

ART IN EMBASSIES EXHIBITION
United States Embassy Manama



Shell

SHELL RUMMEL *Remembering the Day, 2018*
Giclée reproduction on canvas, 68 ½ x 56 in. (174 x 142,2 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Alexandria, Virginia

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."

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

WELCOME

The role of art in diplomacy is to create a virtuous cycle of engagement, growth, and shared values, a dynamic that describes the United States-Bahrain partnership. In any form, art is meant to change our perspective and push us to think. At its finest, art is transcendent, moving us to a higher plane of understanding.

The exhibition you see is designed to encourage your spirit to soar. It focuses on two primary themes – abstract representation of natural scenes and America’s unique art form: jazz. Shell Rummel’s pieces, *Remembering the Day* and *Misty Knoll*, might be landscapes, seascapes, or cloud banks – contemplating them brings serenity. Eileen Olson’s *Sail at Daybreak* shows a stylized classic seashore montage familiar to us all, and your imagination fills in the details. Soo Chang’s *Stored Memories* and Carol Ryan’s *Native Truth* could well be companion pieces, with their exquisite use of color and geometric design creating a palette upon which we project our thoughts and emotions. Claudia Cappelle’s *Living Waters* evokes the power and motion of the sea with bold brush strokes and colors.

And how can depictions of jazz players not improve your mood? James Kerr’s *Jazz on the Square* and *The Block Party* incorporate the soul and groove of the music, taking you to New Orleans’s Congo Square and Frenchmen Street. The photographs of jazz

legends Louis Armstrong and Dizzy Gillespie playing in far-flung locations while on U.S. State Department-sponsored Jazz Ambassadors programs conjure an earlier era when American superstars personally spread their music, and American values, through extended tours.

We are grateful to the artists for allowing us to display their works in our exhibition. We also thank the Louis Armstrong House Museum in Queens, New York, and the Institute of Jazz Studies at Rutgers University in New Jersey for lending the Jazz Ambassadors photographs. The State Department's Office of Art in Embassies kindly assembled the pieces, and we benefited from Imtiaz Hafiz's guidance and support.

I hope you share in the delight we feel in displaying this exhibition. Enjoy!

Ambassador Steven Bondy

*Manama, Bahrain
January 2023*

CLAUDIA CAPPELLE

“Painting, for me, is an instrument of personal transformation. It is an avenue of growth for the evolution of my spirit. This process allows for the freedom to explore new ideas and challenges in the pursuit of my visual integrity. It is an ever-evolving expression of making choices and taking risks while inviting openness for finding better solutions—trust, letting go, giving up control and preconceptions; thereby creating something greater and less contrived, often more powerful than what I had originally conceived.”¹

Born in Chicago, Claudia Cappelle's appreciation for art began at an early age with visits to the city's Art Institute. She studied at the American Academy of Art in Chicago and graduated from the University of Illinois, Chicago, with a Bachelor of Science degree in medical illustration.² She is currently enrolled in the graduate studio art program at Towson University, Maryland.



Figure 1: Living Waters, 2008

Acrylic and Caran d'Ache on canvas, 28 x 22 in. (71,1 x 55,9 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Baltimore, Maryland

SOO K. CHANG

“My paintings are a reflection of my life around me as I see and hear it. Stories are collected in my head of simple smiles [and] kindness, tragedy to everyday mundane, simple reality, and turned ... into a poetry of colors on canvas. I love the intense colors and textures achieved from the experience. The complexity is real, but visually, it’s simple. The strength and serenity of my work is real but subliminal. I want the painting to speak to the audience as if on stage and delivering a message to empower and shape us. So, my painting begins with a silence in my head, an empty room, blank canvas, and magic happens.”³

Soo K. Chang was born in South Korea and immigrated to the United States at age nine. She received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in graphic design from Bradley University, Peoria, Illinois.⁴ Her work can be found in private international collections and throughout the United States.



Figure 2: Stored Memories, 2020
Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 48 in. (121,9 x 121,9 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Darien, Illinois

JAMES P. KERR

Painter James P. Kerr's impressionist-inspired canvases capture sun-filled moments of scenic locations such as Florida, the Caribbean, New England, and North Carolina.⁵ Responding to the vibrant colors of nature, Kerr has developed a high-key palette implemented with loose, open brushwork. He primarily works with oils but has explored various media, including watercolors, graphite, pastel, and lithographs.⁶ In addition to landscapes, Kerr is also interested in exploring the human form through figurative works, portraits, and studies of human activity. His lively depictions of jazz musicians honor the resilient spirit of the New Orleans jazz community after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina.⁷



Figure 3: Jazz on the Square, 2016
Oil on linen, 43 x 53 in. (109,2 x 134,6 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Boca Raton, Florida



Figure 4: The Block Party, 2021
Oil on canvas, 38 ½ x 38 ½ in. (97,8 x 97,8 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Boca Raton, Florida

EILEEN OLSON

After a thirty-year career as a critical care registered nurse, Eileen Olson directed her longstanding passion for creative expression into becoming a full-time artist. After experimenting with different styles, she now creates large-scale, colorful abstract paintings in oil, acrylic, and pastel, aiming to distill the essence of nature into her works.⁸ The shores near her home state of Delaware continue to serve as a source of inspiration.⁹ Although Olson's art is primarily abstract, she may include representational figures, like birds, and calligraphic strokes.¹⁰ Her work has been shown in galleries across Delaware, Maryland, and Washington, D.C. She conducts art workshops, judges for art competitions, and gives demonstrations to numerous art leagues and local social groups.



Figure 5: Sail at Day Break, 2018
Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 48 in. (121,9 x 121,9 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Bethany Beach, Delaware

SHELL RUMMEL

“I want the viewer to look at my art and notice the finest of details (the lines, the nuance of colors, the play of light and the spaces in between...) To see beyond...to feel. The juxtaposition of perfect/imperfect details in nature really intrigues me and often provides the inspiration that is at the forefront of my work. Noticing and capturing this natural process in my art is what feels real and raw, and beautiful to me. I strive to honor these elements in all I create.”¹¹

With a creative career spanning nearly twenty-five years, artist and designer Shell Rummel is best known for her tranquil paintings that feature organic, fluid lines, evocative patterning, and intricate layers.¹² She prefers to work in watercolor, adding ink to highlight the juxtaposition of soft washes alongside line drawing.¹³ Her work has been acquired by private and corporate collections around the world.



Figure 6: Remembering the Day, 2018
Giclée reproduction on canvas, 68 ½ x 56 in. (174 x 142,2 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Alexandria, Virginia



Figure 7: Misty Knoll, 2018
Giclée reproduction on canvas, 68 ½ x 56 in. (174 x 142,2 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Alexandria, Virginia

CAROL RYAN

“My love is to paint. My need is to create something authentic from my soul, a painting that will touch the curiosity and complexities of people, their emotions, and their beliefs. One that inspires an ongoing dialog within.”¹⁴

Primarily self-taught, artist Carol Ryan works with acrylic paint on canvas to create color field paintings driven by balance, texture, and, most importantly, emotion.¹⁵ Her technique involves assertive color combinations and textural nuances such as drips, spattering, and structural build-up.¹⁶ Ryan’s work can be seen in galleries as well as private collections around the United States and Canada.



Figure 8: Native Truth, 2021
Acrylic on canvas, 48 x 48 in. (121,9 x 121,9 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, Chicago, Illinois

JAZZ AMBASSADORS

At the height of the Cold War, the U.S. Department of State set out to counter Soviet disinformation and improve the public image of the United States abroad through cultural diplomacy.¹⁷ Symphony orchestras and ballet dancers had previously served as State-sponsored cultural ambassadors. However, Adam Clayton Powell Jr.—the first African American elected to Congress, from New York—lobbied for jazz performers to be sent overseas as well. As a uniquely American art form based on improvisation and the blending of aspects of existing culture into something new, Powell believed that jazz could be a powerful tool for conflict intervention.¹⁸

Thus, in 1956, the Department began sending Jazz Ambassadors to countries across Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe. Renowned entertainers such as Quincy Jones, Duke Ellington, and Sarah Vaughan faced demanding schedules and exhausting journeys, but they were also met with large, exuberant audiences who had little or no exposure to jazz. Their success, perhaps paradoxically, underscored the racial inequities that those artists experienced at home while highlighting American values of creativity, freedom of expression, and innovation.¹⁹

Known for his magnetic charm, unmistakable gravelly voice, and energetic, swinging trumpet solos,²⁰ **Louis Armstrong** was an internationally beloved entertainer before embarking on a State Department-sponsored tour at the end of 1960. In fact, he had already completed an unofficial ambassadorial trip to the soon-to-be independent nation of Ghana in 1956, where he thrilled a crowd of several hundred thousand in Accra.²¹ For this State Department tour, Armstrong and his All-Stars band performed in twenty-seven cities in venues throughout Africa, breaking only to film *Paris Blues* in France. By the time they reached Egypt in January of 1961, Armstrong's group had suffered severe fatigue and tragedy after their singer Velma Middleton suffered a fatal stroke in Sierra Leone.²² The photos of his journey, however, convey only the joy of Armstrong's music and personality as he serenades his wife Lucille near the Great Sphinx of Giza and rallies a group of smiling orphans in Cairo.



Figure 9: Accra, 1956

Digital reproduction of archival print, 18 x 21 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (45,7 x 55,2 cm)
Courtesy of the Louis Armstrong House Museum, Queens, New York

ARTIN DERBALIAN



Figure 10: Cairo with wife Lucille, 1961

Digital reproduction of archival print, 18 x 21 in. (45,7 x 53,3 cm)

Courtesy of the Louis Armstrong House Museum, Queens, New York

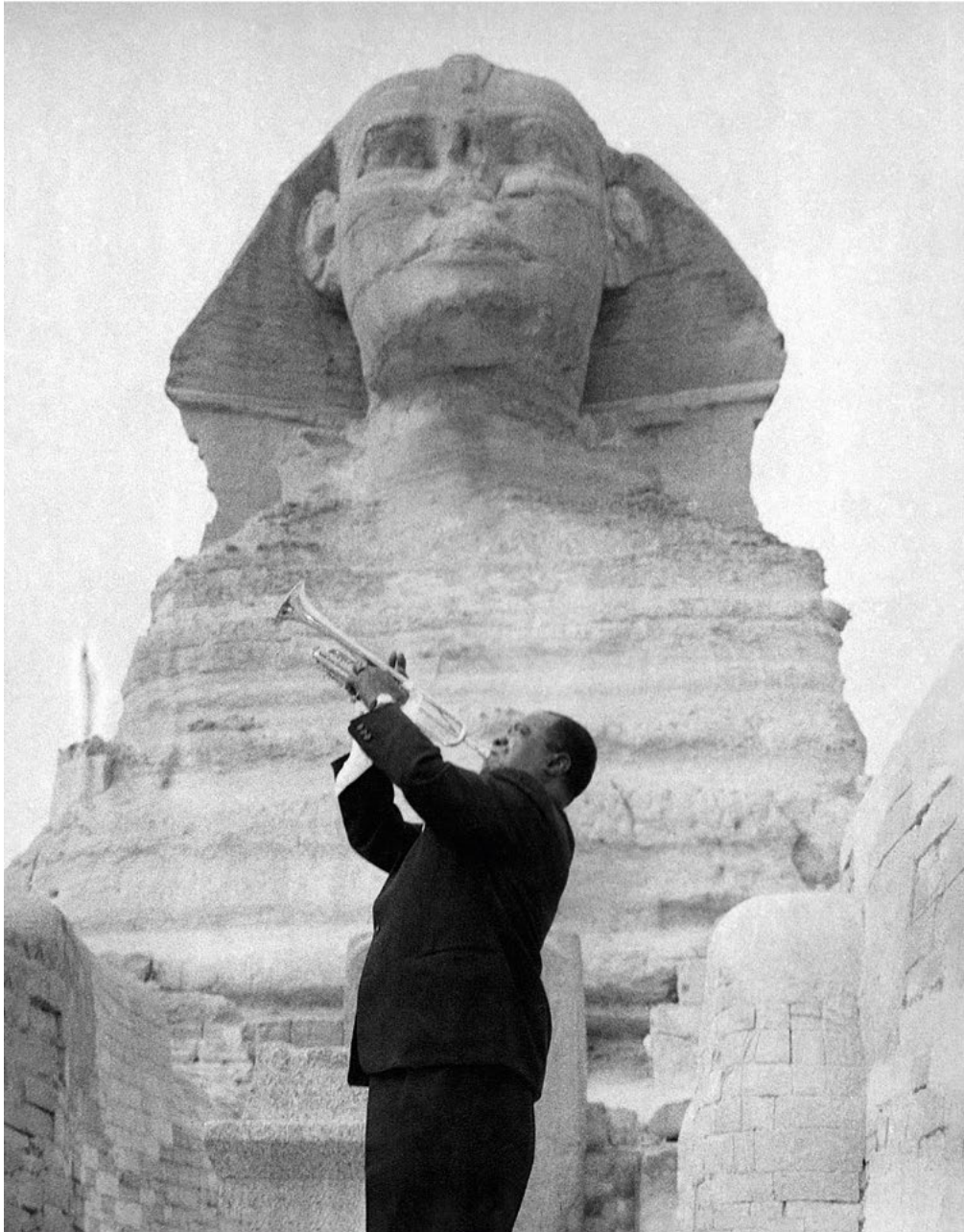


Figure 11: Cairo – Solo Sphinx, 1961

Digital reproduction of archival print, 18 x 15 ½ in. (45,7 x 39,4 cm)
Courtesy of the Louis Armstrong House Museum, Queens, New York



Figure 12: Cairo - Orphanage, 1961

Digital reproduction of archival print, 18 x 15 ½ in. (45,7 x 39,4 cm)
Courtesy of the Louis Armstrong House Museum, Queens, New York

A pioneer of bebop—a style of jazz distinguished by dissonant harmonies and contrasting rhythms—trumpet player **Dizzy Gillespie** was recruited directly by Adam Clayton Powell Jr. as the State Department's first official Jazz Ambassador. Wary of promoting American ideals of freedom abroad while he faced segregation and discrimination in the United States, Gillespie insisted his band be integrated and include both male and female performers.²³ In March of 1956, he departed for the inaugural Jazz Ambassador tour, making stops in southern Europe, the Middle East, and South Asia. A virtuosic soloist with a charismatic personality, Gillespie easily won over audiences on stage and off. Captivated by new music he encountered, he eagerly befriended local musicians, even inviting a young street performer in Dhaka (then East Pakistan, now Bangladesh) to a jam session.²⁴ Ultimately, Gillespie's tour was a triumph and convinced State Department officials of jazz's diplomatic value.²⁵



Figure 13: Dizzy Gillespie charming snake, Pakistan, 1956
Digital reproduction of archival print, 18 x 15 1/16 in. (45,7 x 39,9 cm)
Courtesy of Institute of Jazz Studies, Marshall Stearns Personal Papers,
Rutgers University Libraries, New Jersey



Figure 14: Dizzy Gillespie with band in Turkey, 1956
Digital reproduction of archival print, 15 x 18 in. (38,1 x 45,7 cm)
Courtesy of Institute of Jazz Studies, Marshall Stearns Personal Papers,
Rutgers University Libraries, New Jersey

ENDNOTES

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