

**ART IN
EMBASSIES
EXHIBITION**
UNITED STATES
EMBASSY
PARAMARIBO



Cover

Kit Ling Tjon Pian Gi

Spirit of Nature – thought, 1999

Oil on hardboard

26 ¾ x 31 ½ in. (68 x 80 cm)

ART IN EMBASSIES EXHIBITION
UNITED STATES EMBASSY PARAMARIBO

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

Welcome (virtually) to my home's Art in Embassies' exhibition! I am very pleased to offer this digital introduction to the nine pieces of American and Surinamese art. The works are a range of styles and mediums, but they all have one thing in common — the artists are women of varying ethnic and national origins who are interpreting their culture, environment, or experience into art.

Empowering women — economically, artistically, and socially — is one of the most beneficial things that any society can undertake. The U.S. and Suriname both have strong female leaders and role models and in this exhibition I wanted to celebrate women in our artistic communities.

The U.S. artists range across America — from the late Nancy Asbell who focused on the natural beauty of my adopted home of Florida, to Native American artist Jaune Quick-to-See Smith of Montana, to Trisha de Borchgrave of Maryland (my birth state). The Surinamese art — by Kit-Ling Tjon Pian Gi and Hanka Wolterstorff — highlight the diversity of the nation's colorful and harmonious natural environment. Also featured are three of Ms. Tjon Pian Gi's works as a tribute to her themes that underscore the strength of women.

I am very grateful for the support of the Office of Art in Embassies and Readytex Art Gallery for making this exhibition possible. I hope you enjoy the artworks as much as I do.

Ambassador Karen L. Williams

Paramaribo, Suriname
June 2019

**Nancy
Asbell**
(1962-2012)

“As an artist, I try to bring a sense of calm to the viewer. Perhaps my style is inspired realism, going a step further to connect on a spiritual level. Coming from an artistic family, I was encouraged to draw and create as soon as I could hold a crayon ... I was inspired by the classics; Gainsborough, Monet, Winslow Homer, and Van Gogh. Growing up in Florida, I have fallen [sic] in love with our beautiful skies, marshes, and wildlife. One of my current series, *Florida Horizons*, celebrates this desire to call attention to the Florida that I grew up with, the Florida that is slipping away, and the Florida that is around us every day. Most of my paintings are originals. I like the viewer to appreciate the one of kind nature of my work in a world of prints and Giclees. I paint in acrylics and watercolors because of the versatility of the medium. I like the immediacy of their purest form.”

Nancy Asbell, an artist and a musician, exhibited her paintings throughout Florida. Her work and her story served to highlight the importance of taking on extreme challenges and turn them into opportunities. An advocate for lupus, she said, “If lupus is my lemons, then my artwork is my lemonade.”

Four Palms, 2009
Acrylic on canvas
40 x 30 in. (101,6 x 76,2 cm)
Collection of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.;
Gift of the artist, St. Johns, Florida



Trisha de Borchgrave

(1961)

Trisha de Borchgrave was born in Paris, France, and raised in Mallorca, Spain. After completing her education in England, she worked for Andreas Galleries in Washington, D.C., and as a textile designer for Danielle Doran in London. An artist since the late-1990s, she also writes on policy, politics, and lifestyle at the *HuffPost*, *Arab News*, *the Big Smoke*, *Australia*, and *Al Arabiya English*, and her articles have appeared in ABC, Spain, UPI and the World Today, Chatham House.

De Borchgrave said about her artistic practice, “My underlying inspiration and passion for the miracle of a fruit, vegetable, or flower have kept me for the moment from exploring little outside that domain. I still cannot quite believe that the complexity and variety of color, form, and taste in earth’s offerings are real and I challenge anyone to pick an apricot or almond off a tree or pull at a hidden carrot and not feel that a spiritual presence has been there first, distributing these perpetual gifts to us: health, nourishment, and beauty on tap and our disposal for being a member of this planet. Mind boggling!”

Gourds, 2004
Acrylic on board
47 x 37 in. (119,4 x 94 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Bethesda, Maryland



Riva Leviten

(1928-2014)

Born in California, Riva Leviten spent most of her life as an artist in Providence, Rhode Island, where she was deeply involved in the art community and became a member of the Providence Art Club. Her work has been exhibited in several private collections, museums, and galleries throughout the world.

Known for her abstract monoprints and collages, Leviten said, "I have been a working artist for half a century. Works on paper (printmaking, collage, painting, drawing, encaustic, and mixed media) have been much of the focus of my artistic life. My interest is to take various and seemingly non-related parts and bring them together creating an integrated whole. They communicate personal and universal themes which elicit from the viewer a reminder of his or her own human condition. Be that as it may, the range of my work has tremendous breadth and depth, often harkening to archetypal responses."

Times Three, undated
Monotype
30 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 30 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (77,2 x 76,5 cm)
Collection of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.;
Gift of Riva Leviten



Jaune Quick to See Smith

(1940)

Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, born at Flathead Indian Nation in Montana, has said “I see myself as a bridge builder. My art, my life experience, and my tribal ties are totally enmeshed. I go from one community with messages to the other, and I try to enlighten people.” Smith has taught and lectured across the country and her work can be found in the collections of several major museums.

Since her emergence as an artist in the 1970s, Smith has had a unique voice in American art working in a variety of media that has addressed several subjects, but is largely focused on issues related to Native American identity. As she has said, “In my work I use humor and satire to present narratives on ethical treatment of animals, humans, and our planet. My work is philosophically centered by my strong traditional Salish beliefs.”

Smith’s lithograph *We Are All Knots in the Great Net of Life* incorporates sketches of an Indigenous American Indian man with an eagle feather in his hair, as well as wild animals, insects, and a stalk of maize — and a spider’s web and a human skull, two reminders of life’s fragility. “This lithographic drawing is a symbolic microcosm of my life, but has analogies to the larger system on our planet,” she added.

We Are All Knots in the Great Net of Life, 2007
Five color lithograph printed on white Somerset
satin paper, 39 x 31 ½ in. (99,1 x 80 cm)
Collection of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.;
in collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution’s
National Museum of the American Indian,
Washington, D.C.



Kit Ling Tjon Pian Gi

(1952)

“Art is more than a painting on the wall or a sculpture in a hall. Art should be more a part of our daily life. ‘Art is life’ and ‘Life is Art,’” Kit-Ling Tjon Pian Gi states as the basis for her work. Born in Paramaribo, Suriname, she started her career as an art teacher and lecturer, but became a full time visual artist in 1988, with an emphasis on painting, drawing, and experimental art. In 2005, Tjon Pian Gi added video film and video installation as a medium to her practice. Recurring themes in her work are nature, in its physical and its spiritual form, the various cultures of Suriname, and women, especially the strength of women. In addition to exhibiting in nationally and internationally solo and group shows, Tjon Pian Gi served as the secretary of the Federation for Visual Artists in Suriname (FVAS) between 1998 and 2017.

Texts are also important for Tjon Pian Gi’s work, and for a period she focused on creating a true fusion between visual art and the art of words, which resulted in the publication of the books: *The Strength of Women* (2009), and *Short Stories*, a bundle of poems (2012). In 2012, Tjon Pian Gi was the featured visual artist within the 13th International Conference of the Association of Caribbean Women Writers and Scholars (ACWWS). In 2013, she received the Bridget Jones Travel Award from the Society of Caribbean Studies in the U.K.

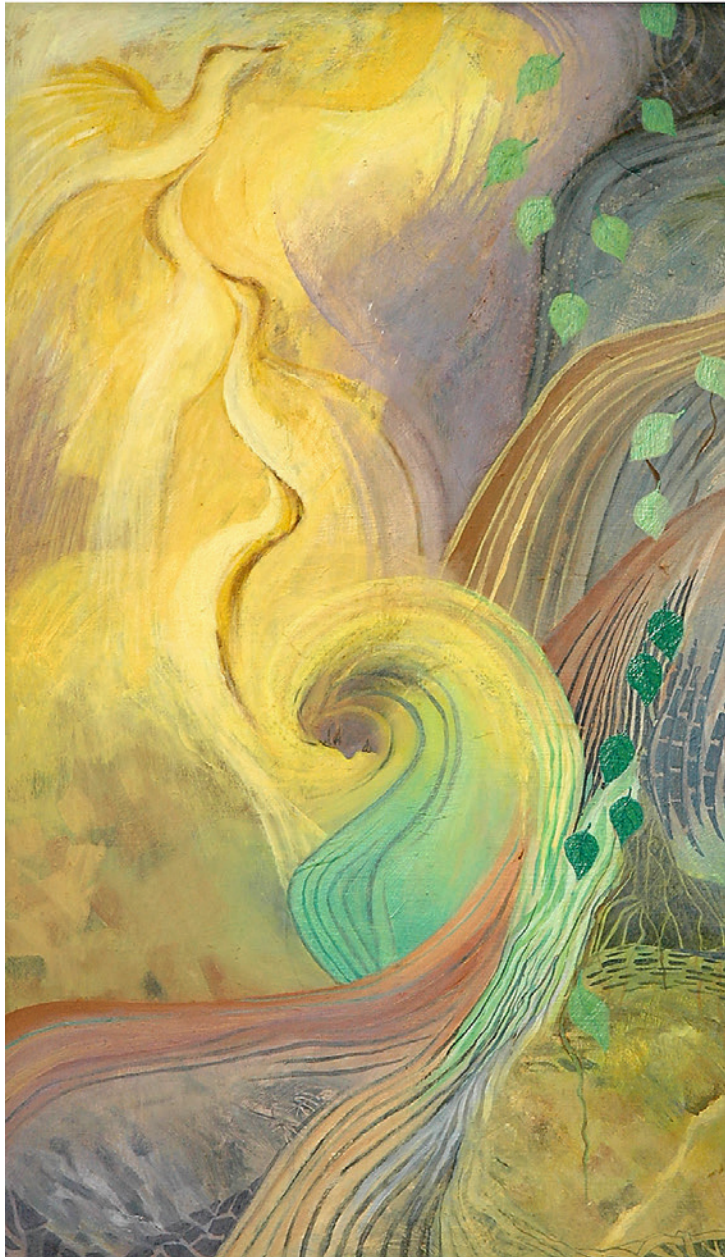
Een fout van de goden 2, 2009
Acrylic on canvas
25 $\frac{3}{16}$ x 35 $\frac{9}{16}$ in. (64 x 90 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Readytex
Art Gallery, Paramaribo, Suriname

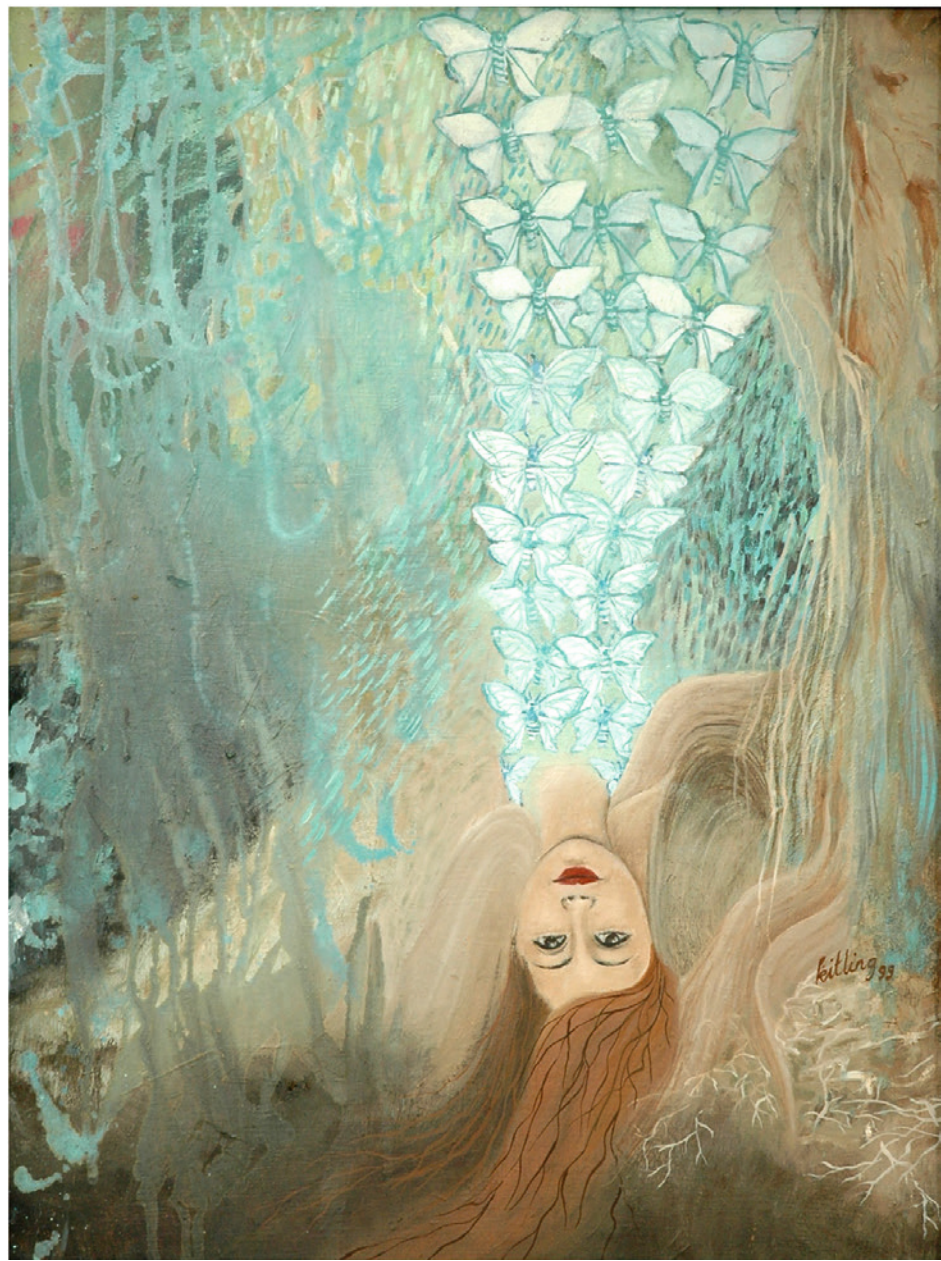


**Kit Ling
Tjon Pian Gi**
(1952)

(left) **Spirit of Nature – thought**, 1999
Oil on hardboard
26 ¾ x 31 ½ in. (68 x 80 cm)

(right) **Spirit of Nature – butterfly**, 1999
Oil on hardboard
26 ¾ x 31 ½ in. (68 x 80 cm)





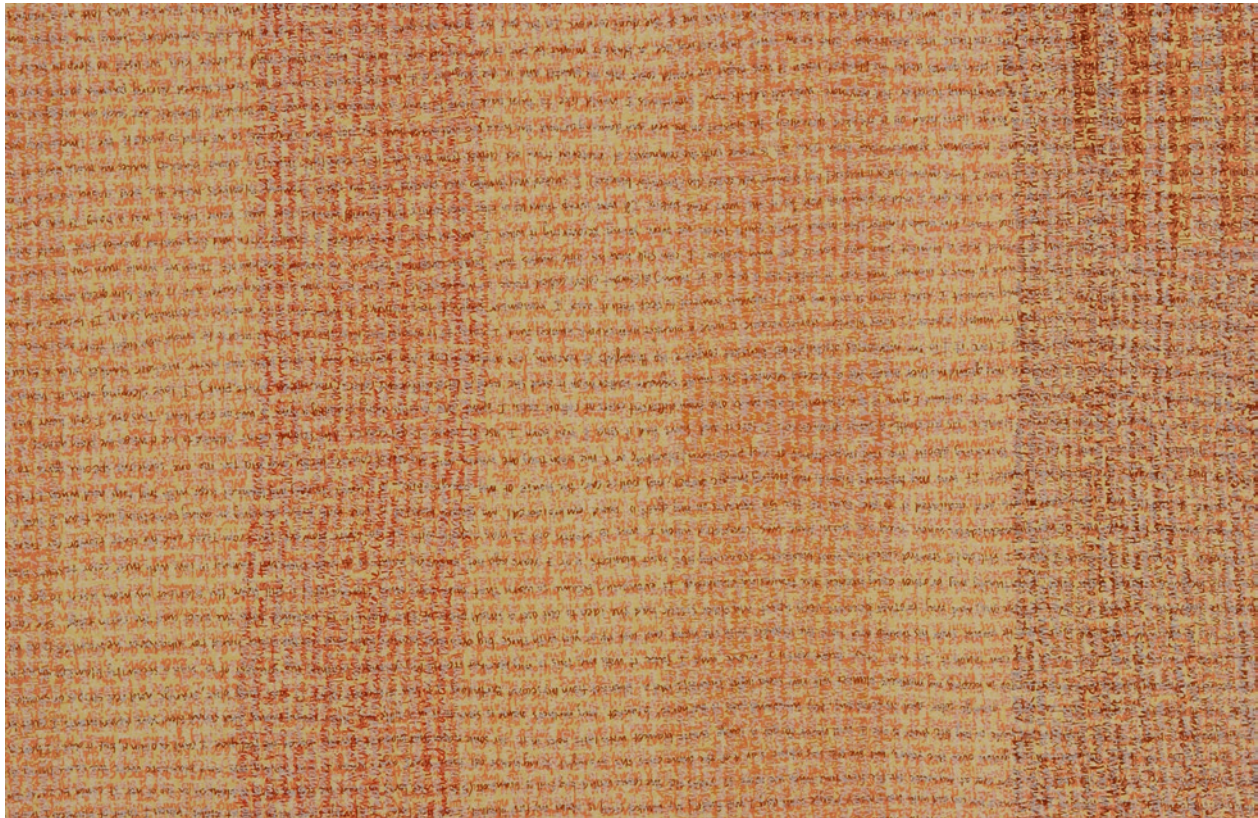
Marie Watt (1967)

Marie Watt's work is at once abstract and concrete, ephemeral and tangible. In her lithograph *Blanket Stories: Continuum (Book I / Book III)* what at first appears to be a detail of a woven blanket reveals itself to be lines of text that mimic the warp and weft of a woven textile. In this work, the ephemerality of words is preserved in a concrete, tactile form. The lithograph's language 'tapestry' reveals the "personal, social, and cultural histories" embedded in ordinary household items, she said.

Watts's work celebrates her indigenous American heritage by reexamining the objects and traditions associated with Native American cultures. As she says, "My work explores human stories and rituals implicit in everyday objects. I consciously draw from indigenous design principles, oral traditions, and personal experience to shape the inner logic of the work I make." By alluding to the blanket-weaving tradition, Watts recalls her own Seneca heritage and suffuses it with new life. As such, the intangibility of oral tradition is given solidity and permanence in another traditional form. Watt weaves together distinct media to celebrate her culture and its relationship to American culture at large.

**Blanket Stories: Continuum
(Book I / Book III), 2007**

Six color lithograph printed
on natural Sekishu on white Arches paper
31 ½ x 39 in. (80 x 99,1 cm)
Collection of Art in Embassies, Washington,
D.C.; in collaboration with the Smithsonian
Institution's National Museum of
the American Indian, Washington, D.C.



Hanka Wolterstorff

(1943)

Born in Hoorn, the Netherlands, Hanka Wolterstorff has lived and worked in Suriname for over thirty years creating and exhibiting abstract, three-dimensional ceramics. The statuettes, sculptures of Wolterstorff up to a meter in height, are curvaceously shaped with strong dynamics and beautiful colors. Each work, crafted organically without a predefined idea or design in mind before beginning, is asymmetrical and harmonious. The finish is smooth and the colors are whimsically applied in different oxides such as dark iron, green copper oxide, or yellow manganese.

Wolterstorff is a professionally trained ceramicist who took lessons with Ted Heymans and studied under Soeki Irodikromo before opening her own studio. She earned the award for most-outstanding work during the National Art Exhibit of 2004 in Suriname. About her practice, Wolterstorff has said, "Once in a while you have things to change up. It may be that I suddenly see something in the clay, or try something and then think: hey, that's nice. I never start with a preconceived idea."

Untitled 2, 2016
Ceramic
Dimension variable
Courtesy of a private collection



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