



ART IN EMBASSIES EXHIBITION
United States Embassy Pristina

JOHN MAC KAH

French Broad Olivette, 2017

Oil on panel

17 × 25 in. (43,2 × 63,5 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Asheville, North 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."

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

WELCOME

We are pleased to present this exhibition of works by American artists that reflect two aspects of the bond between the people of the United States and Kosovo: the struggle to protect the environment and the quest to build more just societies.

When we first visited Kosovo in 2003, we found ourselves admiring the similarities of the landscape to that of our home in the mountains near Asheville, North Carolina. While preparing for our return to Pristina, we sought works by artists from the Asheville area to highlight this shared natural heritage. We struck gold when we met the husband and wife team of John Mac Kah and Ruthanne Kah, who lead the Saints of Paint, a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving the environment, caring for animals, and working for positive social change. We are grateful to the Kahs and other artists in their collective who have been willing to lend paintings to this exhibition—Dana Margaret Irwin, Susan Kokora, Mohamed Sabaawi, and Deborah Squier.

The commitment and activism of artists in the Saints of Paint collective forms a bridge to the rest of the exhibition—portraits of American civil rights hero Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and portraits of Lena Horne, Josephine Baker, and Katherine Dunham, three African American women whose legacy as performing artists is often overlooked. These latter three portraits belong to a larger collection by photographer Carrie Mae Weems entitled *Slow Fade to Black* highlighting the achievements of African American politicians and performers from the mid-twentieth century. Weems deliberately blurred the images in this collection to suggest that society is allowing those figures to dissolve unnoticed into the past. *Slow Fade to Black* is also the title of a book by Dr. Thomas Cripps highlighting the accomplishments of African Americans in film in the face of racism during the first half of the twentieth century.

We hope you will find these works beautiful and inspiring in equal measure.

Ambassador Philip S. Kosnett and Alison Kosnett

*Pristina
December 2019*

DANA MARGARET IRWIN
/ born 1947 /



Blue Ridge from Craggy, 2018
Acrylic on board
21 x 11 in. (53,3 x 27,9 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Fairview, North Carolina



Dana Margaret Irwin painted under the tutelage of watercolorist Lois Thomas in Greenville, South Carolina, at age nine. Her career as an art director spans three decades of national book and magazine publishing. She is a member of Saints of Paint, a collective funding nonprofits and artists.

Irwin's formal art study includes a Bachelor of Fine arts degree in graphic design from the University of Georgia (Atlanta) and post-graduate work at the Tyler School of Art in Pennsylvania (Philadelphia), as well as the Art Students League and the School of Visual Arts, both in New York City. Her work has been shown in several exhibitions throughout the Carolinas and exists in public and private collections across the U.S. and Europe.

JOHN MAC KAH
/ born 1952 /



Cold Mountain Evening, 2017

Oil on canvas

18 x 30 in. (45,7 x 76,2 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Asheville, North Carolina



John Mac Kah is a landscape painter exploring deep observations and creating contexts that reflect his experiences of the natural world. Kah finds influence in the imagery of American landscape painters of the nineteenth and twentieth century. Of their work, he says, "... artists raised questions about the relationship of man and Nature and those questions remain valid, if not urgent, with increasing pressures from development and destruction of species and habitat."

Kah studied at the Ringling College of Art and Design in Sarasota, Florida. Eventually, he left to explore and pursue his vision of what he wanted for his work, which included a strong respect for materials and techniques. He attributes this in part to his family heritage in the visual arts as a descendant of cabinetmakers and photographers.

JOHN MAC KAH
/ born 1952 /



French Broad River, 2014
Oil on panel
30 x 53 in. (76,2 x 134,6 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Asheville, North Carolina



Mouse Creek, 2008

Oil on panel

27 x 22 in. (68,6 x 55,9 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Asheville, North Carolina

JOHN MAC KAH
/ born 1952 /



French Broad Olivette, 2017
Oil on panel
17 x 25 in. (43,2 x 63,5 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Asheville, North Carolina



Dogwoods, 2013

Oil on linen

23 x 30 in. (58,4 x 76,2 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Asheville, North Carolina

RUTHANNE KAH

/ born 1947 /



Redbuds, 2010
Oil and linen on panel
16 x 19 in. (40,6 x 48,3 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Asheville, North Carolina



Maples, 2007
Oil on linen panel
22 x 27 in. (55,9 x 68,6 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Asheville, North Carolina



The creative process runs in the family for traditional landscape and still-life painter Ruthanne Kah. “There was among my grandparents a legacy of craftsmanship. One grandfather was a cabinetmaker, the other an engineer who designed vending machines. My father was a carpenter and maker of kites,” she said. During a visit to a regional museum in Florida, viewing a collection of European seventeenth- and eighteenth-century paintings had a profound effect on Kah, “... my life was changed. I attended art classes and spent Saturdays drawing statues in the courtyard.” She later studied extensively in the arts with an emphasis on fiber and dyeing. The transition to her new medium allowed Kah to explore her interests in color, botany, and natural pigments.

Kah graduated from New College of Florida (Sarasota), with a Bachelor of Arts degree in literature. She enrolled in post-graduate studies and participated in an artist-in-residence at the University of North Carolina (Asheville) and completed the Professional Crafts Program at Haywood Technical College (Clyde, North Carolina) in textile design, specializing in fiber arts, color and dye applications, and hand weaving. Kah shares a studio with husband, painter John Mac Kah, in Asheville, North Carolina.

SUSAN KOKORA
/ born 1951 /



Glassy Waters, 2018

Oil on linen panel

21 x 29 in. (53,3 x 73, cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Asheville, North Carolina

The work of Susan Kokora reflects her lifelong passion for art. Kokora grew up in what was once rural New Jersey, but she had easy access to the museums and galleries of New York City. She later moved to Asheville, North Carolina, where she began a formal study of oil painting with painter John Mac Kah. Kokora is a member of Saints of Paint, a group of artists who collaborate with nonprofit organizations interested in the environment and social justice. Her work has been featured in public and private collections throughout Asheville.

WARREN K. LEFFLER
/ 1926-2014 /



**Martin Luther King, Jr. after meeting with President Johnson
at the White House to discuss Civil Rights, December 3, 1963, 1963**

Black and white photographic print

13 x 16 in. (33 x 40,6 cm)

Courtesy of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.;

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, LC U9 10978 A 3

Warren K. Leffler was a photographer for *U.S. News & World Report* during the civil rights years. Although based primarily in Washington, D.C., Leffler also traveled down South to cover many of the main events for the magazine. He received the World Press Photo Award for spot news in 1960.

MOHAMED SABAAWI
/ born 1948 /



Lane Pinnacle, 2018
Oil on wood
20 x 26 in. (50,8 x 66 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Asheville, North Carolina

Egyptian-born artist Mohamed Sabaawi is a realist painter working in portraiture, landscapes, and figurative art. He began his studies in Alexandria, Egypt, with Seif Wanly, who introduced modern art to the country. Under family pressure, he interrupted his formal study of fine arts to become a medical doctor, practicing psychiatry for almost thirty years in the U.S. In the last decade, he revived his focus on the arts, studying among noted American artists in the arts community of Asheville, North Carolina.

Sabaawi's work in psychiatry attuned his senses to emotional nuance; this aptitude finds new expression in the way he identifies and interprets on canvas the essence of his subjects. His work has been characterized as emotionally resonant, uniting the truth of a realistic representation with psychological and spiritual intuition. Sensitivity to color value and light and the expressiveness of his brushwork are the foundation of his appealing and characteristic style.

DEBORAH SQUIER



Deborah Squier trained at the Boston Museum School (Massachusetts) and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill). She continues to study and explore while developing a style rooted in and connected to conservation. She regularly paints en plein air. Her inspiration is, "the Appalachian landscape with its distinct diversity of ecosystems, mountain vistas, and lush veil of atmosphere as well as our ongoing relationship with the land." Squier says, "This relationship is constant and has profound consequences for all species. I am forever grateful for the transcendent beauty and quality of life afforded by these ancient mountains. They teach me and they touch me. It is my hope that as we cultivate our awareness of this complex and essential connection with Nature, we can begin to heal the earth and ourselves." Her work is in numerous private and public collections in the U.S. and abroad.

Graveyard Fields Location: Blue Ridge Parkway, 2018

Pastel

26 ½ x 26 ½ in. (67,3 x 67,3 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Asheville, North Carolina

PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN



Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (January 15, 1929-April 4, 1968) was a famous leader of the American civil rights movement, a political activist, and a Baptist minister. In 1964, King became the youngest man to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his work as a peacemaker, promoting nonviolence and equal treatment for different races. On April 4, 1968, Dr. King was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. King's most influential and well known public address is the "I Have a Dream" speech, delivered on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. on August 28, 1963.

Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., no date
Black and white photograph
12 ½ x 15 in. (31,8 x 38,1 cm)
Courtesy of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.

CARRIE MAE WEEMS

/ born 1953 /

Carrie Mae Weems earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, and a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of California, San Diego, continuing her studies in the graduate program in folklore at the University of California, Berkeley. With the pitch and timbre of an accomplished storyteller, Weems uses colloquial forms—jokes, songs, rebukes—in photographic series that scrutinize subjectivity and expose pernicious stereotypes. Weems' vibrant explorations of photography, video, and verse breathe new life into traditional narrative forms—social documentary, tableaux, self-portrait, and oral history. Eliciting epic contexts from individually framed moments, Weems debunks racist and sexist labels, examines the relationship between power and aesthetics, and uses personal biography to articulate broader truths. Whether adapting or appropriating archival images, restaging famous news photographs, or creating altogether new scenes, she traces an indirect history of the depiction of African Americans for more than a century. Weems has received honorary degrees from Colgate University, New York, and California College of the Arts, Oakland. Her awards include the Anonymous Was a Woman Award, Skowhegan Medal for Photography, Rome Prize Fellowship, and the Pollack Krasner Foundation Grant in Photography, among others. Weems lives and works in Syracuse, New York.



Top left:
Slow Fade to Black
(Katherine Dunham), 2009-2011
Inkjet print, 49 3/4 x 37 in. (125,1 x 94 cm)
Courtesy of the artist,
and Jack Shainman Gallery,
New York, New York



Top right:
Slow Fade to Black
(Josephine Baker), 2009-2011
Inkjet print, 49 3/4 x 37 in. (125,1 x 94 cm)
Courtesy of the artist,
Carrie Mae Weems Studio, and the
Delavan Center, Syracuse, New York



Bottom right:
Slow Fade to Black
(Lena Horne), 2009-2011
Inkjet print, 49 3/4 x 37 in. (125,1 x 94 cm)
Courtesy of the artist,
Carrie Mae Weems Studio, and the
Delavan Center, Syracuse, New York

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