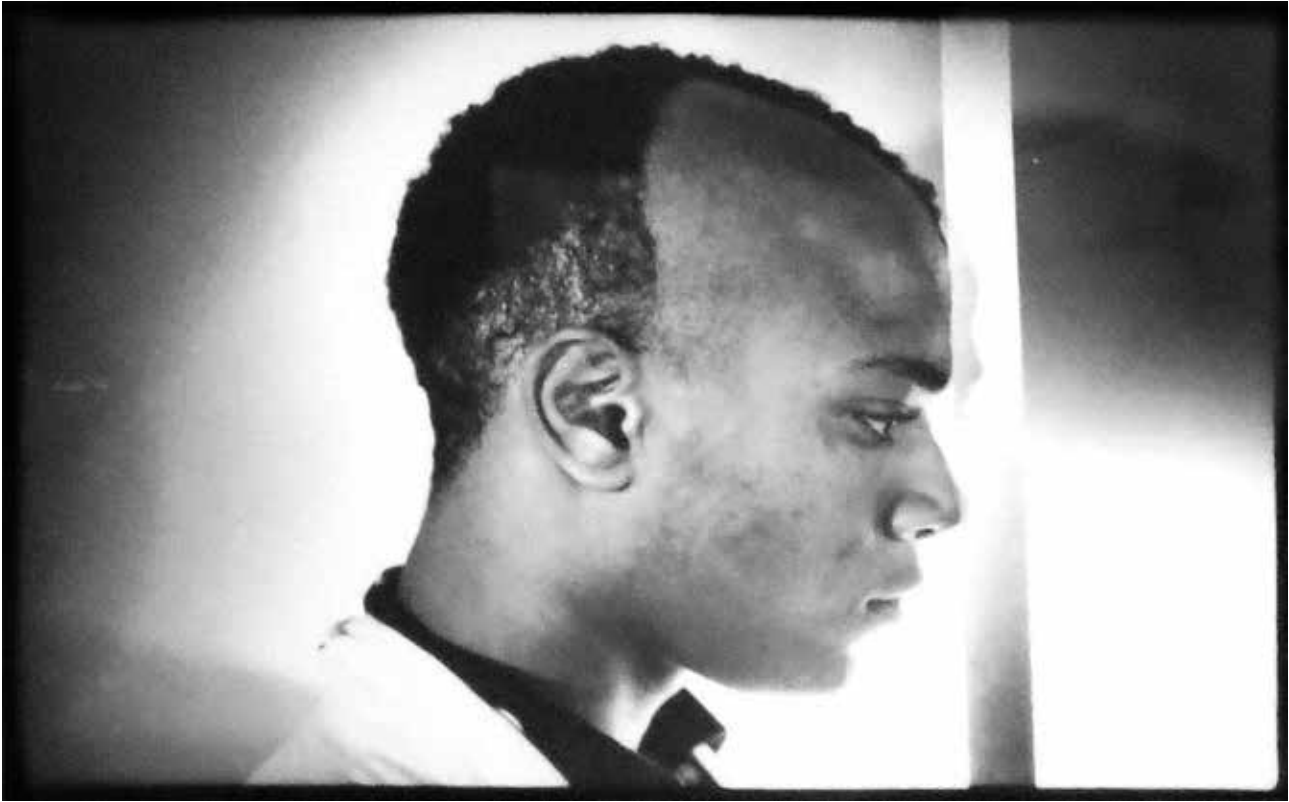
The House of Seagram, the Los Angeles Women's Foundation, UNICEF, and the Girl Scouts of America's 85th Anniversary commemoration. The United States Postal Service commissioned the artist to create the first Kwanzaa Stamp, released in 1997.



SYNTHIA SAINT JAMES Tchokola, 1991

Print, 22 ¾ x 31 ½ in. (57,8 x 80 cm)

Gift of the artist to Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.



NICHOLAS TAYLOR *Jean Michel Basquiat: an Intimate Portrait, #12*, 1979

Black and white photograph on archival paper, 11 x 14 in. (27,9 x 35,6 cm). Courtesy of the artist and the Theare Group, Chicago, Illinois

NICHOLAS TAYLOR

This is one image from a portfolio of twenty six historic photographs from one roll of film (including a text panel written by Taylor for each print) which contextualize the historical significance of Jean-Michel Basquiat, and his

eccentric behavior and obsessive hunger for fame and respect in the vacuous art world of New York City. Born under the pulsating lights of lower Manhattan's famed Mudd Club in January of 1979, this portfolio captures the friendship between artists Jean-Michel Basquiat and Nicholas Taylor.

www.cepagallery.org

PHOTOGRAPHER – UNKNOWN

The August 28, 1963, Civil Rights March on Washington, D.C., riveted the nation's attention. Rather than the anticipated one hundred thousand marchers, more than twice that number appeared, astonishing even its organizers. Blacks and whites, side by side, called on President John F. Kennedy and the Congress to provide equal access to public facilities, quality education,

adequate employment, and decent housing for African Americans. During the assembly at the Lincoln Memorial, the young preacher who had led the successful Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered a stirring message with the refrain, "I Have a Dream."

www.spanierman.com



PHOTOGRAPHER – UNKNOWN Civil Rights March on Washington, D.C. [Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Speaking], August 28, 1963

Contemporary print of a black and white photograph, 8 x 10 in. (20,3 x 25,4 cm). Courtesy of the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, ARC 542068, NWDNS 306 SSM 4D(107)8, and Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.

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