



Art in Embassies

U.S. DEPARTMENT *of* STATE

Art in Embassies Exhibition: United States Embassy Luanda

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.”

www.art.state.gov

Welcome

Selecting works of art through Art in Embassies for the Ambassador's Residence in Angola was a thoughtful process. The Residence, along with the Embassy, serves as a meeting place to connect the people of the United States, Angola, and São Tomé and Príncipe, making it the perfect venue to highlight American culture and traditions. My wife, Rebecca, and I kept this in mind as we worked with Art in Embassies to select works that highlight the diversity of the United States and reflect our interconnectivity with cultures around the world.

We delight in communicating the American message to everyone we meet. Much of my time as an Ambassador has been in countries that speak a language other than English. Art serves as a bridge to link our people by translating unspoken words into universal ideas and feelings that we all understand.

With our selections, Rebecca and I hope to communicate a message that highlights our deep respect and appreciation for tradition as well as our aspirations for new possibilities that present themselves through inclusion and diversity. The artwork featuring Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, and Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King Jr. alongside Avis Collins Robinson's introspective painting of John Lewis demonstrate the power peacemakers wield in our society.

Additionally, we chose to explore the interrelatedness of humankind and the planet we inhabit. To that end, we selected neglected landscape photographic works of Elena Dorfman, the discarded everyday items-inspired work of Karen Fitzgerald, and the nature-inspired tapestries of Joan Griffin. These works push us to reflect more deeply about the planet we are blessed to live on while creatively highlighting our responsibility to care for it.

We are grateful to the talented artists who created the works and have generously allowed us to share them with you. We also thank Art in Embassies for their hard work and dedication in creating this exhibition and virtual catalog.

We hope that these works serve as your bridge to connect with the limitless potential in our world, as they have done for us.

Ambassador Tulinabo S. Mushingi
Luanda, Angola
March 2024

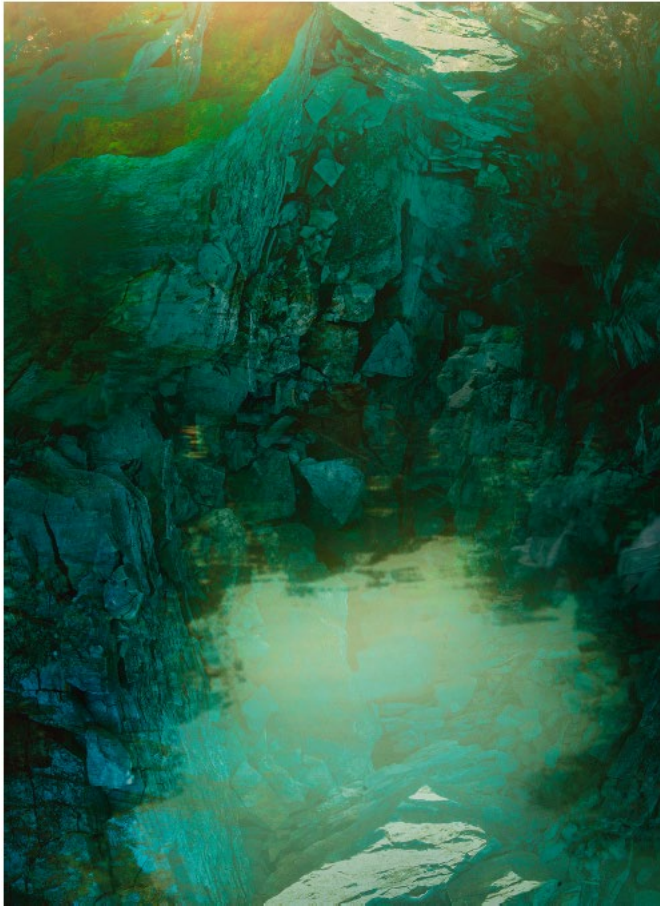
Artist Biographies

Elena Dorfman (born 1965)

Elena Dorfman uses photography, video, and tapestry to explore marginalized communities and neglected landscapes. “Identity—sexual, social, cultural, and environmental—is a root element of her work. Her artistic practice which includes recording—through photography and film—the complexity of physical settings by layering dozens, sometimes hundreds, of images, both original and archival, with maps, texts and other ephemera gathered over the course of years. Through this process, she blends nature and artifice, depicting evidence of past actions, uses, and habitation.” Her *Empire Falling* series investigates the abandoned and active rock quarries of the American Midwest. By combining images made over several years and numerous locations, this conceptual landscape work presents a contemporary view of an ancient—though evolving—landscape. Continuing in this multi-layered approach led Dorfman to create the images for her *Sublime: The L.A. River* series, which were made along the Los Angeles River. Once a hub for early Western settlers, the river has long flowed through a concrete channel to help alleviate devastating flooding and is now heavily polluted.

Dorfman regularly lectures at museums and universities, most recently teaching a Masterclass for the Zavattini Prize students of the Scuola D’Arte Cinematografica, Rome. Her work has been exhibited widely across the globe, including at the Fondazione Prada, Milan; Palazzo Strozzi, Florence, Italy; the Triennale di Milano, Milan; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Numerous institutions hold her work in their collections, including the Denver Art Museum; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the Cincinnati Art Museum; the Palm Springs Art Museum, California; the Newcomb Art Museum at Tulane University, New Orleans; and Bass Art Museum, Miami Beach, Florida. Dorfman’s *Still Lovers* series inspired the feature film *Lars and the Real Girl*.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Empire Falling 9



Year created: 2013

Format: Pigment print on Hahnemuhle metallic paper

Dimensions: 50 × 37 1/2 in. (127 × 95,3 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Los Angeles, California

Title of Artwork Displayed: Sublime L.A. 10



Year created: 2015

Format: Pigment print on metallic paper

Dimensions: 33 1/2 × 70 in. (85.1 × 177.8 cm)

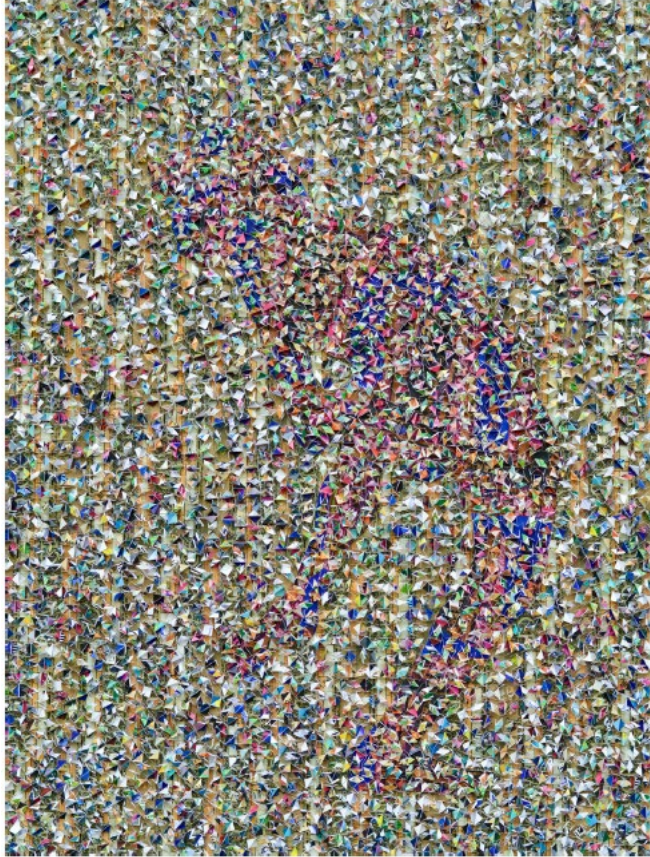
Courtesy of the artist, Los Angeles, California

Karen Fitzgerald (born 1979)

“What most compels me about being an artist is the calling for authenticity, championing merit in a disposable world, and digging in the dirt for clues to what holds us together.”

Karen Fitzgerald is a contemporary artist who repurposes everyday items into stunning compositions, breaking down various materials from junk mail to discarded clothing to explore the value and meaning of the things we own and the things we throw away. Due to the resin coating, her work has a jewel-like, reflective finish, inviting the viewer to look closer at what lies below the surface. Fitzgerald works primarily in series, focusing on subjects and materials she finds particularly relevant. Her artwork has been shown in galleries and museums across the United States.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Like Winter's Tongue Among the Shadows



Year Created: 2022

Format: Expired gallery exhibition cards

Dimensions: 48 × 36 in. (121.9 × 91.4 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Arlington, Virginia

Joan Griffin (born 1941)

Joan Griffin's nature-inspired tapestries are designed to make a distinct statement. The artist begins by creating a full-sized drawing called a cartoon that serves as a kind of roadmap for the textile. Then she meticulously interlocks warp and weft, carefully blending her specially dyed yarns, resulting in a textural work with a subtle play of light and dark.

Griffin, who began her career painting watercolors and weaving clothing, earned a Master of Fine Arts degree from Antioch University and a Bachelor of Science in art education from the

State University of New York at Buffalo. Her work has been exhibited widely across the country and is held in the permanent collections of several hospitals, corporations, and residences. She has taught at various art centers, colleges, and high schools and currently teaches weekend workshops in her Charlottesville, Virginia, studio.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Forest Edge



Year Created: 2012

Format: Handwoven tapestry

Dimensions: 24 × 50 in. (61 × 127 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Charlottesville, Virginia

Title of Artwork Displayed: Three Diamonds



Year Created: 1997

Format: Monotype

Dimensions: 36 1/4 x 22 1/4 in. (92,1 x 56,5 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Alexandria, Virginia

Avis Collins Robinson (1953-2023)

“Avis Collins Robinson is a visual artist best known for her paintings and abstract quilts that explore America’s deep-seated, often unacknowledged tensions over race, gender, oppression, and history. Her work portrays, both directly and metaphorically, the richness of African American life and the deep, layered meanings of a simple word: soul. Her portraits invite the viewer to look into her subjects’ souls and experience our common humanity. Her quilted fabric works are imbued not just with striking color and form but with history and emotion as well.

Using the rich traditions of African American quilt making as a foundation, she has developed a new visual language — sometimes with deceptive simplicity masking great complexity, sometimes so jam packed with energy that the pieces of fabric almost seem to be in motion, always overflowing with soul. Like W.E.B. Du Bois, she uses the concept of soul to convey the universal nature of the human struggle — joys and sorrows, the satisfaction of accomplishment, the comfort of family, and the persistent resonance of history.”

Robinson studied at the University of Maryland, College Park, and Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Her mixed-media portrait of Abraham Lincoln was selected in a nationwide search as the most iconic image of the former American president and is permanently installed in the lobby of Ford’s Theatre in Washington, D.C. Her work has been shown at the Studios of Key West, Florida, and the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C.

Title of Artwork Displayed: John Lewis



Year Created: 2020

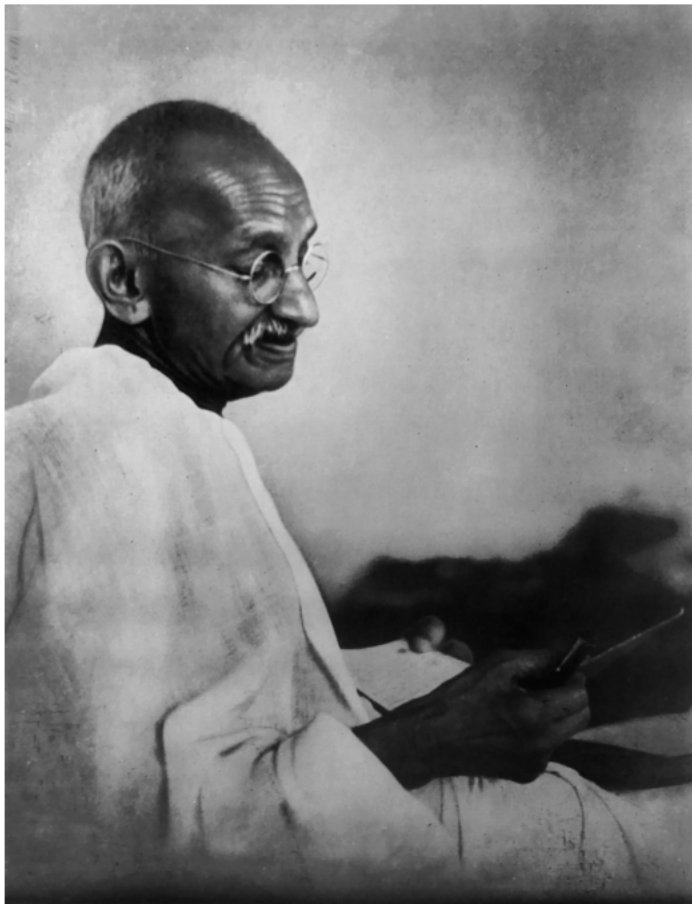
Format: Oil on canvas

Dimensions: 24 × 20 in. (61 × 50,8 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Arlington, Virginia

Anonymous/Photographer Unknown

Title of Artwork Displayed: Mahatma Gandhi



Year Created: 1940s

Format: Digital print from photograph

Dimensions: 27 x 21 1/2 in. (68,6 x 54,6 cm)

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

Title of Artwork Displayed: Nelson Mandela



Format: Digitized print from photograph

Dimensions: 20 1/2 x 18 in. (52,1 x 45,7 cm)

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

Title of Artwork Displayed: Photograph of Rosa Parks with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr



Year Created: circa 1955

Format: Photograph

Dimensions: 7 13/16 × 11 5/8 in. (19,8 × 29,5 cm)

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