



ART in Embassies Exhibition United States Embassy Mbabane



**Nancie Battaglia** *One Square Mile of Hope*, 2011 |  
Photograph, 24 x 36 in. (61 x 91,4 cm) | Courtesy of the artist, Lake Placid, New York

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/>

# Introduction

Coming from New York State, I find that people often assume I am from a great metropolis. They are frequently surprised to learn that I am actually from a small town in the heart of farm country, sandwiched between the Adirondack Mountains and the St. Lawrence River. As I thought about works for Mbabane's Art in Embassies exhibition in my Residence, I sought to provide a taste of New York beyond the city.

Nancie Battaglia's *One Square Mile of Hope* and Anne Diggory's *Mountain Folds* offer glimpses of the lakes and mountains of upstate New York. Beyond capturing a day in the life of the region, Battaglia's photo is a physical representation of freedom of assembly – the ability of more than two thousand people to gather in a public place to raise awareness and funding for breast cancer.

Carrie Hill's baskets, *Six Nations of the Iroquois*, were crafted on the St. Regis Mohawk Reservation, part of the Mohawk Nation at Akwesasne, which neighbors my home town. I had initially requested a simple Mohawk strawberry basket, but Ms. Hill most generously offered to create a piece for this exhibition. This work particularly excites me because the governance practices of the Iroquois Confederacy were among the models that inspired the United States' founding fathers as they crafted our new country's government.

Heidi Lietzke's *Susquehanna Isle* depicts a portion of a massive river that runs from the Catskill Mountains in New York, where I spent summers with my Grandmother, to the Chesapeake Bay near my current home in the Washington, D.C. area. I especially love that this powerful river is depicted in a most delicate and graceful manner. This piece has an extra connection for me in that it won an award in 2015 at the 58th Chautauqua Annual Exhibition of Contemporary

Art. For many years, my family has paid a summer visit to the Chautauqua Institution, a community in western New York dedicated to lifelong learning and artistic expression that President Theodore Roosevelt described as “typically American, in that it is typical of America at its best.” *Susquehanna Isle* let’s me keep a little piece of Chautauqua history in my home in Swaziland.

Sara Harris, an artist living in a town even smaller than mine, produced a piece called *Celebration* that reminds me of Fourth of July celebrations in small towns across the state. Don Resnick, a Long Island artist, usually based his work on the natural landscape around him, but his work *Acacias* depicts an African landscape with which I am deeply familiar.

Finally, the exhibition includes the New York many people think of first – New York City – with Karin Batten’s *Ellis Island*, a painting from an artist with a fascinating back-story, and a depiction of sites that are most emblematic of the Unites States’ history of welcoming immigrants who have helped our country keep working toward forming “a more perfect union.”

I hope that this exhibition will give you a bit of the flavor of the whole of New York State, and that you will be able to draw your own connections or inspirations from the images here. I am immensely grateful to the artists for sharing their works, the Art in Embassies team for their work in assembling all the pieces, and the Embassy team who helped to bring it to life in Mbabane.

**Ambassador Lisa J. Peterson**

*Mbabane, Swaziland  
September 2016*

# Nancie Battaglia

Nancie Battaglia is a freelance photojournalist with a deep appreciation for human energy, nature's beauty, and rustic charm. She lives in New York State's Adirondack Mountains, in the city of Lake Placid, a training and competition site for Olympians and outdoor enthusiasts. Her images in *Sports Illustrated*, *National Geographic*, and the *New York Times* have helped shape the way Americans see the Adirondacks and the Olympic village.

On September 24, 2011, over 2,200 paddlers showed up on the shores of the central Adirondack town of Inlet, New York, (population, 400) to set a new Guinness World Record. The official tally was 1,902 boats, forming the largest raft of canoes and kayaks in the world. The event, called 'the One Square Mile of Hope,' helped raise over \$80,000 towards breast cancer research.

[www.aqpix.com/battaglia](http://www.aqpix.com/battaglia)



**One Square Mile of Hope**, 2011 | Photograph, 24 x 36 in. (61 x 91,4 cm) | Courtesy of the artist, Lake Placid, New York

# Karin Batten

Karin Batten was born in Hamburg, Germany. She studied painting and sculpture at Central Saint Martins College, London, England, and received her Master of Fine Arts degree from Hunter College, New York City. Batten has shown her work in solo and group exhibitions in the United States and Europe, and her work is included in permanent collections such as those of the National September 11 Memorial and Museum, New York; the Federal Reserve Bank of New York; and Davidson College, Van Every/Smith Galleries, North Carolina. Batten has received grants for public art from the New York City Metropolitan Transit Authority and the New York State Council on the Arts. Recently she was awarded a Pollock-Krasner Grant and an Artists' Fellowship in Painting from the New York Foundation for the Arts. She was one of the artists directly affected by the World Trade Center attack. Her studio was on the 91st floor of Tower One.

"Since I moved to New York City I have been fascinated by the scale of its buildings, reminiscent of mountains and deep valleys. I have always been interested in unique perspectives and vantage points, particularly the birds-eye-view, which evokes feelings of freedom and alludes to the vastness of space.

Flights over New York City and its five surrounding boroughs opened my eyes to beautiful views of the urban landscape. Watching New York from above, the seemingly fragmented city merges into one cohesive unit, that needs the collective in order to continue to evolve, grow, and prosper.

My choice of materials directly reflects this duality and very essence of the city itself. The colors of the oils sticks that I use all individually influence the canvas' overall image. However, it is not until the many layers, textures, strokes and colors intertwine that the composition comes into focus and the true magnificence of New York City's skyline and terrain is captured."

[www.karinbatten.com](http://www.karinbatten.com)



**Ellis Island**, 2005 | Oil stick on paper, 32 x 42 in. (81,3 x 106,7 cm) | Courtesy of the artist, New York, New York

# Anne Diggory

Anne Diggory paints out of her studio in Saratoga Springs, New York. She is known for her combination of accurate detail with expressive painting and strong abstract structure – an outgrowth of education at Yale University (New Haven, Connecticut) and Indiana University (Bloomington) and many years of exploring and painting the natural world. Diggory creates artwork that goes beyond the description of a certain place as she conveys the complex experience of looking around a space. By manipulating composition, color, amount, and clarity of detail and the ways that forms merge or separate, she presents the carefully observed details as an energized, light-filled whole. Her work has been seen in over thirty-five solo exhibitions and seventy-five group exhibitions in the United States, Panama, and Germany.

While many of her works are inspired by the Adirondack Park in upstate New York, painting locations also include California, Alaska, Norway, Ireland, and various seashores as well as her own city of Saratoga Springs and the clutter of her studio. With an interest in the choices made in the creative process, Diggory researches historic painting locations of nineteenth-century American artists. She lectures about those choices and writes about them for the *Adirondack Almanac*. She has published her research on nineteenth-century artist John Frederick Kensett at Lake George in the *Metropolitan Museum Journal*.

Major commissions include an Adirondack scene for the new Upstate Cancer Center in Syracuse, New York, and several large murals for the Adirondack Trust Company in Saratoga Springs, New York. Public art works include a collaborative commission of art work for the Saratoga Springs Train Station and a large interactive artwork series for the Albany Institute of History and Art.

“This interior is a view of my studio as I was working on the final stages of a *plein aire* painting that I had started on the Loj Road near Lake Placid, New York. The mountains in the center are part of the Adirondack Mountains, Algonquin Peak and Mount Jo. In the foreground is a piece of Indonesian fabric that I had just removed from my porch. As it sat in a jumble on my table the fabric looked like those mountains, abstracted and re sculpted. A third landscape is referenced out the window. I often enjoy painting the juxtapositions of things that share visual qualities but are very different in content.”



**Mountain Folds**, 2005 | Acrylic on wood panel, 24 x 30 in. (61 x 76,2 cm) | Courtesy of the artist, Saratoga Springs, New York

# Sara Harris

"My interest is to blur the perception between visual reality and the imagined. My paintings move between abstraction and representation, focusing primarily on color. Color functions on many levels. It can be perceptual, realistic, theoretical, emotional or symbolic. For me, color usage is the purely, intuitive, manipulation of the element of color to construct the composition and create a mood.

I live in the country, close to nature, so often my surroundings initially stimulate and inform my imagination...the light, color, spirit, and the energy of a moment. I am also affected by environmental issues.

I paint entirely in my small, cozy studio. Sometimes I tone the canvas; other times I prefer the bright white of the primed canvas. I occasionally make preliminary sketches. I might have an intention or an image in mind or I may just start putting colors or lines down until something appears. Because of my fascination with the relationship between colors, I do a lot of layering and scraping of paint, staying alert for interesting harmonies. I find that often I will work into paintings that I deemed finished ... allowing the underpainting to come through and create a richer surface.

Historically, I have been especially inspired by post impressionism and fauvism. Color affects me deeply – as Henri Matisse said, 'Colour was not given to us in order that we should imitate nature. It was given to us so that we can express our emotions.' By selection, by elimination and by emphasis, I express my inner self through my art."

[www.saraharrisgallery.com](http://www.saraharrisgallery.com)



**Celebration**, undated | Oil on canvas, 30 x 36 in. (76,2 x 91,4 cm) | Courtesy of the artist, Accord, New York



## Carrie Hill

**Six Nations of the Iroquois: Seneca, Tuscarora, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, Mohawk, 2016 | Black Ash Splints and Sweetgrass | Each of six: 12 x 6 x 6 in. (30,5 x 15,2 x 15,2 cm) | Courtesy of the artist, Hogansburg, New York | Photo: Cassandra Blair of Fairytale Dreams Photography**



Carrie Hill is a Mohawk artist from Akwesasne, New York, who makes baskets. "The tradition of weaving black ash splints and sweetgrass goes back generations in my family. I learned first from my Aunt and excelled early. Weaving felt natural, right; I fell in love with the entire process and was soon creating my own unique pieces.

The journey begins with gathering sweetgrass and preparing the long strips of black ash, called splints. Each must be shaved, split and cut to size; this is the most difficult part of making a basket. Today I am the teacher. I continue to pass the tradition along to the next generation, my children and to those in my community who want to learn."

Hill created this series of baskets for the Art in Embassies exhibition in Mbabane. Each basket represents one of the Six Nations of the Iroquois: Seneca, Tuscarora, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, and Mohawk.

[www.chillbaskets.com](http://www.chillbaskets.com)

In her studio, Heidi Leitzke creates paintings with thread. She graduated with a Master of Fine Arts degree in painting from Western Carolina University (Cullowhee, North Carolina) in 2006. She also studied at the Chautauqua Institute School of Art in New York, and American University's Art in Italy program. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Fine Arts from Anderson University, in Indiana, in 2002. Leitzke's work is in many private collections throughout the country and in Australia.

Leitzke has taught at the Chautauqua Institution School of Art in New York and Drexel University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Leitzke worked as gallery director and adjunct fine arts instructor at Pennsylvania College of Art & Design for nine years in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and is currently the public art manager for the city.

"When my son was born I found that I could no longer spend long hours in my studio painting large canvases. The set-up, process, and mess of oil painting was just too much. I turned back to the cherished format of hand-held embroidery, the basics of which I learned as a child, and found a process, which is perfect for this point in my life.

Painting with thread is clean, portable, intimate, and malleable. When I set my work down the needle stays where I leave it, a physical and mental cue, reminding me where to start next. Unlike paint, the thread does not dry too quickly, it is not toxic and the remarkable range of thread colors may be used in a sophisticated and painterly manner. The mark-making vocabulary I am building seems to have limitless potential. The complicated surface texture created by thread woven into linen has a seductive quality, which appeals to a human's desire to touch. The relationship between the diminutive size of the linen rectangle is in contrast to the landscape imagery creating a subtle but compelling contradiction in these embroidered vignettes."



**Susquehanna Isle**, 2014 | Embroidery and acrylic on linen, 10 x 15 in. (25,4 x 38,1 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist, Lancaster, Pennsylvania

## Don Resnick (1928–2008)

“Art depends upon men dedicated to nature, declared the sixteenth-century English philosopher Francis Bacon. Painting, at its best, invokes our most honest and raw emotions about the natural world. It is a reminder of the natural world that we all yearn to experience and return to. The inspiration for my paintings is the intense experience of a place – its particular light, its particular space – at a unique moment in time. This is the case whether I’m standing along the wind-blown coastline, hiking near a still tidal inlet, or walking by a rippling mountain stream. Painting is my way of sharing what I have seen and experienced. Painting is my story. So, if while viewing my work others see nature in a new and vital way – seeing the natural world as a place in need of protection – then I have succeeded in some small manner. My art has no overt political agenda. To paraphrase the critic Robert Hughes, one of the projects of art is to reconcile us with the world through the ecstatic contemplation of pleasure in nature. I couldn’t agree more.”

Don Resnick was born 1928 in New York City, and lived and worked from his home-studio in Long Island, New York, until his death in 2008. Resnick studied at Hobart College in Geneva, New York; the School for Social Research in New York City; and the Internationale Akademie für Bildende Kunst in Salzburg, Austria. He was a student of Oskar Kokoschka, Raphael Soyer, Seymour Lipton, and Julian Levi.

[www.odonwagnergallery.com/artist/don-resnick](http://www.odonwagnergallery.com/artist/don-resnick)



**Acacias**, 1992 | Oil on canvas, 40 x 50 in. (101,6 x 127 cm)  
Donated to Art in Embassies by David Resnick and Iwonka Piotrowska, Rockville Centre, New York



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