

United  
States  
Embassy  
Dili

Art in  
Embassies  
Exhibition



INU BERE

**A harmony of Atauro in a landscape of Tais, 2013**

Acrylic on canvas, 70 1/6 x 55 1/8 in. (178 x 140 cm)

Courtesy of the artist and Projeto Montanha, Kabas Fatin, Aileu, Timor-Leste

# 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 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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# Welcome

Timor-Leste is among the unique countries in the world. A Portuguese colony for nearly 400 years, the relatively small national territory comprises a fascinating blend of ethnicities, languages, and terrain. The Timorese remained fiercely devoted to an independent state after the Portuguese left in 1975 and Indonesia occupied the country for twenty-four years. The Timorese people finally achieved full sovereignty over their country in 2002, that freedom forged through years of conflict and sacrifice.

For this exhibition, my wife Alexandra and I chose American artists from diverse backgrounds to echo the diversity here in Timor-Leste. Each of their works also reflects mastery of their craft, in recognition of a natural Timorese affinity for art and design in all forms.

We are grateful to two Timorese artists, Inu Bere and his younger brother Catarino Bere de Jesus, whose volume of work belies their youth and symbolizes what Inu eloquently described as a new country with one foot in its traditional past while also eager to embrace what the future has to offer. Inu's work also touches on the beauty of the land and incorporates the famous Timorese *tais* textile design, while Catarino's work captures the theme of resilience: a Timorese woman whose lined face reflects strength, experience, and dignity.

We selected works that embody both the spiritual and physical elements of Timor-Leste's identity, which integrated themes of strength and the Timorese's close relationship to the mountains and the sea. Ramona Candy's works reflect the omnipresence of the country's small sellers: fruits and vegetables, fish, meat, and other bounty of this land. Karin Tauber's *March of the Loggerheads* expands on the environmental theme, highlighting the fragility of those who depend on the land and sea. Augusta Agustsson's *Plastic Sea* reflects the human impact on the environment, which the Timorese have focused on increasingly in recent years.

Tony Abeyta's *Infinite Wisdom* captures the spiritual energy of Timor-Leste's traditional beliefs and references the Timorese affinity for animal totems, especially the crocodile, the primary character in the country's creation myth. Finally, Alisa Banks's *Chocot* reflects a sense of optimism and dynamism through light and texture, which resonates with the viewer as a metaphor for Timor-Leste's youthful population and institutions, all characterized by hope and striving for a promising future.

**Ambassador C. Kevin Blackstone and Mrs. Alexandra Blackstone**

*Dili, Timor-Leste  
January 2022*

# Ksolok Bodik Mai

Timor-Leste tama iha nasaun úniku sira iha mundu ne'e. Kolónia ida Portugés nian besik tinan 400, territóriu nasionál relativamente kiik ne'e kompostu husi mistura fasinante husi etnisidades, dalen, no rai sira. Timoroan sira ho fiar makaas tubarai metin ba estadu independente ida hafoin Portugés sira husik hela rai ne'e iha 1975 no Indonézia okupa nasaun ne'e durante tinan rua nulu resin haat. Povu Timor-Leste too ikus hetan soberania totál ba sira-nia rain iha tinan 2002, ukun rasik-an ne'e hari'i liuhusi konflitu no sakrifísiu iha tinan barak nia laran.

Ba espozisaun ida-ne'e, ha'u-nia espoza Alexandra no ha'u hili artista Amerikanu sira husi orijen oioin hodi ekoa diversidade iha Timor-Leste ne'e. Sira-nia obras ida-idak refleto mós domíniu ba sira-nia liman-fatin, atu rekoñese ema Timoroan sira-nia afinidade naturál ba arte no dezeńu iha formas hotu-hotu.

Ami agradese tebes ba artistas Timoroan nain rua, Inu Bere ho nia alin Catarino Bere de Jesus, ne'ebé nia volume servisu nega tiha sira-nia joventude no simboliza saida maka Inu ho elokuyente deskreve nu'udar nasaun foun ne'ebé ho ain ida iha ninia tempu pasadu tradisionál enkuantu iha sorin seluk hakarak mós atu hako'ak buat ne'ebé futuru iha atu oferese. Inu nia obra mós hatudu rai ne'e nia furak no hatama dezeńu hena tais famozu Timor nian, no Catarino nia obra kaptura tema reziliénsia: feto Timoroan ida ne'ebé ninia oin namkurut refleto forsa, esperiénsia no dignidade.

Ami hili ona obras hirak ne'ebé mak inklui elementu espirituál no fíziku husi Timor-Leste nia identidade, ne'ebé mak hatama tema sira hanesan forsa ka kbiit no ema Timoroan sira-nia relasaun besik ho foho sira no tasi. Ramona Candy nia obras refleto prezensa boot husi nasaun ne'e nia vendedór kiik sira: aifuan no modo, ikan, naan, no rikusoin barak rai ne'e nian. Karin Tauber nia obra *March of the Loggerheads* – Lenuk sira-nia Marxa – haluan liután tema kona-ba meu ambiente, destaka kona-ba frajilidade husi ema sira ne'ebé maka moris depende ba rai no tasi. Agusta Agustsson nia obra *Plastic Sea* – Tasi Plástiku – refleto impaktu umanu nian ba iha meu ambiente, ne'ebé maka Timoroan foku liután ba iha tinan hirak ikus ne'e.

Tony Abeyta nia obra *Infinite Wisdom* – Matenek Rohan Laek - kaptura enerjia espirituál husi Timor-Leste nia fiar tradisionál no referénsias ba Timor-Leste nia afinidade ba toten balada fuik, liuliu lafaek, karáker prinsipál iha mitu kriaun paíz ne'e nian. Ikus liu, Alisa Bank nia obra *Chocot* refleto sentidu otimizmu no dinamizasaun liuhusi naroman no textura, ne'ebé ba haree-nain sira signifika metáfora ida ba Timor-Leste nia populasaun no instituisaun sira ne'ebé maka sei joven hela, hirak ne'e hotu karakterizadu ho esperansa no hakaas-an atu hetan futuru ida ne'ebé di'ak liután.

**Embaixador C. Kevin Blackstone no Sra. Alexandra Blackstone**

*Dili, Timor-Leste  
Janeiru 2022*

# Tony Abeyta

(born 1965)

Tony Abeyta uses bold colors representative of the light, earth, and sky of his home state of New Mexico. His mixed-media paintings sometimes include sand, gold leaf, and encaustic wax to show the importance of Native American religious and cultural figures without explicitly depicting them.<sup>1</sup> A departure from his usual process, *Infinite Wisdom* was created as part of a collaboration between Art in Embassies and the Institute of American Indian Arts in an effort to highlight the diversity and vitality of Native American contemporary art. Hand-printed in monochromatic tones of black and white with overlays of orange, *Infinite Wisdom* contains several iconographic examples of his Navajo roots. The subject of the print is a horned toad, often referred to by the Navajo people as the keeper of all wisdom, both ancient and prophetic. The smaller, younger animal follows his elder through a dream realm filled with stars. Two eagles, some scattering seeds, and an arrowhead serve as protection for the horned toads.<sup>2</sup>

Abeyta graduated from New York University and received an honorary doctorate from the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Along with the New Mexico Governor's Excellence in the Arts award, he is recognized as a Native treasure by the Museum of Indian Arts & Culture, Santa Fe. His work is part of the collections of the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C.; the Heard Museum, Phoenix; and the Autry Museum, Los Angeles.<sup>3</sup>

## **Infinite Wisdom**, 2015

Hand-printed multi-photo-plate lithograph

36 ¾ x 29 in. (93,3 x 73,7 cm)

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

In collaboration with the Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe, New Mexico

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# Agusta Agustsson

(born 1952)

With needle and thread, Agusta Agustsson crafts textiles reflecting the impact of climate change and pollution. She places acrylic paint on a gelatin plate before printing the fabric using plants, store packaging, or other organic materials. After building up several layers, she rearranges the dried fabric and sews it into abstract compositions.<sup>4</sup> Multi-patterned pink and green fabrics in *Plastic Sea (Pink and Green)* signify discarded trash like straws, plastic bags, and plastic bottles floating in the ocean. Designed to elicit an emotional response, Agustsson's sustainable works are meant to encourage viewers to save the planet from environmental destruction.

Although she earned a painting degree from the Massachusetts College of Art and Design, Boston, Agustsson pursued quilting and worked as an art teacher for twenty-two years. Additionally, she was a member of the Graphic Workshop, a student-run collective that produced hundreds of silkscreen posters commenting on war, racism, and global warming from 1970 to 1992. Her textiles have been exhibited throughout New England, namely at the DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum, Lincoln, Massachusetts; the Bristol Art Museum, Rhode Island; and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, which acquired one of her works.<sup>5</sup>



**Plastic Sea (Pink and Green), 2019**

Hand-printed cotton, pieced and machine stitched

38 x 61 1/2 in. (96,5 x 156,2 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Melrose, Massachusetts

# Alisa Banks

(born 1961)

Visual artist Alisa Banks addresses identity politics through her sculptural books, textile collage, and mixed media. Incorporating traditional craft techniques, the artist stitches various found materials—paper, photos, hair, and fragile plants—in her abstract works.<sup>6</sup> *Chocot* is a colorful collage: vertical bands containing watercolor, acrylic paint, charcoal drawing, embroidery, and pieces of the artist's hair are unified in a rectangular format.

Banks received a Bachelor of Science degree in medical technology from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, and a Master of Fine Arts degree in art from Texas Woman's University, Denton.<sup>7</sup> She has exhibited throughout North America and Europe, including at the Foundry Gallery, London, and the African American Museum, Dallas. Her work is included in the permanent collections of the Smithsonian Institute and the Library of Congress, both in Washington, D.C., and the New York Public Library.

**Chocot**, 2007

Mixed media

26 x 26 in. (66 x 66 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Dallas

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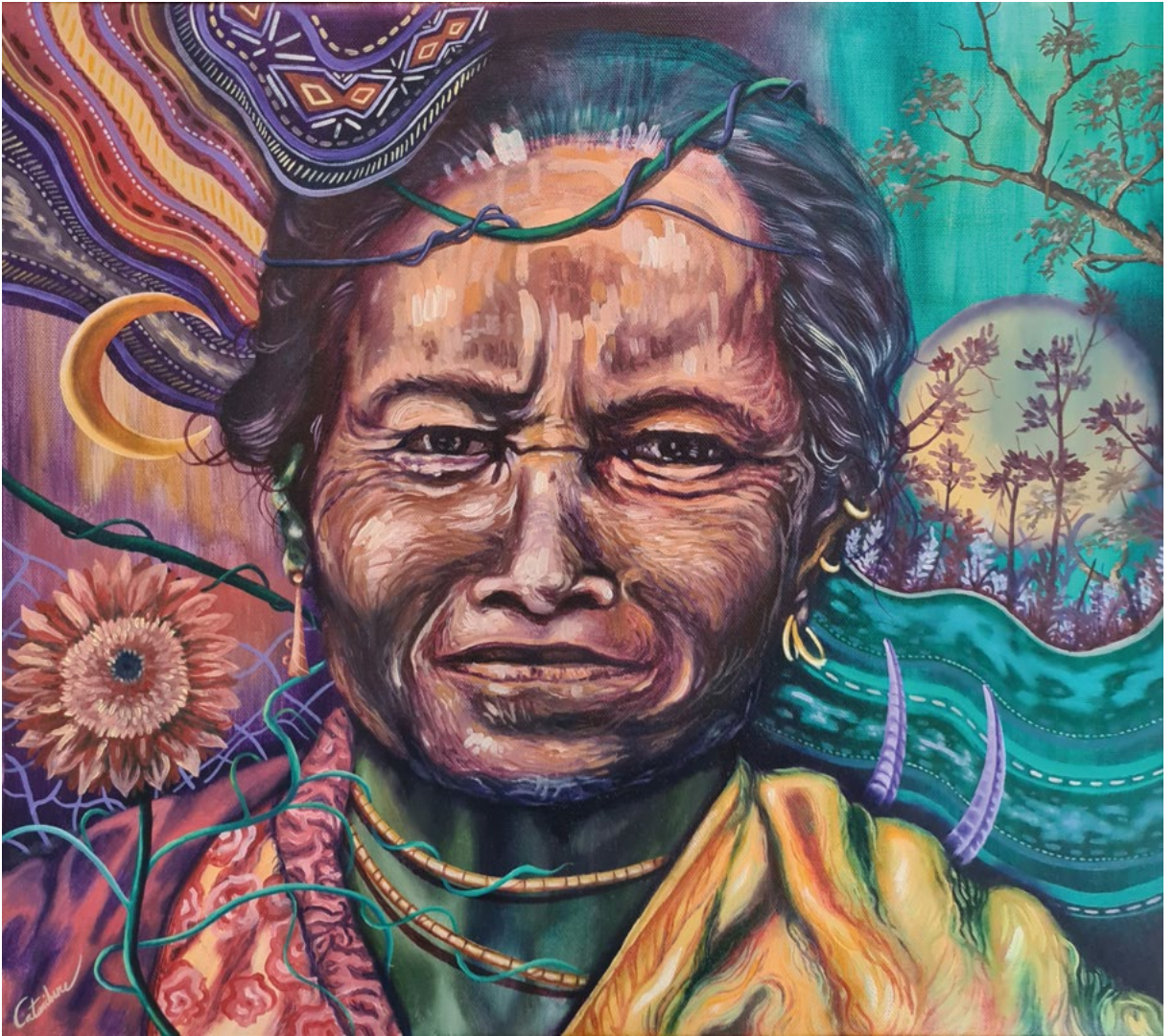


# Catarino Bere de Jesus

(born 2000)

Catarino Bere de Jesus has been passionate about music and the arts since his childhood in Aileu Vila, Timor-Leste. His mother was a fine arts teacher, inspiring him to pursue a career in the arts.<sup>8</sup> He is one of the leaders of Projeto Montanha, a non-profit organization that provides educational opportunities and community development for Timorese youth and their families, where he learned about art.<sup>9</sup>

In *The Root*, Bere pays tribute to Timorese women. Dressed in tribal jewelry and featured with a traditional tais cloth, the subject looks directly at the viewer with a slight smile. Wrinkles lining her face and eyes signify a life full of experience and wisdom, while the crescent moon on the left side and the full moon on the right indicate the passage of time. *Tais* is a form of weaving typically made for ceremonial use; its stratified design contains layers of color and texture woven in bands of varying width. For women in post-conflict Timor-Leste, it has essential goals: to help them heal from past traumas and provide employment for those who were widowed, orphaned, or estranged from their families during wartime. Those who earn a living by weaving this traditional cloth are venerated in Timorese culture, proving that women can assume positions of independence and leadership.<sup>10</sup>



**The Root, 2021**

Oil on canvas, 18 1/8 x 20 1/2 in. (46 x 52 cm)

Courtesy of the artist and Projeto Montanha, Kabas Fatin, Aileu, Timor-Leste

# Inu Bere

(born 1997)

Painter, metal engraver, and woodcutter Inu Bere is one of Timor-Leste's most prominent artists.<sup>11</sup> His paintings incorporate the ancient weaving technique of *tais*, a symbol of his country's cultural identity. *Tais* is a form of traditional weaving typically made for ceremonial use; its stratified design contains layers of color and texture woven in bands of varying width.<sup>12</sup>

*The seascape near Hera*—a village within the municipality of Dili—features an untouched tropical paradise. In *A harmony of Atauro in a landscape of Tais*, Bere takes inspiration from Dutch impressionist Vincent van Gogh, Spanish surrealist Salvador Dali, and his cousin Pelle Pereira.<sup>13</sup> Created after his father died, the painting shows a pristine scene on Atauro Island, a small island north of Dili, where several birds are perched on a palm tree entwined with sunflowers. This avian assemblage, which includes a pair of crows, represents death separating a father and his children, while the fleet of boats gliding in the ocean—closely resembling *tais* cloth designs—indicates that despite tragedy and suffering, life goes on.<sup>14</sup>

Bere graduated with a degree in visual arts from the University of Vale do Paraíba, São Paulo. He is currently the head of the art department at Projeto Montanha, a non-profit organization that provides educational opportunities and community development for Timorese youth and their families.<sup>15</sup> His works were exhibited at the Latin American Print Show, Londrina, Brazil; the Institute of Social Sciences, University of Brasília, Brazil; and the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum.



**A harmony of Atauro in a landscape of Tais, 2013**

Acrylic on canvas, 55 1/8 x 70 1/8 in. (140 x 178 cm)

Courtesy of the artist and Projeto Montanha, Kabas Fatin, Aileu, Timor-Leste





**The seascape near Hera, 2018**

Acrylic on canvas, 19 5/16 x 19 5/16 in. (49 x 49 cm)

Courtesy of the artist and Projeto Montanha, Kabas Fatin, Aileu, Timor-Leste

# Ramona Candy

(born 1952)

A former professional dancer, Ramona Candy brings color, movement, and texture into her choreographed mixed-media collages.<sup>16</sup> Whether experienced as a personal or collective memory, Candy's work radiates with nostalgia, history, community, and appreciation<sup>17</sup> for her Caribbean heritage, which directly inspired *Conch Shells and Starfish* and *Marigot*. Although the settings are different—*Conch Shells and Starfish* shows local fishermen peddling their freshly caught shells and starfish to three tourists, while *Marigot* features fruit sellers—both works portray vibrant seaside communities. *Pathways*, an abstract painting on three panels, is dominated by large red-orange spirals and concentric circles. The bright colors, the spiral's dizzying patterns, and the crackled effect from the paint hypnotize and enthrall the viewer.

A self-described “choreographer on canvas,” Candy is also a motivational speaker, curator, and arts administrator from New York. Her work was presented at the International African Arts Festival in 2006 and at DanceAfrica 2010 at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.<sup>18</sup> Candy has hosted art workshops for New York organizations such as the United Nations International School and the Brooklyn Public Library. She currently serves as director of the Council for the Arts at St. Joseph's College, Brooklyn.



**Marigot, 2005**

Collage on canvas

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

Courtesy of the artist, Brooklyn, New York



**Conch Shells and Starfish, 2006**

Collage on canvas

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

Courtesy of the artist, Brooklyn, New York

**Pathways, 2015**

Mixed media on canvas

Triptych: each panel 30 x 12 in. (76,2 x 30,5 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Brooklyn, New York



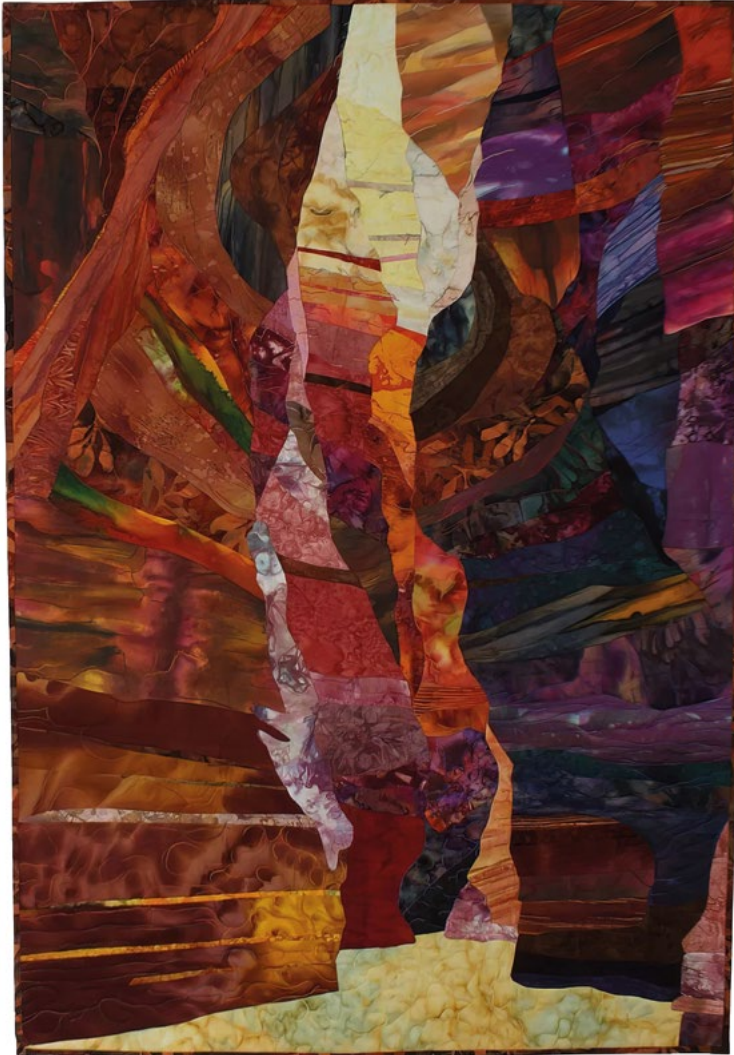
# Karin Tauber

Traditional art quilter Karin Tauber explores line, fibers, and color in her multi-layered landscape quilts.<sup>19</sup> Produced using free-motion machine quilting, each work is inspired by her travel experiences. In *March of the Loggerhead*, endangered sea turtles journey back to the ocean after nesting onshore on Fripp Island, South Carolina. The piece highlights the turtles' plight; only 200,000 loggerheads are left in existence, as they face threats such as loss of nesting habitats from coastal development or accidental capture in fishing gear.<sup>20</sup> Tauber uses traditional strip piecing appliqué, as well as an irregular-shaped outline with a fringe border, in this textile.<sup>21</sup> *TRANSLucent—California Poppies* depicts a red and orange poppy in the foreground as light diffuses through its fine leaves, creating shadows and designs. *INTERlayered Wadi Mujib II* uses rectangular and patterned fabric pieces to imitate the natural beauty of Wadi Mujib, a river canyon in Jordan comprised of aragonite crystal and gypsum layered with gravel, sand, and pebbles.<sup>22</sup>

Born and raised in Germany, Tauber settled in Virginia in 1999. She is the founder of the Hachinger Quilt Festival in Munich and the Blue Ridge Quilt Festival in Blacksburg, Virginia.<sup>23</sup> A member of the Studio Art Quilt Associates and Textile Artists of Virginia, Tauber has showcased her works at the National Quilt Museum, Paducah, Kentucky; the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; and the Taiwan International Quilt Exhibition.

**March of the Loggerhead, 2008**  
Textile  
54 x 26 in. (137,2 x 66 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist, Blacksburg, Virginia





**INTERlayered Wadi Mujib II, 2018**

Textile, hand applique, and free-motion quilting, 36 x 24 in. (91,4 x 61 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist, Blacksburg, Virginia





**TRANSlucent—California Poppies, 2016**

Textile, template method followed by free-motion machine quilting, 36 x 24 in. (91,4 x 61 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist, Blacksburg, Virginia

## Notes

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- 18 Ramona Candy.
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- 20 Karin Tauber, email to the author, March 17, 2021.
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- 22 Karin Tauber
- 23 Karin Tauber, email to the author, May 12, 2021.

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