



ART IN EMBASSIES EXHIBITION
United States Mission to the African Union, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

RONALD JACKSON

Profiles of Color #1, 2014

*Acrylic and oil paint, paper, and fabric on cradled wooden panel
16 x 16 in. (40,6 x 40,6 cm)*

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Myrtis, Baltimore, Maryland

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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."

<https://art.state.gov>

INTRODUCTION

It has been my great pleasure to work with the Art in Embassies program to select art for my Residence in Addis Ababa, including African American artists and American artists on Africa. Many of the works in this exhibition either reflect the African American experience or artists' interpretations of it. As Americans struggle still today with issues of fraught racial relations, it is instructive to reflect on the messages conveyed in the works of this exhibition.

My home town's Worcester Art Museum lent five from a larger series of photographs that will appear in a museum exhibition beginning in late 2017, *Reimagining a Community of Color, 1897-1917*. William Bullard, a white itinerant photographer, captured images of his neighbors in their shared lower middle class, racially integrated neighborhood. His careful notes about his subjects rescued them from the historical anonymity more typical of their demographic, and demonstrate for us the subjects' pride

and aspirations as they created a place for themselves and their community in a very American story of migration and integration.

In sharp contrast, Gloria Kirk incorporates the photos of those whose identity has in fact been lost to history. But she claims them as her family album, inserting them into her own photographs that speak to her of the distance African Americans have travelled in our history. Similar sentiment imbues Alanna Reeves' image transfer onto embroidered muslin.

Betty Murchison's paintings of families and relationships, as well as Ronald Jackson's *Profiles of Color*, remind us that people of color have not frequently been the typical or traditional subjects of western art. My thanks to the artists for sharing their homages to family or those who have felt marginalized. In a more pointed reference to the U.S. history of racial relations, Nina Buxenbaum incorporates the ante-bellum *Topsy-Turvy* doll to explore her personal expression of self as a biracial woman and the metamorphosis of identity.

With a nod to our work with the AU in the health sector, I was pleased to include critical care registered nurse Nate Lewis' paper cutouts exploring issues of frailty and resilience. The works' themes and geometric shapes pair well with Janet Goldner's metal sculptures.

Ines Barlerin, Janet Goldner, and I share a fascination with Mali, where we were all privileged to live for extended periods. Goldner's sculptures incorporate the geometric shapes found in traditional Malian bogolon cloth and other aspects of Malian culture. Barlerin captures women returning from a wedding on a Sunday in Bamako, and as we see them ride a motor scooter with bare arms, she helps us challenge stereotypes of Muslim women in Africa.

My thanks go to Art in Embassies staff, and in particular curator Claire D'Alba, for their support in this process. Finally, I cannot express my appreciation deeply enough to all the fine artists represented here, as well as to the Worcester Art Museum, for sharing these works, along with their passions for the African American experience and Africa.

Ambassador Mary Beth Leonard

*Addis Ababa
July 2017*

INES RULIS BARLERIN

(1958, Kenitra, Morocco)

“Not infrequently floating, sometimes buttery soft, sometimes hard edged. Life out of a suitcase, distilled through time with repetitive brush and pallet knife strokes, arresting color and light. The thing that sticks out, the expression that won’t go away, the angle that jars, bring forward a certain truth, and in the end a kind of beauty.”

“I have been painting for over two decades. Work and rearing children took up a lot of my time but the painter never went away. Art classes at the University of Vermont, the Corcoran School of Art, and the University of Maryland, helped me figure out the method. Living in different countries and experiencing varied cultures formed the vision. My paintings have been exhibited in shows in Washington, D.C.; Tokyo, Japan; Paris, France; Boston and Nantucket, Massachusetts; Baltimore, Bethesda, Frederic, and Potomac, Maryland, among others.”

—Ines Rulis Barlerin

www.ines.biz/about

After The Wedding, Muses From Mali, 2015

Oil on canvas

48 x 36 in. (121,9 x 91,4 cm)

Courtesy of the artist and Reyes + Davis, Washington, D.C.



WILLIAM BULLARD

(1876-1918)

William Bullard's photographs tell an American story of the racially diverse community in Worcester, Massachusetts, constructing an identity through photography in the aftermath of post-American Civil War emancipation and reconstruction. They address larger themes in American history, many of which remain relevant today: the stories of African Americans and those of Native American descent claiming their rightful place in society, as well as the fundamentally American story of migration, immigration, and creating community in new surroundings.

Bullard's photographs provide an exceptional opportunity to deepen our understanding of the political and personal use of photography by African Americans after emancipation. Unlike most extant archival collections of everyday black Americans taken in this period, most of whom remain anonymous, the subjects in Bullard's photos are identified in his logbook, contextualizing the stories of many lower-middle class African Americans, a demographic often lost to history. The photographs represent Bullard's neighbors—individuals and families sharing a relatively small physical space in Worcester's Beaver Brook neighborhood, a neighborhood co-habited by African Americans, some Native Americans, and whites like the Bullard family.

Many of the African Americans Bullard photographed migrated from the South; they were former slaves, their children, and grandchildren. Where others in New England told stories describing their former lives as slaves, the individuals represented here "tell a free story." No longer "former slaves" or "freed people," Bullard's subjects sometimes represent themselves as independent, prosperous, and fashionable, at other times as "ordinary" Worcester residents. Whether posing in front of their homes or in their gardens, in military uniforms, or dressed in the latest cycling attire with their bicycles, all of the individuals in these photographs, black or white, stake their claims as citizens.

*—Nancy Kathryn Burns, Associate Curator of Prints,
Drawings and Photographs, Worcester Art Museum*



Raymond Schuyler with his Children, c. 1904

Archival inkjet print, 5 x 7 in. (12,7 x 17,8 cm)

Courtesy of the Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts



***Portrait of Eugene Shepard Sr.
Seated in a Railcar, c. 1905***

Archival inkjet print

7 x 5 in. (17,8 x 12,7 cm)

Courtesy of the Worcester Art

Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts



Portrait of Celia Perkins, c. 1900

Archival inkjet print

7 x 5 in. (17,8 x 12,7 cm)

Courtesy of the Worcester Art

Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts

***Portrait of Edward Perkins in his
Garden, c. 1902***

*Archival inkjet print
5 x 7 in. (12,7 x 17,8 cm)
Courtesy of the Worcester Art
Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts*



***Thomas A. and Margaret
Dillon Family, c. 1904***

*Archival inkjet print
5 x 7 in. (12,7 x 17,8 cm)
Courtesy of the Worcester Art
Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts*



NINA BUXENBAUM

(1974, Brooklyn, New York)

“As a woman of mixed heritage, I use the *Topsy-Turvy* doll as a metaphor for the way we learn to define ourselves as women in a society that is increasingly diverse and complex and where we are redefining our roles. The doll, whose name is derived from the character of Topsy in the Harriet Beecher Stowe novel, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, is designed to look like a southern belle on one side, but her dress conceals a black girl underneath. Through the flip doll, I explore my personal expression of self, as a biracial-woman, and play with the metamorphosis of identity. I am also interested in the ability of this subject matter to address femininity as it relates to cultural constructs including class, race, and sexuality. The complexity of identity is one of transformation and redefinition: it is mutable.

...Much of the work is autobiographical; it is the personal versus the public persona that I am exploring. The internal self, and the self we project out to the world, are often disparate or opposing, sometimes in subtle ways. As I continue to paint these dual women, I find deeper layers that tell more complex stories about who we are and who we pretend to be. This idea of the binary has been a continuing theme and I am currently exploring ways to expand and develop this work allowing it to take on more depth and nuance. I have found that my subjects often guide the direction of the final image through their personal stories, body language, and self-identity. Their own personal complexity adds layers of meaning to the work while allowing for multiple interpretations of the final image. Thus, revealing the humanity and interconnectedness of all people.”

—Nina Buxenbaum



Waiting, 2014

Mixed media on paper, 50 x 60 in. (127 x 152,4 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Myrtis, Baltimore, Maryland

JANET GOLDNER

(1952, Washington, D.C.)



Ideogram (Sorghum), 2007

Steel, 28 x 14 x 3 in., (71,1 x 35,6 x 7,6 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, New York, New York

“My work explores culture, identity, and social justice in various media: steel sculpture, photography, video, installation, and social projects. It consistently bridges diverse cultures, celebrating the unique beauty and genius of each, as well as what we have in common. Cultural preservation is important to my work [in which] my research takes the form of immersive fieldwork. Annual visits to Mali provide inspiration.

Social projects internationally and in the U.S. include participation with diverse groups of artists and non-artists. I engage in long-term collaborations, particularly with Malian artists. We are all, at the same time, researcher and object of research, producing dialogues and concrete works of art.

My life experiences play an integral part in the development of my work. A master welder, I work in three dimensions as well as on paper, on the floor, on walls, and suspended from the ceiling, indoors and outdoors. My installations include steel sculptures, video, photography, and sound. My work combines poetry, patterns, forms, and African themes that engage in social discourse.

My work in the U.S. and internationally includes cultural, educational, and women’s empowerment projects as well as commissions, exhibitions, collaborations, residencies, community art projects, [and] public art projects. I have been working in Mali for more than two decades.”

—Janet Goldner

www.janetgoldner.com



Zig-Zag (one side tall), 2007
Steel, 41 x 21 x 5 in. (104,1 x 53,3 x 12,7 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, New York, New York



Zig-Zag, 2007
Steel, 49 x 13 x 7 in. (124,5 x 33 x 17,8 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, New York, New York

RONALD JACKSON

(1970, Helena, Arkansas)

“Life is a continual experience of discovery. Contrasting things that are apparent or taught with personal discoveries creates a perspective that is unique to every individual.

Being mainly a figurative artist, I seek to capture intimate settings to use as a gateway to ponder the complexities of the human experience, as well as the society that influences them. A comprehensive catalog of unique experiences is veiled behind every silent gaze of the human expression. In my work, the figure’s environment gives suggestion to what some of those experiences may be. My goal is to create work that is visually poetic, aiming to create an interactive experience in which the viewer is compelled to ponder possibilities that are reflections of their own experiences. I hope that my work can become a catalyst to trigger for the self-discovery of value, beauty, and significance among people who feel marginalized.

As a self-taught artist and painter, I find the process of manipulating paint on the canvas as being more critical than the materialization of the image. The practice of studying design and composition influences me to alter reality which can add a mystical quality to my work. It is my desire to master the element of mood and emotion rather than mastering the painting of objects. Every application and technique discovered adds depth to my artistic voice, increasing my capacity to communicate in both direct and subtle fashion.

For me, the overwhelming appeal of creating art is its legacy quality. The idea of being able to paint years beyond retirement age and having a lifetime’s body of work representing my time on earth is priceless.”

—Ronald Jackson



Profiles of Color #1, 2014

*Acrylic and oil paint, paper, and fabric on
cradled wooden panel, 16 x 16 in. (40,6 x 40,6 cm)*

*Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Myrtis,
Baltimore, Maryland*



Profiles of Color #8, 2014

*Acrylic and oil paint, paper, and fabric on
cradled wooden panel, 16 x 16 in. (40,6 x 40,6 cm)*

*Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Myrtis,
Baltimore, Maryland*

GLORIA C. KIRK

(1944, Washington, D.C.)

“I am a Washington, D.C., native who has spent many years abroad in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Both my photographic and mixed-media work are influenced by my life experiences and take on themes of spiritual and personal identity, as well as local and international significance. I have exhibited in the U.S., Ghana, Sierra Leone, Brazil, and Cuba. The D.C. Commission on the Arts and Humanities has many of my works in its collection. I have very strong blood memory, which stimulated me to give voice to those who have gone before. My greatest influences have been the strength and dignity communicated through the carriage and visage of the ancestors. My art represents the link -- the thread -- that runs from the past, through the present, to the future.

I am a member of several D.C. arts and photography associations, including Black Artists of D.C., the National Conference of Artists, the Museum of Contemporary Art/D.C., the Washington Project for the Arts, the American Visionary Museum, the Potomac Polymer Clay Guild, the Exposure Group, the Professional Photographers of America, the Maryland Professional Photographers' Association, FotoCraft (established 1937), and The Photographers' Collective.”

—Gloria Kirk

I Will Never Leave You, 2012

Photographic pigment print on German etching paper

18 x 24 in. (45,7 x 61 cm)

Courtesy of the artist and International Visions Gallery, Washington, D.C.



NATE LEWIS

(1985, Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania)

“Hidden from eyes, and below the surface of skin, our cells, organs, and body systems teeter between stability and instability. We can identify the disruption that has upset the balance through the use of various lenses. We can restore the balance by altering the anatomy through the use of surgical incisions.

Hidden within a single sheet of white paper, lies its dynamics of life. With a blade, I play with its vulnerable construction; and through the surgical process, bring out its fragile, astonishing attributes.

Through a myriad of precise cuts, I carve, fold, and sculpt the paper, giving it new form that visually combines the aesthetics of drawing, sculpture, etching, embroidery, and fabric. I developed this technique by regarding the blade as a pen.

I realized the blade was multifaceted and able to act on the unseen anatomy within a sheet of paper to create a new anatomy, multidimensional and intricate.

This approach stems from my nursing experience in caring for critically ill patients and their family members. In the Intensive Care Unit setting, I witnessed how tragedy and uncertainty brings about a sudden transparency and vulnerability between the patient, family members, and caregivers. This experience gave me a vivid awareness of the thin line between living and dying. As a result, transparency and vulnerability became an urgent matter. By removing layers of fear, guilt, and shame that disrupt equilibrium and interfere with growth; and by cultivating meaningful relationships, I hope to encourage others to do the same. Like my interaction with paper, the exchange between vulnerable subjects is fragile, mysterious, and beautiful.”

—*Nate Lewis*

<http://natelewisart.com/>



Vertebral Anemone, 2015

Hand sculpted paper

11 x 8 ½ in. (27,9 x 21,6 cm)

Courtesy of the artist and Morton Fine Art, Washington, D.C.



You Need to Go Beneath All That, 2015

Hand sculpted paper

11 x 8 ½ in. (27,9 x 21,6 cm)

Courtesy of the artist and Morton Fine Art, Washington, DC

BETTY MURCHISON

(1927, Chicago, Illinois)

Betty Murchison has spent a lifetime working with fragmented “real” stories about relationships and the emotions that accompany them such as passion, sadness, love, solitude, and loneliness. Her paintings focus on people and highlight the figure. Murchison states that her subjects are usually female because “[She] knows about females as compared to males, or animals, or things.” Murchison’s paintings are stories of the people we meet daily, the friends, family, and even people we encounter with whom we connect. She has an ability to be suggestive within her color scheme, that this person or groups of people that she has chosen to become her subject create that mood or that interest that keeps the viewer engaged. Murchison states, “I always begin a new work with the certainty that a figure will emerge which causes the excitement that encourages me to bring a canvas to life. This new body of work was painted in that manner. Most of the paintings are more fully figurative, less gestural and have smoother and more even brushstrokes and color than some of my previous work.”

www.inter-visions.com/betty-murchison.html

Sisters Back to Back, 2007

Acrylic on canvas

60 x 16 in. (152,4 x 40,6 cm)

*Courtesy of the artist and International
Visions Gallery, Washington, D.C.*





The Three of Us, 2012
Acrylic on canvas
16 x 12 in.
(40,6 x 30,5 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and
International Visions
Gallery, Washington, D.C.

ALANNA REEVES

(1993, Washington, D.C.)

“My heritage, my family, and our collective origins are the basis for my work. My father’s parents were born in Jamaica and Costa Rica and are of African descent while my mother’s parents were born in the U.S. and are of Scots-Irish and Norwegian descent. Growing up, none of the cultures were really represented to me in any significant way but I was always aware of them, wanted to know more about them and incorporate familial traditions into our day to day lives. As I’ve gotten older I’ve collected more information, both through academic research and oral history, and all combine into themes and ideas that I represent in my work. ...I’m concerned with those who regard themselves as ones of a displaced identity and how they idealize their homelands for better or for worse.”

Alanna Reeves is a D.C. metro based artist whose preliminary practice includes printmaking, embroidery, and gouache. Following inspiration from her father, art is her chosen occupation leading her to acquire a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the Rhode Island School of Design with a concentration in history of art and visual culture. During her undergraduate career she participated in the university’s European Honors Program which places students in Rome, Italy, and provides time and space to conduct independent study projects. This study resulted in a strong focus on origins, displaced identities, and race and spurred her family and narrative based studio work. As she continues this practice she also seeks opportunities to support the local arts community through education.

www.inter-visions.com/about-us.html



Untitled I, 2014

Monoprint, image transfer, and embroidery on muslin

11 x 13 in. (27,9 x 33 cm)

Courtesy of the artist and International Visions Gallery, Washington, D.C.

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The students of Clark University who shared their research into the Bullard photo subjects to provide insights into the families and individuals pictured. Their seminars focusing on Bullard were co-taught by Nancy Kathryn Burns, Associate Curator of Prints and Photographs at the Worcester Art Museum, and Dr. Janette Greenwood, Professor of History at Clark University, with research assistance from Dr. Diana Boucher.

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