

ART IN EMBASSIES EXHIBITION
UNITED STATES EMBASSY ADDIS ABABA



MICHAEL GROSS

Cocktail Party, 1975

Acrylic on canvas

48 x 96 in. (121,9 x 243,8 cm)

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Myrtis,
Bethesda, 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."

<https://art.state.gov/>

WELCOME

One of the great pleasures of representing the United States in Ethiopia is the opportunity to facilitate lively exchanges and deeper understanding between our nations and people. My wife, Kate, and I are privileged to extend this interplay to the walls of the Ambassador's Residence, where an extraordinary collection of contemporary art from the United States and Ethiopia has taken up residence. Our goal in assembling this exhibition was the same as our approach to throwing a party: bring together exceptional and sometimes provocative representatives of our two nations and see what happens. Each work is a wonderful guest – captivating on its own and vital to the broader dialogue. I'll let them speak for themselves, except to note that they bring significant diversity in scale, mood, composition, media, and subject matter. So too the artists, who represent not only two nations but significant ethnic, gender, artistic, and generational diversity.

Their works grace a historic residence sited on land that belonged, from the early 1900s, to the Ethiopian imperial family. A historic tukul, or traditional home, remains from this era, as does a set of four chairs owned by the imperial family. The property was the site of the Japanese legation during the Italian occupation of the 1930s when the current residence may have been built. After the Italian forces were expelled in 1941, the property was reclaimed by the imperial family and used as a weekend retreat. In an August 1944 letter from Emperor Haile Selassie I to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Ethiopia transferred

title of the residence and property to the United States. Today, the compound also hosts the U.S. Embassy to Ethiopia and the U.S. Mission to the African Union.

Sincerest thanks to the artists who have so generously shared their works with us and the Residence's many visitors. Special thanks to Art in Embassies curator Sarah Tanguy for assembling the U.S. art, and to Meskerem Assegued, Director of the Zoma Museum, for assembling and installing the Ethiopian art. Our warm appreciation as well to Tabitha Brackens, Amanda Brooks, Danielle Giampietro and Victoria See from Art in Embassies, and to James Cohan and the James Cohan Gallery for enabling the display of works by Elias Sime. Finally, we're indebted to numerous members of the U.S. Embassy team, notably Li Ping Lo, Robert Reeves, Katie Koehler, Elizabeth Muir, Worku Lemma, Workneh Assefa, Dereje Shibeshi, and Tadele Teferra.

Ambassador Michael Raynor

*Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
July 2018*

SEIFU ABEBE (1973)

Seifu Abebe is a multimedia artist who finds beauty in his environment, expressing it through oil painting, graphic design, watercolor, sculpture, mural, chalk art, sandblasted art on glass, glass engravings, and interior design. A graduate from Addis Ababa University, Alle School of Fine Arts and Design (Ethiopia), Abebe is a chairperson of the Ethiopian Visual Artists Association. He is also the art director and graphic designer of *What's Out* magazine. Over the last fifteen years, Abebe has had over thirty solo and group exhibitions at the Ethiopian National Theater Art Gallery, the Economic Commission for Africa, the U.S. Embassy in Addis Ababa, the National Museum of Ethiopia (Addis Ababa), and different venues in the United States and Canada.

Going Home, 2018

Oil on canvas

27 ¹⁵/₁₆ x 27 ¹⁵/₁₆ in. (71 x 71 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



GOULED AHMED (1992)

Gouled Ahmed is a Somali-Ethiopian visual artist, writer, and stylist. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in history with a concentration in Africana Studies from Bard College, New York. Ahmed is working on his debut collection of short stories, centering the narratives of communities displaced by the 1991 Somali Civil War. This fall he will attend Yale University (New Haven, Connecticut) as a Master of Fine Arts creative writing candidate. While there, he hopes to finish his manuscript and find innovative pathways to combine his love for visual, oral, and written storytelling. Ahmed's main research interests include precolonial African sartorial practices, with a specific emphasis on the Horn of Africa region. East African cultural motifs play a central role in his images and his image making processes. His work deals with the notion of futurity and is heavily aimed at envisioning new aesthetic futures for the Horn.

Ode to the Old Land, 2017

Photograph

12 5/16 × 12 5/16 in. (31,3 × 31,3 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, New Haven, Connecticut





Connotations of Subjugation and Adornment, 2017
Photograph
12 5/16 × 13 in.
(31,3 × 33 cm)
Courtesy of the artist,
New Haven, Connecticut



Re-imagining Hope, 2018
Photograph
12 5/16 × 12 5/16 in.
(31,3 × 31,3 cm)
Courtesy of the artist,
New Haven, Connecticut



The Fast Rose, 2017

Photograph

18 $\frac{7}{8}$ × 18 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (48 × 46 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, New Haven, Connecticut

TIZTA BERHANU (1991)

Tizta Berhanu is a young artist who explores and expresses human emotions including love, hate, fear, and laughter through semi-abstract and abstract art. Her dominant medium is oil on canvas. She studied art for two years at the Enlightenment Art Academy (Addis Ababa) and then earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at Addis Ababa University, Alle School of Fine Arts and Design (Ethiopia). Full of potential and energy, Berhanu is one of the most promising emerging artists, daring and expressing hidden emotions on her canvas. Her work has been exhibited in several local and international venues including the Lela Gallery in Addis Ababa; That Art Fair in Cape Town, South Africa; and Tobya Art Gallery in Seattle, Washington.

Untitled 6, 2017

Oil on canvas

51 $\frac{3}{16}$ × 47 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (130 × 120 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



GARY BOWLING (1948)

“My artistic interests changed dramatically over the nine years I taught ... Possibly because I found myself spending so much time in a basement office, my paintings evolved into an exploration of light and atmosphere and ideas associated with the landscape. I became particularly interested in the landscape as experienced from the highway, and features that suggested a demarcation between public and private space. More recently, I have been interested in the individual engaged by landscape and landscape as an expression of solitude.”

Missouri painter Gary Bowling teaches at Westmar College (Le Mars, Iowa) where he was chairman of the Art Department for nine years. He earned his Master of Fine Arts degree at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville.

(Top) **Absinthe Sky and Burned Prairie**, 2011
Oil on canvas
53 x 66 in. (134,6 x 167,6 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Lamar, Missouri

(Bottom) **Tangerine and Cobalt**, 2014
Oil on canvas
54 x 70 in. (137,2 x 177,8 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Lamar, Missouri



ALEXANDRA CHIOU (1989)

“In terms of process and medium, I began as an oil painter creating large-scale paintings with vibrant colors. Over time, I wanted to achieve greater transparency and airiness in my work, and moved towards pen, ink and acrylic paint. Most recently, I have incorporated layered cut paper into my work, adding new textures and more dimensions to my pieces... Ultimately, I plan to continue developing my interest in science, philosophy and natural history to further investigate this idea of the human body as a habitant and environment in itself.”

Maryland-based artist Alexandra Chiou received her Bachelor of Arts degree in studio art and Bachelor of Science degree in commerce, both from the University of Virginia in Charlottesville.

Path of the Raigo, 2011
Oil on canvas
20 x 16 in. (50,8 x 40,6 cm)
Courtesy of the artist,
Bethesda, Maryland



Hide and Seek, 2015
Acrylic, cut paper
14 ¼ x 12 ¼ in. (37,5 x 31,1 cm)
Courtesy of the artist,
Bethesda, Maryland

AMY FLATTEN (1963)

“In creating my artwork, including the piece shown here, I incorporate texture by using different palette knives and then smoothing and softening areas with damp brushes. I like to layer the paint such that hidden objects and lines underneath reveal new findings in an often viewed piece. My paintings present unique abstractions of commonplace things that have caught my eye or have challenged my intellect. I continually analyze and adjust my approach, endeavoring to create a sense of balance and structure, and to keep a viewer’s eyes moving throughout my work.”

Amy Flatten earned her Ph.D. in engineering science and mechanics from the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta. She is currently the director of international affairs for the American Physical Society.

Evening Glow at Sunset, 2013

Acrylic on paper

39 x 31 in. (99,1 x 78,7 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Arlington, Virginia



MICHAEL GROSS (1944)

“After making drawings and paintings of plants, landscapes, and buildings over many years, I decided to try abstraction. This change opened up a new world for me to explore how I could express my feelings—at times, joy, at other moments, sorrow, as well as pain and fear—more directly. This gave me far greater power and the freedom to experiment continually.”

Michael Gross studied at the Corcoran College of Art and Design in Washington, D.C., taking classes in drawing, painting, and printmaking.

(Cover) **Cocktail Party**, 1975
Acrylic on canvas
48 x 96 in. (121,9 x 243,8 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie
Myrtis, Bethesda, Maryland

(Right) **Vision in Yellow #1**, 2008
Screen print
22 ½ x 22 ½ in. (57,2 x 57,2 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie
Myrtis, Bethesda, Maryland



DESTA HAGOS (1952)

Laureate Artist Ms. Desta Hagos graduated from Addis Ababa University, Alle School of Fine Arts and Design (Ethiopia) with a diploma in painting. She then earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from California Lutheran University (Thousand Oaks). In 2017, Hagos was honored with a Lifetime Achievement award by Abyssinia Award Organization. In 2018, she became the first female artist in Ethiopia to be awarded the distinction of Laureate Artist. Over the years, she has exhibited in more than fifty solo and group exhibitions in Ethiopia and around the world. For twenty-two years, she worked at the Ethiopian Tourist Trading Enterprise in different capacities, including the head of the department. A full-time studio artist, Hagos uses oil and watercolors to paint her signature works of vividly colored realistic and semi-realistic flowers and beautiful scenes of everyday life.



Still Life 10, 2016

Oil on canvas

47 ¼ × 27 ⅞ in. (120 × 70 cm)

Courtesy of the artist,
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Green Abstract, 2014

Oil on canvas

30 ⅝ × 30 ⅝ in. (77 × 77 cm)

Courtesy of the artist,
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



RONALD JACKSON (1970)

“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.”

Maryland painter Ronald Jackson is a U.S. Army veteran who has exhibited throughout the United States.

Couple with Rooster, 2016

Oil on canvas

48 x 48 in. (121,9 x 121,9 cm)

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Myrtis, Baltimore, Maryland



ULRIKA LEANDER (1946)

“I believe that I am drawn to tapestry weaving by the endless fascination of watching the gradual unfolding of the chrysalis that is my design, into a tapestry that will uplift the spirit and bring new life to an architectural space in a way that fulfills my client’s expectations for a work of enduring beauty and worth. From my personal point of view, weaving a tapestry draws on many parts of my being, the artist’s imagination, the weaver’s skill and the human ability to create.”

Weaver Ulrika Leander studied at Carl Malmsten’s School of Art, Nyckelvik’s School of Art, and Handarbetets Vänners’s College of Art and Interior Design, all in Sweden.



Listen to the Tree, 2009
Tapestry
124 x 44 in. (315 x 111,8 cm)
Courtesy of the artist,
Royal Oak, Maryland

SCOTT OLSON (1976)

Scott Olson's practice is rooted in a deep fascination with painting's materials, tools, and history, but also in performance, music, and improvisation. Through a process involving layering and removing through the use of glazes, masking, and scraping, the composition becomes an index of his maneuvers; a deliberate record of his process to which the viewer becomes a witness. His paintings work against final, realized forms, and instead suggest a state of openness and evolution, where materials and forms seem to unfold, perform and dissolve before the viewer's eyes.

Olson earned his bachelor's degree at Alfred University in New York and his master's degree at Ohio State University (Columbus). He teaches at Kent State University in Ohio.

Untitled, 2017

Oil on linen

21 ½ x 23 ½ in. (54,6 x 59,7 cm)

Courtesy of the artist and James Cohan
Gallery, New York, New York



ELIAS SIME (1968)

Elias Sime is a multi-disciplinary artist whose work includes collages, stitched canvases, and sculptural assemblage using buttons, plastic, leather, fabric, wood, mud, and straw, and most recently electronic components such as motherboards and wires. A graduate of Addis Ababa University, Alle School of Fine Arts and Design (Ethiopia), Sime's work has been shown in numerous venues in Ethiopia including the European cultural institutes, the U.S. Embassy, and Zoma Museum, of which he is a co-founder. Internationally, his work has been exhibited at the Dak'Art Biennale in Senegal and other locales including Vienna, London, and various cities in the U.S. Some of his sculptures are currently in use as the stage set for the touring opera *Oedipus Rex*, directed by Peter Sellars. His works are collected by museums such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, Israel Museum in Jerusalem, Perez Museum of Art in Miami, Harn Museum of Art, University of Florida in Gainesville, and the Masashi Private Museum in Tokyo.

Cactus & Water, 2003-2004

Canvas, thread, and buttons
56 $\frac{3}{16}$ × 29 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (143 × 74 cm)

Courtesy of the artist and James Cohan
Gallery, New York, New York



ELIAS SIME



Tightrope: Blue Peace, 2018

Electrical wire on board

72 $\frac{7}{16}$ × 78 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (184 × 200 cm)

Courtesy of the artist and James Cohan Gallery,
New York, New York

TIBEBE TERFFA (1948)

Tibebe Terffa graduated from Addis Ababa University, Alle School of Fine Arts and Design (Ethiopia) in painting in 1973. While a student, Terffa and his friends formed the Sixteen Young Artists Association to stage exhibitions around the country. He worked as an illustrator for Kuraz Publishing House for many years and has been a full-time studio artist since 1984. His art has been exhibited in numerous solo and group exhibitions in Ethiopia, Kenya, Germany, Canada, the United States, and Spain. One of the most prominent and deeply philosophical artists in Ethiopia, Terffa spends half of his time in Canada where his children reside and where he has a lifelong relationship with the art community. He recently had a successful exhibition at Gallerie Le Sud in Zürich, Switzerland. When he is not painting, Terffa spends most of his time in his lush edible garden behind his colorful wooden house and studio.



Untitled, 2017

Acrylic on canvas

31 ½ × 38 ¾ in. (80 × 98 cm)

Courtesy of the artist,
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

TIBEBE TERFFA

Untitled, 2017
Acrylic on canvas
31 ½ × 38 ¾ in. (80 × 98 cm)
Courtesy of the artist,
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



ABEL TILAHUN (1983)

A multidisciplinary artist, Abel Tilahun's artistic practice includes sculptural installation, video art, drawing, and painting. A 2006 graduate with Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in sculpture from Addis Ababa University, Alle School of Fine Arts and Design (Ethiopia), he earned his Master of Arts degree in fine art from Adams State University in Alamosa, Colorado. He splits his time between his Addis Ababa studio and Washington, D.C., where he has taught as an adjunct professor at American University and Marymount University. Tilahun has shown several solo and group exhibitions in various venues around the world including the National Museum of Ethiopia (Addis Ababa), the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (Germany), the Katzen Museum at the American University (Washington, D.C.) among others. Intellectually fresh and moving, his work represents an unwavering voice of his generation.

Sunny-Side Up, 2018

Platinum silicone, metal, wood, and LED neon
39 $\frac{3}{8}$ × 39 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (100 × 100 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



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