



ART IN
EMBASSIES
EXHIBITION

UNITED STATES
EMBASSY
ACCRA

Cover:
Sandra Lauterbach
Faience Nouvelle, 2016
Textiles, 37 × 25 in. (94 × 63,5 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Los Angeles, California

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 in the 1950s and a decade later President John F. Kennedy formalized it, naming the program's first director. Now with over 200 venues, AIE curates exhibitions for the representational spaces of all U.S. Ambassadors' residences and new embassies 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 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

This exhibition at the Residence of the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Ghana seeks to embody the goals of the Art in Embassies program—to create cross-cultural dialogue and mutual understanding through the visual arts. These pieces reflect the importance Americans and Ghanaians attach to our shared history and common values.

The Atlantic Ocean joins our two countries, initially separating, then connecting people. Several of the works feature water—from the *Cape Coast Castle Sea View* by retired diplomat Brooks Anne Robinson to the vibrant *I've known Rivers Blue* by United States- and Ghana-based artist Arnold Sobers that evokes the Hudson River of my childhood. Robinson's other photos depict Ghana's charms, often found along a path where you may need a guide, or behind walls. However, hidden places can also mask horrors, as the haunting 'door of no return' of Cape Coast Castle reminds us. Historically, this doorway is where an untold number of enslaved people were led—to be loaded on to ships and experience the last moments in their homeland.

Ghana is known for its rich biodiversity, a treasure we need to preserve for future generations. Fellow Brown alumnus Dan Gottsegen's shimmering water and soothing forest scenes *Persistence of Memory* and *Backwoods 5: Summer Light* remind me of that treasure and the places in my memories. Takoradi-based artist Kobina Nyarko's paintings, *Fish Galaxy I* and *Blue Fish*, also highlight Ghana's natural riches and the environmental menace of marine plastics. I first noticed his work during my 1997–2001 posting in Ghana and admired his refined style.

Diplomacy is about people, as we see in Sobers's exquisite detailed portraits *Kenya Girl* and *Bliss* and also in Los Angeles-based Synthia Saint James's powerful *Resilience* and *Women Lifting their Voices*. Saint James's themes of persistence and empowerment resonate in both countries. Finally, the playful colors of Californian Sandra Lauterbach's textiles and my grade school classmate Amie Ziner's bright iPad sketch show there is room in this world for both the traditional and modern to coexist. Even as the world becomes increasingly dependent on technology, there is still an important place for serendipity in our lives.

I hope you are as inspired by this exhibition as I am. I greatly appreciate the artists for their generosity in lending their beautiful works, as well as to Art in Embassies for assembling the art and to my colleagues at Embassy Accra for their assistance in installing the exhibition.

Ambassador Stephanie S. Sullivan

*Accra, Ghana
March 2021*

Dan Gottsegen (1958–)



Backwoods 5: Summer Light, 2016
Oil on canvas, 32 × 32 in. (81,3 × 81,3 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Hartland, Vermont

Dan Gottsegen lives and works in rural Vermont. His work is influenced by his ongoing wilderness explorations and meditations. In the *Die Wanderungen* series, he combines and overlaps images improvisationally. Said one curator, “Gottsegen develops a composition that allows for combining and compressing different moments, in the way that the mind wanders when walking in the woods.” Reviewers have called his work poignant, meditative, and emotionally powerful.

Gottsegen has exhibited nationally including solo shows at the Feick Gallery at Green Mountain College in Vermont; Karpeles Museum in Santa Barbara, California; and Prince Street Gallery in New York, among others. He has been in numerous group exhibitions. He also has done a number of large-scale public art projects including windscreens for the Westminster, Colorado, Light Rail Station; the South Burlington, Vermont, City Center Gateway; and work at the Vermont State Forensics Lab, a piece which combines Gottsegen’s painting, a public garden, and outside glass work.



Persistence of Memory, 2016. Oil on canvas, 48 × 54 in. (121,9 × 137,2 cm). Courtesy of the artist, Hartland, Vermont

Sandra E. Lauterbach (1952–)

“Fabric has always been a part of my world. My family was in the textile business for over four generations—from the Austrian Hungarian Empire to Poland and finally in the United States. That may help explain why I feel most comfortable expressing myself with textiles...

The challenge for me in creating my current series of freeform abstract pieces is in taking diverse patterned fabric pieces and creating a dialogue between them that results in a harmonious whole. I start by putting one piece and then another on my design wall and see if they communicate. Is there a dialogue between one piece and another? A spark? Color, shape, pattern print, and scale are all factors I consider in addition to other design elements. I seek to create depth and movement in my pieces.

I view fabric pieces as my paint. The stitching helps to interconnect the forms by creating texture and marks on my ‘canvas’—similar to a painter using brush strokes to create marks in their paintings. My work marries the traditional and historical technique of stitching with contemporary abstract art.”

Sandra E. Lauterbach is a contemporary mixed-media artist with a studio in Los Angeles, California. She initially attended Pomona College, where she studied art before earning a Juris Doctor degree at the University of Southern California Law School. When she decided to leave the practice of law and focus on her art, she attended a number of art schools, including Otis College of Art and Design in Los Angeles.

Cover:

Faience Nouvelle, 2016

Textiles, 37 × 25 in. (94 × 63,5 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Los Angeles, California

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Serendipity, 2014

Textiles and metal springs, 37 × 25 in. (94 × 63,5 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Los Angeles, California



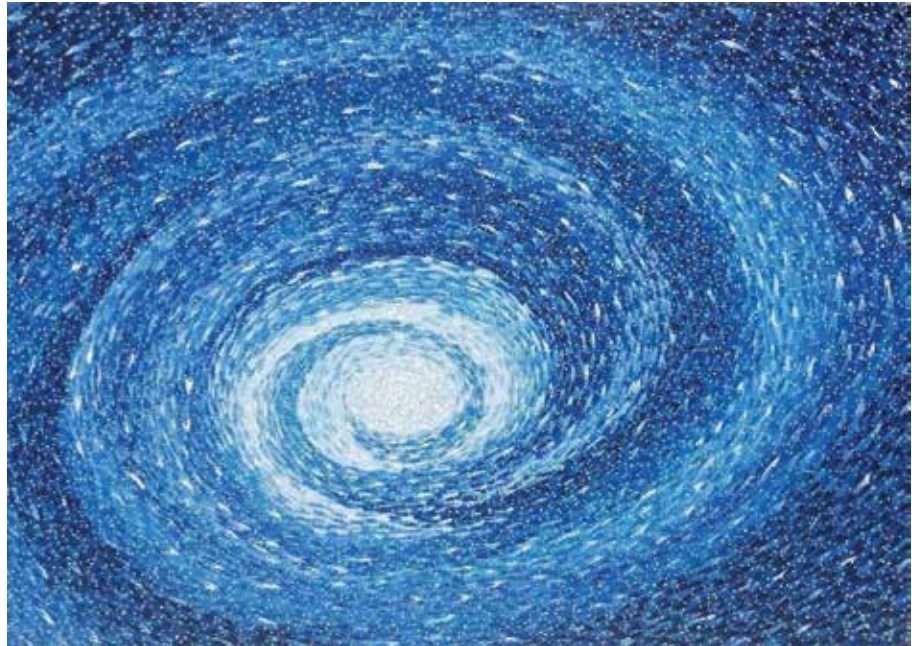


Blue Fish, 309. Acrylic on egg shell paper, 20 ½ × 24 ¼ in. (142 x 182 cm). Courtesy of Cross Gallery, Accra, Ghana

Kobina Nyarko (1972–)

Much of Kobina Nyarko's work explores the symbolism of fish displayed in a signature abstract form. His work is considered to be illustrative of third-generation Ghanaian artists who freely express themselves in a modern world without succumbing to restrictive notions of African art.

Born in Takoradi in Ghana's Western Region, Nyarko obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree in industrial art from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. Prior to university, he participated in the First National Exhibition of Unknown Artists, organized by Ghana's National Commission on Culture, and the *Feeling Africa with Us* exhibition at the Minsk Art Gallery in Belarus. He has also shown his work across the United States and Europe. Nyarko is a member of the Foundation for Contemporary Art in Ghana, and his paintings can currently be found in a number of public and private venues. Beyond his studio, he paints wall murals and large-scale canvases.



Fish Galaxy I, 2014
Acrylic on canvas,
39 × 55 in. (99,1 × 139,7 cm)
Courtesy of Cross Gallery,
Accra, Ghana

Brooks Anne Robinson

“This collection of photographs taken in Ghana is a meditation on the trans-Atlantic slave trade. We know quite a bit about that terrible chapter in human history thanks to the work of historians and archaeologists. But still, there remain many unanswered questions around what precisely happened back then, including who suffered and how they suffered. Also, we are still considering the consequences for us today, on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. With these few images, my aim is to hint at the many things that will always remain unknown, the secrets that will remain buried—in the sea, in the soil, in the sands of time—and the faces we shall never see.”

Brooks Anne Robinson is an accomplished photographer based in Accra, Ghana, and Washington, D.C.

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(top left) Audrey's Wall, University of Ghana, 9/2014, 2014
(top right) Sea View, Cape Coast Castle, 11/2015, 2014
(bottom left) Stairway with Stone, University of Ghana, 1/2016, 2016
(bottom right) Arched Doorway, Cape Coast Castle, 11/2015, 2015
Photographs, 8 × 8 in. (20,3 × 20,3cm) each of four
Courtesy of the artist, Washington, D.C.



Synthia Saint James (1949–)

Internationally recognized self-taught artist and author Cynthia Saint James was born in Los Angeles, California. Her professional career began in New York City in 1969, and her work has been used on the covers of over fifty books, including those by Alice Walker, Terry McMillan, Iyanla Vanzant, and Julia Boyd. Since 1990, Saint James has completed commissions for major organizations, corporations, and individual collectors, including the House of Seagram, the Los Angeles Women's Foundation, UNICEF, and the Girl Scouts of America's 85th Anniversary commemoration. The United States Postal Service commissioned the artist to create the first Kwanzaa Stamp, released in 1997.





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Resilience, 2018

Giclée on canvas, 34 × 24 in. (86,4 × 61 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Los Angeles, California

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Women Lifting their Voices, 2014

Giclée on canvas, 34 × 24 in. (86,4 × 61 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Los Angeles, California

Arnold Sobers (1956–)

According to Arnold Sobers, the creative process is a cocktail of inspiration, time, effort, and love. It involves a detailed study of both human and photographic subjects. An original drawing can take anywhere from several days to several months of continuous work to complete. Each stroke of the pencil adds life to the image.

Sobers started painting and drawing at the urging of his wife. Since then, he has sold and exhibited his works all over the world, including Senegal, Mali, Indonesia, Belgium, the Netherlands, and the United States (New York City). His work reflects his love of the diverse people and cultures he has experienced throughout his life. In each piece, Sobers captures the essential uniqueness of the individual as well as his or her emotion. Each work is an act of love of humanity and of God.

Sobers was born and raised in New York City. After obtaining a master's degree in business administration, he worked for Citibank and later volunteered with the United States Peace Corps, serving at the Central Bank of the Philippines on a World Bank Rural Credit Project. Returning from Manila at the end of his Peace Corps tour, Sobers joined the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Washington, D.C., where he met his wife, Sharon Cromer. Sobers, his wife, and their two daughters have lived in Pakistan, Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal, Indonesia, Ghana, Nigeria, and Tanzania. They moved to Ghana for the second time in 2017, where his wife currently serves as the Mission Director of USAID/Ghana.



I've Known Rivers Blue, undated
Mixed media incorporating carved wood,
impasto paste, and oil paint
79 1/2 x 43 7/16 in. (202 x 110,3 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, New York, New York



Bliss, 2002
Graphite gyclee on bristol paper
25 ½ × 31 in. (64,8 × 78,7 cm)
Courtesy of the artist,
New York, New York



Kenya Girl, 1996
Graphite gyclee on water color paper
25 × 26 in. (63,5 × 66 cm)
Courtesy of the artist,
New York, New York

Amie Ziner

“I’m primarily an oil painter working on themes of sexual expression, repression and marginalization; I use the metaphor of plants, specifically weeds, to extrapolate from the physical world the shape of our intercourse with the environment.

The meaning inherent in plants; their lore, history of use and our perceptions of their value; these are graphical representations of the reasons for feminism. I explore these meanings as they relate to both males and females in my series, *Women and Weeds*, to female domesticated animals in *She Farms*, and in my new series, *Men and Flowers*.

Large format oil paintings weave together bodies and botanicals, using all the ways in which we view plants—as sources of beauty, ugliness, sustenance, healing and hurting, and ultimately, as reflections of the ways we see ourselves.”

Amie Ziner is an illustrator and artist based in Milford, Connecticut.

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Untitled, c. 2015

iPad 2 with NomadBrush, Procreate app, digital print

18 × 14 in. (45,7 × 35,6 cm) framed

Courtesy of the artist, Milford, Connecticut



Acknowledgments

Washington, D.C.

Claire D'Alba, Curator

Jamie Arbolino, Registrar

Tabitha Brackens, Managing Editor

Tori See, Editor

Megan Pannone, Editor

Amanda Brooks, Imaging Manager

Accra

Roberto Quiroz, Public Affairs Officer

Courage Ahiati, Digital Engagement Coordinator

Kenneth White, Professional Associate

Vienna

Nathalie Mayer, Graphic Design

Manila

Global Publishing Solutions, Printing



Published by Art in Embassies
U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C.
March 2021
<https://art.state.gov/>