



UNITED STATES EMBASSY BERN  
ART IN EMBASSIES EXHIBITION

*West*  
1911

## West Fraser

**Setting Moon**, 2011

Oil on linen, 22 x 30 in. (55,9 x 76,2 cm)

Courtesy of the artist and Helena Fox Fine Art, Charleston, South Carolina

# 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."

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# Introduction

It is a great pleasure and honor to welcome you to Blumenrain, the Residence of the United States Ambassador in Bern. Margaret Ann and I have a deep passion for collecting and learning from art. My personal interest began as a child with fond memories of my artist grandfather encouraging me to paint, draw, and appreciate nature, architecture, and all that surrounds us. One of my earliest recollections of dating Margaret Ann includes picnics in the Virginia mountains where I would quiz her for art history exams, sharing and learning the history of the art we loved. And so, it was an exciting and special experience to work with the talented creative team at the State Department's Art in Embassies program. Now over fifty years old, Art in Embassies gives each U.S. Ambassador around the world the opportunity to create a unique exhibition for his or her official residence. We look forward to sharing ours with our American, Swiss, Lichtenstein, and other guests who visit the Ambassador's Residence in Bern.

Our choices for this exhibition reflect a range of memories from my early childhood—from fishing and sailing on the Long Island Sound to enjoying the sybaritic rhythms of the marsh and ocean tides at our South Carolina home on Sullivan's Island in the mouth of Charleston Harbor. The sea

and all its beauty has influenced our lives. The art we selected brings to life the smells of the pluff mud, salt sprayed air, and architectural brilliance of the Lowcountry, and most of all, the amazing diversity of artists and their works that reflect South Carolina's great artistic heritage.

In the salon of the Residence, *We Always May Be What We Might Have Been*, the large contemporary canvas of Laura Spong, the recently-deceased and dearly missed artist widely recognized as one of South Carolina's most prominent painters, commands attention while harmonizing with the beauty of the room, from which guests are able to look out upon the gardens and distant Alps. Other pieces in the salon include Leo Twiggs's emotive piece, *Anchored in the Spirit*, which reminds us of the eloquence of Southern symbols and their power in daily life. One of the great American outdoor artists, Mike Williams, in *Congo VI*, captures a pond in prism with his colorful geometric fish. And West Fraser, a renowned landscape artist, deftly evokes the languid barrier island in summer with *Setting Moon*.

In addition to great landscapes and the outdoors, Southern architectural studies are an important part of this exhibition. The paintings of Edward Rice, *Spire (Grisaille)*, in the dining room along

with *Pilot House IV* and *BBQ Shed* in the receiving hall present the light, texture, and beauty found in the historic and distinct architecture of the Lowcountry. The agrarian fields, a source for bountiful food and hunting in the South, beam throughout *Champey's Grove Thunderstorm* by Mary Bentz Gilkerson of Columbia, South Carolina.

One artist who paints translucence and light with brilliance is Stephen Chesley; featured in the dining room is *Breakers*, his painting of the ocean surf. In the music room, Chesley captures an iconic scene of a shrimper casting his net in the marsh with, *Hunting*. The sun room's large canvas, *Lagoon Tide*, presents Chesley's aura of a dusk lighted marsh and a realism that enables you to all but hear the cicada beginning their evening song.

In addition to the paintings, Chesley's sculpture, *Cumulus*, sits atop the piano in the music room, accompanied by two pottery amphoras by Jay Owens that add texture and color to the book cases in the music room.

Margaret Ann and I enjoy entertaining and sharing the Art in Embassies exhibition with our guests. These works of art, and others by Roland Albert, Michael Cassidy, Kevin LePrince, Olessia Maximenko, Caroline McCloud Self, Enid Williams,

and David Yaghjian, inspire conversations and interest in life in the United States and it enhances our great honor to serve President Trump as his Ambassador to Switzerland and Liechtenstein. This exhibition is curated by Camille Benton, whose professional talents, artistic knowledge, and genuine love for her job made this experience so enjoyable. The exhibition is made possible through the Department of State's Art in Embassies program, which fosters dynamic cross-cultural dialogue and understanding across the world through the medium of art. Finally, I would like to express my deep gratitude to Wim Roefs, at if ART Gallery, for his friendship and dedication to this exhibition, to Helena Fox Fine Art for reaching into the private collection of the artist, to LePrince Fine Art, and to the fifteen gifted artists who graciously lent their works to the exhibition. Their contributions inspire each visitor to the Residence to provoke conversations centered on nature, philosophy, spirituality, and politics—all which help deepen relationships and understanding, which is the foundation of diplomacy.

**Ambassador Edward T. McMullen, Jr.  
and Mrs. Margaret Ann McMullen**

*Bern  
August 2018*

## Roland Albert 1944

Roland Albert, a widely respected artist in his native Germany, is a fixture on the art scene of the state of Rhineland-Palatinate. He is part of the artists's exchange between Columbia, South Carolina, and its German sister city of Kaiserslautern. In that context, he has participated in several group exhibitions in Columbia, where he also held his first solo show in the United States.

Albert has exhibited all over Europe and studied with the famous Greek American sculptor Kosta Alex in Paris. He is a graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts, Munich, Germany.

Albert says, "I paint and draw. I do not depict, but form marks and signs. My sculptures are marks and signs in space."

**Schote II (Pod II), 2012**

Cardboard

6 x 18 x 11 in. (15,2 x 45,7 x 27,9 cm)

Courtesy of the artist and if ART Gallery, Columbia, South Carolina



## Michael Cassidy 1977

Michael Cassidy was born and raised in Michigan. A rural upbringing created a deep-seated connection with nature and an interest in art led him to Kendall College of Art and Design in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Of his work he says, "These pieces are about slowing down, looking closely and carefully, accepting life as it is, as it comes to

us, being curious and finding beauty in as much as we can. I represent these objects as things to be considered in all their various and complex parts. These things are of the past and the present—a life examined with all its beauty and scars; each piece, a rich, intimate, and layered story."





(Left) **A Tenuous Survival III**, 2016  
Oil on canvas on mounted panel  
10 ½ x 6 ¾ in. (26,7 x 17,1cm)  
Courtesy of the artist, West Columbia, South Carolina

(Right) **The Past They Bear III**, 2016  
Oil on canvas mounted on panel  
12 x 7 ½ in. (30,5 x 19,1 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist, West Columbia, South Carolina

(Left) **Easy Winter, Heavy Summer I**, 2017  
Oil on canvas mounted on panel, 36 x 15 in. (91,4 x 38,1 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist, West Columbia, South Carolina

(Middle) **Easy Winter, Heavy Summer III**, 2017  
Oil on canvas mounted on panel, 32 x 10 ½ in. (81,3 x 26,7 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist, West Columbia, South Carolina

(Right) **Late Winter Lion; Recovery #2**, 2016  
Oil on canvas mounted on panel, 15 ¼ x 8 ½ in. (38,7 x 21,6 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist, West Columbia, South Carolina



## Stephen Chesley 1952

Stephen Chesley grew up in Virginia Beach, attended university at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond and received his Master's degree from the School of Architecture at Clemson University in South Carolina. Chesley is a modern tonalist painter yet credits his influences as diverse artists who can infuse elements of solidity, mystery, and poetic emotional content on

the painted surface. His paintings often depict the fleeting light of dawn and dusk, combined with primordial elements such as water, wind, and fire. With history and romanticism, Chesley feels maybe the South is the last American frontier. It is also a focus of his to herald nature by bringing a message of its inestimable beauty and value.



▶ **Cumulus**, 2016

Welded steel, acrylic varnish  
21 x 8 x 5 in. (53,3 x 20,3 x 12,7 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist,  
Columbia, South Carolina



**Breakers (Wave Portrait)**, 2009

Oil on masonite  
18 x 20 in. (45,7 x 50,8 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist, Columbia,  
South Carolina



## Stephen Chesley 1952



**Hunting**, 2011

Oil on Masonite

7 x 10 in. (17,8 x 25,4 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Columbia, South Carolina



**Lagoon, Tide**, 2007  
Oil on Belgian linen  
48 x 72 in. (121,9 x 182,9 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist, Columbia,  
South Carolina



**Marsh, Slight Sky**, 2001-2005  
Oil on Belgian linen  
30 ¼ x 42 in. (76,8 x 106,7 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist, Columbia,  
South Carolina

## West Fraser 1955

A leading American artist in the representational and plein air tradition, West Fraser has built his career on richly painted, atmospheric vistas of cities, coasts, and the landscapes throughout the United States and internationally—from the pristine Sea Islands of South Carolina and Georgia, to the hill towns of Tuscany. Fraser produced his first oil paintings created from life in open air—

en plein air—a style based on an impressionistic rendering of light, color, and atmosphere on the forms of landscapes, city scenes, and marine views. Since then he developed his formal and expressive skills in portraying subjects ranging from panoramic urban rooftop views, to intimate streetscapes, to remote island marshlands.



**Moonlit Phoenix Palms, 1995**  
Oil on linen  
36 x 40 in. (91,4 x 101,6 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist  
and Helena Fox Fine Art,  
Charleston, South Carolina



**Setting Moon, 2011**

Oil on linen

22 x 30 in. (55,9 x 76,2 cm)

Courtesy of the artist  
and Helena Fox Fine Art,  
Charleston, South Carolina



**In the Cradle, 2001**

Oil on linen

28 x 30 in. (71,1 x 76,2 cm)

Courtesy of the artist  
and Helena Fox Fine Art,  
Charleston, South Carolina

## Mary Bentz Gilkerson 1958

Mary Bentz Gilkerson is an artist who uses color and light to connect people to the experience of place. Gilkerson notes, "For the last four years I have been making a small painting every day inspired by the landscapes I travel through, mainly near the roads and highways around Columbia, South Carolina, especially Lower Richland. I'm drawn to the ordinary spaces we move through, especially ones that are within view from the

road, a strange intersection of nature and culture. We move so fast that we don't take time to observe the world around us in the way that people did before modern transportation and technology came along. My work seeks to focus on the shifting patterns of light and color that tell us what time of day and season it is, to notice the small and subtle as well as the large and grand."







◀ **Summer, Evening Sky**, 2014  
Oil on panel  
9 x 12 in. (22,9 x 30,5 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist, Columbia, South Carolina

▲ **Champey's Grove Thunderstorm**, 2014  
Oil on panel  
24 x 30 in. (61 x 76,2 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist, Columbia, South Carolina

## Kevin LePrince 1971

"Often playful and sometimes serious" is how American impressionist Kevin LePrince describes his body of work and choice of subject. The primarily self-taught artist paints alla prima using thick, broken brush strokes and a limited but vibrant palette. LePrince's paintings reflect the late afternoon feeling of being on the water in his native home of Charleston, South Carolina. A graduate from the University of South Carolina in Columbia with a degree in economics, LePrince began his career in the finance industry. But in 2004, he left his position as vice president to pursue a career as a professional artist. He studied at the Art Students League of New York and in Taos, New Mexico, at the Fechin Institute.





**Calico Jack**, undated  
Oil on canvas, 6 x 6 in. (15,2 x 15,2 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist and LePrince  
Fine Art, Charleston, South Carolina



**Captain Bart**, undated  
Oil on canvas, 6 x 6 in. (15,2 x 15,2 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist and LePrince  
Fine Art, Charleston, South Carolina



## Olessia Maximenko 1980

Olessia Maximenko was born in a small village in Siberia. Maximenko's unique perspective of the world is illustrated in her artwork. She began her lifelong career in art with formal training at an art school in Russia. Although she excelled in school and graduated with honors, it is her raw talent and passion that enable her to paint in her own

style. Having lived in Charleston, South Carolina, for a decade, Maximenko developed a collection of Lowcountry landscapes. She lives with her husband and two young sons in a retired feed mill in Washington, Georgia, a property that serves as home, studio, gallery, and restoration project.



**Rockville Oyster Pickers**, undated

Oil on canvas

Triptych: Each canvas 12 x 12 in. (30,5 x 30,5 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Washington, Georgia



## Caroline McCloud Self 1962

Caroline McCloud Self is a contemporary artist inspired by vivid paint colors and textures, the grittiness of graffiti, and abstract expressionists. "I create my abstract paintings to ... explore these questions, sometimes with more questions. I am inspired by the harmony and juxtaposition of color

and texture in nature, just as I am fascinated with the tension found in the unpredictable flow of life. I seek to layer mystery and movement by using shape, color, and texture mixed with the poetry of fluidity, the complexity of struggle, and the joy of beauty to evoke an emotion of spirit," she says.

**B Street**, 2017

Acrylic, wax, and ink on canvas  
38 x 38 in. (96,5 x 96,5 cm)

Courtesy of the artist,  
Charleston, South Carolina



## Jay Owens 1978

"My pots are used as vehicles to express my ideas of surface and form," says South Carolina-native Jay Owens. "My interest in color developed after visiting Niger, West Africa. From fabrics to bright colored plastic watering cans, colorful and lively decoration is used in the design of everyday objects. Since my visit there I've been exploring how color can be used on traditional pottery forms. The wheel-thrown form allows a topography for me to paint with colored clay slip and experiment with pattern and color."

**Amphora**, 2005  
Earthenware clay, slips, glazes  
12 ½ x 10 x 10 in.  
(31,8 x 25,4 x 25,4 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist,  
Travelers Rest, South Carolina







**Amphora, 2005**  
Earthenware clay, slips, glazes  
12 ½ x 10 x 10 in.  
(31,8 x 25,4 x 25,4 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist,  
Travelers Rest, South Carolina

## Edward Rice 1953

Edward Rice lives and works in Augusta, Georgia. He has grown up with the architecture of the South running through his veins. Rice sees the history of Southern heritage emulated in the architectural features of its stately antebellum homes and structures which he refers to as "our temples." His rich painterly treatment of a cornice, an ice house, a smoke house, a weaving house,

and a barn immortalizes this bygone era in the nation's rich history. To experience his painting in person is to experience the rich cultural mysteries and nuances of the South and its tributaries. Says Rice of his work, "My goal has always been simple enough: to take ideas rooted in the past and make them relevant to our own time."



**BBQ Shed, 2012**

Oil on canvas

30 x 40 in. (76,2 x 101,6 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, North  
Augusta, South Carolina



◀ **Pilot House IV**, 2001

Oil on canvas

24 x 16 in. (61 x 40,6 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, North Augusta, South Carolina



▶ **Spire (Grisaille)**, 1998-2001

Oil on canvas

48 x 30 in. (121,9 x 76,2 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, North Augusta, South Carolina

## Laura Spong 1926-2018

Except for a few urban landscape scenes, still lives, and figurative paintings, Laura Spong has always produced non-representational, abstract expressionist paintings. In the last few years, Spong has increased her reputation in her state and beyond with a series of solo exhibitions and several group shows, including a retrospective at the University of South Carolina's McMaster

Gallery in Columbia. "I paint because I love the process of painting. To me, it's exciting to throw a lot of paint on a clean canvas and then seek to solve the problem of creating order out of chaos. I like it that with non-objective work, nothing is decided for you –no color, no design, no subject matter; the search is wide open," she says.

▶  
**We Always May Be What We Might  
Have Been**, 2014

Oil on canvas

72 x 60 in. (182,9 x 152,4 cm)

Courtesy of the artist and if ART  
Gallery, Columbia, South Carolina



## Leo F. Twiggs 1934

Leo F. Twiggs, from Orangeburg, South Carolina, is seen as the country's main pioneer of batik as a modern art form. His art is about subjects, topics, issues, and people close to his Southern upbringing, but through familiar specifics, Twiggs addresses broader themes, including race, black culture, politics, and relationships between generations. He does so through modern imagery and narrative scenes that are seldom straightforward snapshots but abstracted, symbolic tableaux dominated by shapes, lines, and fields of color. By

the 1970s, Twiggs's national reputation resulted in a several solo shows in the northeast, including at New York's Studio Museum in Harlem. He also has been in group shows featuring the country's most famous African American artists, including Jacob Lawrence and Romare Bearden. His career retrospective, organized by the Georgia Museum of Art from 2004 to 2006 traveled to several venues, including the South Carolina State Museum.



**Anchored In The Spirit**, 2014  
Batik on cotton  
21 ¼ x 25 in. (54 x 63,5 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist and if ART Gallery,  
Columbia, South Carolina

**Woman In Blue Dress**, 2014  
Batik on cotton  
18 x 13 in. (45,7 x 33 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist and  
if ART Gallery, Columbia,  
South Carolina



## Enid Williams 1958

Enid Williams received her Master of Fine Arts degree in painting from Kent State University and her Bachelor of Arts degree in studio art from the University of Toledo, both in Ohio. In 2012 she was awarded a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant, recognizing her as an artist of significant achievement. Williams continues to explore the use of kinetic circles and particles interwoven in a primarily white void, a signature characteristic that she describes as both matrix and backdrop. Her meticulously rendered images are informed by a diverse framework that is both contemporary

and historical: science, literary conventions, color perception charts, the works of abstract expressionists, and op art are often referenced in titles. These influences have inspired the optical complexity and spatial ambiguity of her work. Also citing time as a theme, Williams draws attention to the arrested representation of time in these images and the paradoxically slower but still moving time a viewer may experience when engaging the work. For Williams, this becomes an expression of our attempt at controlling time or preventing change.

▶  
**Damage Control**, 2016

Oil on canvas

24 x 24 in. (61 x 61 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Greenville, South Carolina





## Mike Williams 1963

South Carolina-native Mike Williams earned his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of South Carolina and worked as a sign painter and fine artist during that time. He has created a style that serves as a synthesis between the representational world of tradition and the emotional world explored by modern abstract painters. "All of my work—paintings, drawings, and sculpture—is inspired by my experiences with nature and the environment," he says. "Growing up fishing and hunting South Carolina's lakes and rivers, swamps and flatwoods, cultivated a healthy respect for all things living. That appreciation for the environment

and all its inhabitants is now greater and more important than ever. Urban sprawl and land misuse threatens daily to reduce the earth's remaining bogs, bays, and forests to burning piles of ash needlessly displacing plant and animal life. Swamp lands and marshes remain some of the most valuable resources on the face of the earth... My fish paintings and sculptures manifest as iconic figures of my imagination, experiences as a fisherman, and my physical capabilities as an artist."

▶  
**Congo VI**, 2010

Acrylic on canvas

30 x 30 in. (76,2 x 76,2 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Columbia, South Carolina



## David Yaghjian 1948

Columbia, South Carolina, native and resident David Yaghjian has exhibited across the Carolinas. His paintings often focus on the ordinary of every day which he describes in a poem:

*"Trying not to think too much, or get too lofty,  
too pompous.*

*Digging my toenails into the ground; to stay  
involved with the paint.*

*Accepting and sometimes enjoying aging, but  
not always celebrating it.*

*Alternately terrified and exhilarated.... by  
everything."*

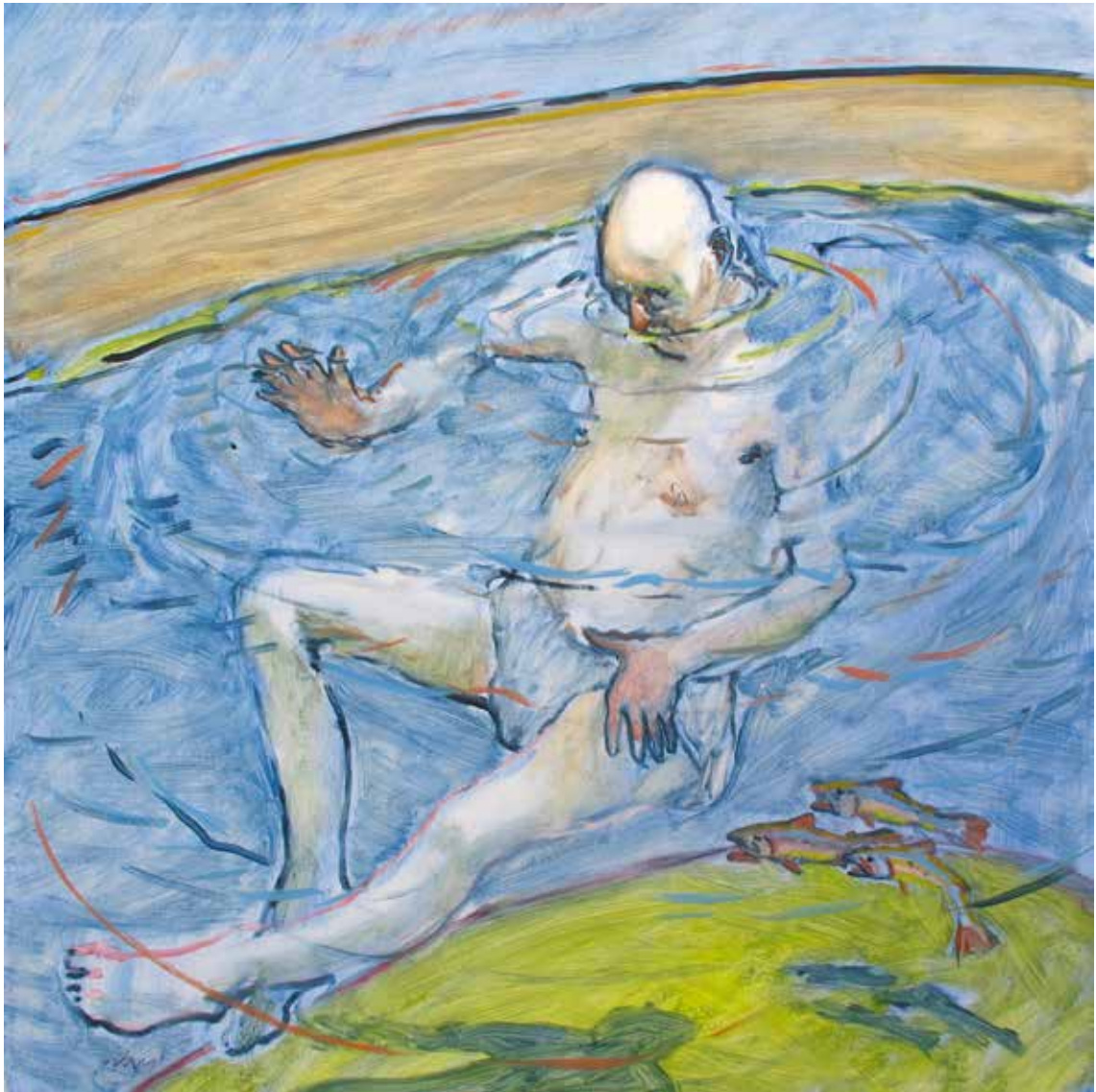
Yaghjian holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Massachusetts's Amherst College and studied at the Art Students League of New York and the School of Visual Art, both in New York City. Among his instructors were Fairfield Porter, Leonard Baskin, Will Barnet, and Chaim Koppelman. While many see the influence of realist painter Edward Hopper in Yaghjian's work, particularly his earlier architectural renderings, another primary influence for both the architectural works and the *Everyman* series is actually a writer – John Updike, who said he strived "to give the mundane its beautiful due."

▶  
**Three Trout**, 2007

Oil on canvas

30 x 30 in. (76,2 x 76,2 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Columbia, South Carolina



## David Yaghjian 1948



**Pool #2 (Ripples), 2005**

Oil on panel

8 x 10 in. (20,3 x 25,4 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Columbia, South Carolina

## Acknowledgments

### **Washington, D.C.**

Camille Benton, Curator  
Tiffany Williams, Curatorial Assistant  
Jamie Arbolino, Registrar  
Tabitha Brackens, Managing Editor  
Tori See, Editor  
Amanda Brooks, Imaging Manager

### **Bern**

Sandi Allaway  
Luz Ampoloquio  
Andrea Baumann  
Gaby Bloem  
Danielle Degiorgi  
Reto Graf  
Kim Hunziker  
James Johnson  
Jens Kubisch  
Gloriano Lupo  
Radhakrishnan Rangaraju  
Tytti Stettler  
Tanya Ward  
Daniel Weiss

*Alexander Sigrist, Photographer*

### **Vienna**

Nathalie Mayer, Graphic Designer



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Published by Art in Embassies  
U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C.  
October 2018

