

ART IN EMBASSIES EXHIBITION | UNITED STATES EMBASSY PORT MORESBY





# 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."

# WELCOME

I deeply believe art is more than something to be viewed; it serves as a bridge connecting people across cultural, linguistic, and historical borders. One of the great privileges of becoming an Ambassador is the opportunity to partner with the U.S. Department of State’s Art in Embassies program and identify works for display in my residence in Port Moresby. I am a fourth generation native Californian—born on the Pacific Coast, raised on its shores—and it is from this mighty ocean that I derive my strength, my drive, and my tranquility. The Pacific Ocean is also the bridge between my country, the United States, and Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu.

As the poet E. E. Cummings said:

*For whatever we lose (like a you or a me),  
it's always ourselves we find in the sea.*

It is this shared oceanic “bridge” that connects our nations, in which we find our true selves, and I chose the theme of “The Ocean” for the selected American artwork. Considering the *Western Edge of the Continental U.S.*, the *Waves* series, or *Pacific Rising*, one clearly feels the impression the ocean has left on the artist, and in turn, upon us. From vibrant colors and cresting waves, to calming seascapes and waterfront serenity, each piece in its own way captures the strength—and calm—of the sea.

In society, women's empowerment is one of the most critical elements for fulfilling the promise of every country's potential, and a key focus of my Embassy team's work, so I selected pieces from female artists. Their artwork and expressions of creativity reinforce women's strength, vision, and potential.

I am deeply grateful to the husband-and-wife team Chaim Bezalel and Yonah Ben Ley, Hilda Green Demsky, Catherine Eaton Skinner, Barbara Fox, Melissa Mahoney, Bobbie Rich, and Joy Williams for lending their artworks, and to the Art in Embassies team and its curator, Welmoed Laanstra, in particular, for her guidance as we worked on this program. I hope all of you enjoy sharing and cherishing this "mighty ocean" exhibit as much as I have.

**Ambassador Erin E. McKee**

*Papua New Guinea  
May 2020*

# BEZALEL-LEVY

(Chaim Bezalel and Yonah Ben Levy)

“Painting is always a relationship between the painter and the subject and the materials. Our technique also includes the relationship between ourselves. The photographer submits to having his composition painted over, sometimes obscured, and the painter is content to paint her partner’s image, although she gets to select which she wants to paint. In many of the paintings, the underlying photograph shows through in some areas, or the frame of the photograph is maintained. When we began, we put aside our individual artistic pursuits in order to create this collaboration. Over the thirty years of our marriage and collaboration, we have returned to our own individual work, but our collaboration has continued. One feeds the other.”

Bezalel-Levy is the combined signature of Chaim Bezalel and Yonah Ben Levy, a husband and wife team, who have been collaborating since 1990. Their mixed media paintings combine photography and oils, oil pastels, or acrylics on rice paper, canvas, or linen. Both artists have an abiding interest in history, personal, regional, national, and inter-cultural relations. In 2019, the artists exhibited their work at the Cambridge Museum of Classical Archaeology in England, and their landscapes from America are included in various public collections. The painting *Western Edge of the Continental United States* is from the Pacific Scrolls section of their *American Scrolls* project. The Pacific Rim encompasses both the Pacific Northwest, where the artists live, and Papua, New Guinea.

**Western Edge of the Continental U.S.**  
(Cape Flattery), 2013  
Mixed media with acrylics on rice  
paper mounted on linen on board  
56 × 21 ½ in. (142,2 × 54,6 cm)  
Courtesy of the artists, Stanwood, Washington



# HILDA GREEN DEMSKY

Hilda Green Demsky was born in Pennsylvania on the Susquehanna River. Responding to a river flood that subsumed her childhood home, she focused her art on global waters. After graduating from Carnegie Mellon University, Carnegie Institute of Technology, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, with a degree in fine art and design, she moved to New York City, where her first job was at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. She then taught art on the Lower East Side before finding a studio and earning a master's degree in art education at Hunter College, New York City.

Faced with gender discrimination in the art world in the 1960s and determined to show and sell her work, Demsky found success by signing her paintings with her husband's name. Her passion for recognizing women artists led to a Christa McAuliffe Fellowship, which enabled her to teach students about contemporary women artists. She was also awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to the Netherlands and a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship to paint in Italy, in addition to exhibitions from China to Greece to Hungary. Working in both representational and abstract styles, she paints in oil on canvas, Mylar, and metals.

**House by the Sea, 2010**  
Oil on canvas  
21 × 26 in. (53,3 × 66 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist, Westchester, New York





# CATHERINE EATON SKINNER



**Pale Green Light Rising from the River**  
 (Passages Triptych), 2015  
 Photo-encaustic oil stick,  
 Moab Entrada paper on wood panels  
 72 × 72 in. (182,8 × 182,8 cm)  
 Courtesy of the artist, Seattle, Washington



Catherine Eaton Skinner maintains studios in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and Seattle, Washington, each of which presents different landscapes and cultures. A multidisciplinary conceptual artist, she uses paint, encaustic wax, glass, sculpture, printmaking, bookmaking, and photography to create her work. She received her Bachelor of Arts and Sciences degree from Stanford University in California, studying art under Nathan Oliveira and Frank Lobdell. In her work, natural materials are combined in juxtaposition to each other: beeswax, damar resin, oil paint and pigments, stones, old cloth, found objects, fabric and threads, wood, lead, steel, and copper wire. Collected antique books and papers are overlaid with wax and paint. Skinner uses prints and monotypes of her photographs and drawings on handmade Himalayan papers, Mylar, and silk tissue.

Travel and research underlie her work, which offers viewers a perspective on the energy and fundamental properties of the natural and industrial worlds. She explores the balance of positive and negative forces extending through universal concepts and the equilibrium that is paramount to humanity's survival. Skinner's paintings and sculpture are included in many international private and public collections, including the Museum of Northwest Art, La Conner, Washington; the Tacoma Art Museum, Washington; and the Museum of Encaustic Art, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

# BARBARA FOX

“I crave beauty, peace, and order, and paint subjects and settings that reflect this idyllic view of the world. My working method pays homage to the Dutch masters and the tradition of academic painting. I work from life and photographs. Watercolor and oil paintings begin as detailed drawings to which a number of glazes are applied, building deep values and rich colors. The process of completing these works may take many weeks, so I usually have several paintings in process at once. Creating artwork is both a meditation and an adventure that opens my eyes to our beautiful world.”

Barbara Fox is a painter recognized for still life and floral subjects in watercolor and oil. Her award-winning paintings have been featured in solo and group exhibitions in museums and galleries throughout the world, including at the Phillips Museum of Art in Lancaster, Pennsylvania; the Neville Museum in Green Bay, Wisconsin; and the Museum of Modern Art in Barcelona, Spain. Fox’s work has been published in three editions of the watercolor publication *Splash: the Best of Watercolor Painting*, and she was featured in *American Artist* and *Watercolor Magic* magazines. She leads watercolor workshops around the country, teaching her method of layering washes and painting details. Fox also works as an illustrator, and a designer for the United States Mint.

**Waves, 2017**

Oil on linen and panel

From left to right and top to bottom: #2, #6, #8, #10, #11, #13, #14, #15, #16

Each: 7 × 7 in. (17,8 × 17,8 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Little Valley, New York



# MELISSA MAHONEY

“I find the Pacific Ocean both calming and turbulent; I’m drawn to all of its energies. It displays a range of colors: from indigo and dark teal at its depth to bright turquoise and blue when the waves are cresting. Its colors and force of nature are captivating to me.”

Melissa Mahoney received her formal training at the University of Georgia, Athens, majoring in graphic design and minoring in fine art. She would also study art in Tuscany, Italy, as part of the university graduate program, where she studied hand-lettering and calligraphy. The brushwork skills she developed in Italy have worked their way into her abstract approach to painting. Starting as a photorealist painter, she transitioned to abstraction, moving further away from the subject and working with only color, shape, form, and texture.

Paintings like *Pacific Rising*, from her *Vortices* series, arose from her deep interest in vortices and the powerful currents that surround them. These paintings are intended to convey a sense of motion. Mahoney fills the canvas with paint, dyes, metal leaf, enamel, and modeling paste, utilizing color with shades of dark and light. The completed work expresses a dynamic force.

**Pacific Rising, 2015**  
Acrylic, enamel, and foil leaf on wood (birch and poplar) panel  
36 × 36 in. (91,4 × 91,4 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist, Palo Alto, California



## BOBBIE RICH

“*Aquamarine* is the first painting I created in my *Sea Gems* series—a series of entrancing jellyfish canvases, inspired by the magnificent Monterey Bay Aquarium tanks in California. The sea backgrounds are flush to the cradled wood panel or stretched canvas. Iridescent brush strokes are visible. The jellyfish are slightly raised with a super slick, shiny finish. Crystal formations flourish in the jellyfish paint. The art captures and reflects light in the most beautiful way. The ocean glistens, while the jellyfish ebb and flow with the ever-shifting light.”

Bobbie Rich is a full-time artist and art educator who searches for new inspiration during her global travels. She moved to the West Coast to study art at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. Over a decade later, private collections in cities across North America, Europe, the Middle East, and Indonesia feature her work. Rich shares her passion for art with the public, nonprofits, and a broad spectrum of students.

**Aquamarine, 2018**  
Mixed media  
24 × 18 in. (61 × 45,7 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist, Los Angeles, California





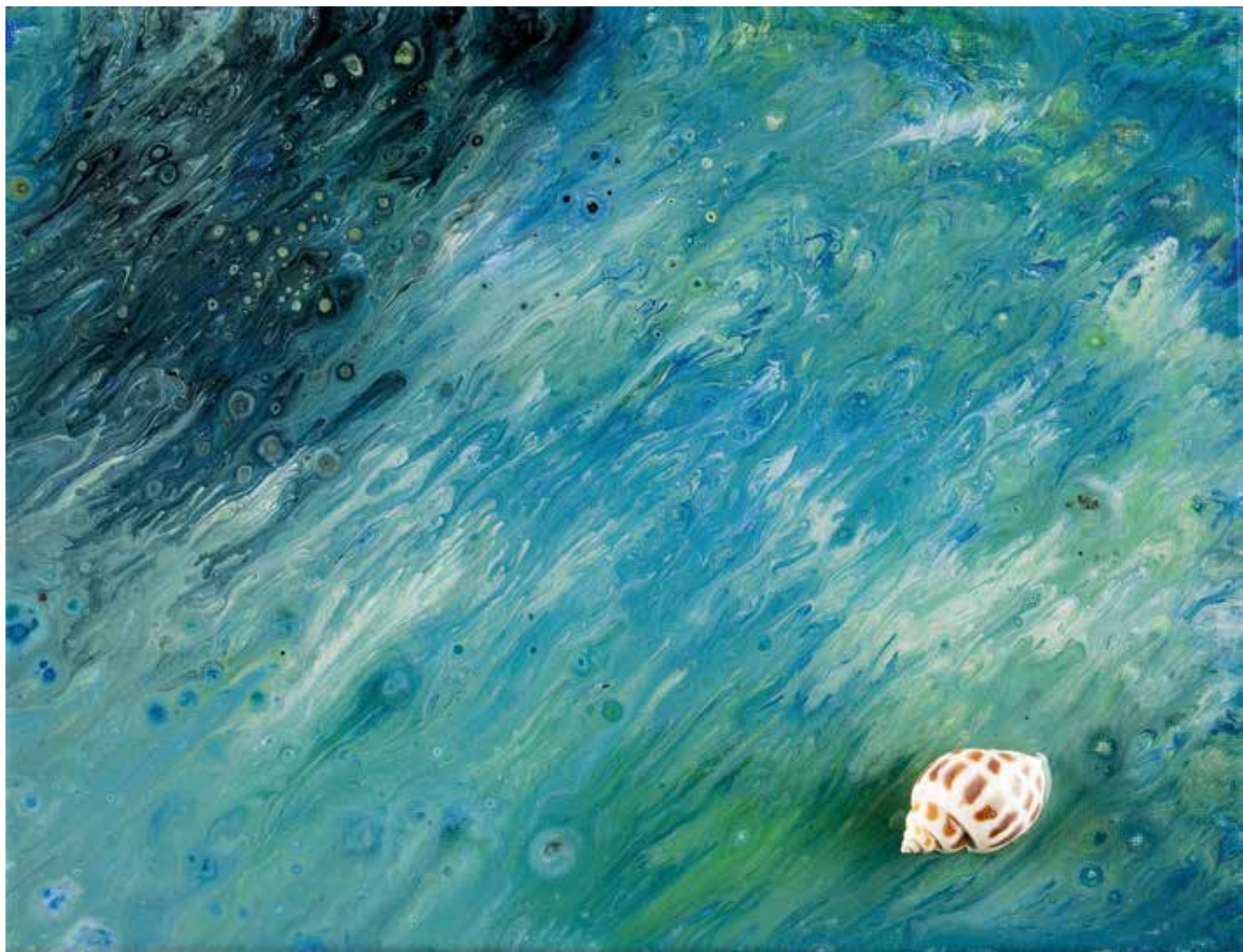
## JOY WILLIAMS

“While he was living on Captiva Island, Robert Rauschenberg told me his mission was to ‘ennoble the ordinary.’ Our conversation inspired me to crystalize the message of my own work. My objective is to offer an aesthetic of flowing ‘waves of joy’ in contrast to the angst of modern life. The abstract combines I create speak to all peoples. They can transcend the boundaries of race, gender, class, faith, and nationality.”

Joy Williams was born in a small Midwestern city overlooking the Mississippi River. Prior to becoming a full-time artist and art instructor, Williams completed an internship with the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), its mission to protect World Heritage sites. Her formal training included college and post-graduate work in Wisconsin, New York, and Florida. Since 2001, Williams has made her home in Fort Myers, Florida.

For Williams’ most recent series, the worldwide need for clean water inspired her. In *In the Straits*, she incorporates a real shell to focus the viewer’s attention on the need for clean oceans. Most of the pieces in this series illustrate shallow tidal pools or estuaries, but *In the Straits* portrays the rapid passage through deep seas.

**In the Straits, 2019**  
Acrylic paint with silicone and a *Babylonia Areolata* seashell  
10 ½ × 13 ½ × 2 ¼ in. (26,7 × 34,3 × 5,7 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist, Fort Myers, Florida



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

### **Washington**

Welmoed Laanstra, Curator  
Jamie Arbolino, Registrar  
Tabitha Brackens, Managing Editor  
Tori See, Editor  
Megan Pannone, Editor  
Amanda Brooks, Imaging Manager

### **Port Moresby**

#### *General Services*

Larry Dumlao, General Services Officer  
Gerald McDaniels, Installation Supervisor  
Keith Knaru, Customs and Shipping Assistant

#### *Facilities*

Michael Harness, Facilities Manager  
Joseph Natera, LES Supervisor  
Gabriel Madaka, Carpenter  
Shane Arua, Carpenter

#### *Public Affairs*

Chad Morris, Public Affairs Officer  
Natasha Bodger, Cultural Affairs Assistant

### **Vienna**

Nathalie Mayer, Graphic Designer

### **Manila**

Global Publishing Solutions, Printing/ Impression

