



Art in Embassies

U.S. DEPARTMENT *of* STATE

Art in Embassies Exhibition: United States Embassy Port of Spain

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

On the wall in the Residence is a photo by James Van Der Zee of a Black woman dressed in beads, a feathered headdress, and a sequined top. A dancer, she poses confidently in a stately home during the Harlem Renaissance. I chose this piece because, while deeply grounded in a defining moment of African American history, her outfit, confidence, and power evoke connections between the story of America, the majesty of Carnival, and the culture of Trinidad and Tobago. Showcasing the ties that bind our nations guides the exhibition at the Residence here in Port of Spain.

The landscapes of R. Gordon Arneson, Don Resnick, and Peter Loftus serve as the foundation of this exhibition. Their depictions of American wetlands and bogs, of mangroves and winding roads, remind me of one of my favorite places in Trinidad and Tobago: the Caroni Swamp. They illustrate the power of our nations' shared natural beauty, evoking nostalgia. Their sunsets create a sense of ease and remind me of how lucky we are to call this beautiful place home. Jacob Lawrence's *Supermarket Flora* hangs in the dining room and does something similar. Its calming presence is a reminder of weekend trips to the Savannah Market, another favorite spot of mine.

I have also included two abstract pieces by Dorothy Gillespie and Joan Thorne. Gillespie's explosion of red, black, and white captures the energy that surges through Trinidad and Tobago. Thorne's use of fluorescent colors and unique shapes reminds me of the magic of Carnival, and the jagged lines that crisscross her piece evoke the meandering parade routes that envelope Port of Spain. Both works represent the pure joy of Trinbagonian culture and serve as a reminder to embrace everything this country has to offer.

I also wanted to include art that reminded me of home. Phoebe Beasley's *Fish Posse* depicts two men casting fishing rods on a boat, and her collage of Paul R. Williams buildings celebrates his impact on the city of Los Angeles. As a Black man in the 1950s and '60s, Williams overcame endless barriers to become one of our nation's most treasured architects. This work exemplifies the power of perseverance and creativity in the face of adversity. Beasley is a close friend from Los Angeles, and including her art felt like an opportunity to share a piece of home with Trinidad and Tobago.

As an exhibition, the art hanging in my residence serves as a bridge between the culture and history of the United States and Trinidad and Tobago. It is my hope that as visitors enter, they feel that connection and are reminded of the deep friendship that ties our nations.

Ambassador Candace Bond

Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago

April 2024

Artist Biographies

R. Gordon Arneson (1916 – 1992)

R. Gordon Arneson was a prominent painter, military leader, and federal employee. He painted in acrylics, holding a dozen solo shows, including ones at the Foreign Service Club and National Arboretum. While a Lieutenant in the U.S. Army in 1945, Arneson served as secretary to the Interim Committee on Atomic Energy. This specialized committee, appointed by Secretary of War Henry Stimson, provided advice on matters that concerned the atomic bomb and the future development of atomic energy. Later, Arneson served in the State Department as a special assistant, first to the Under Secretary of State and then to the Secretary of State, dealing with atomic energy matters. In this position, he worked during the Truman and Eisenhower administrations and, in 1954, served as Deputy Science Adviser to the State Department. Arneson later worked as a writer, contributing book reviews to the Washington Post, and was managing editor of Potomac Books in Washington from 1965 to 1966. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in 1938 from North Dakota State College.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Sunset at Black Water



Format: Oil on canvas

Dimensions: 31 x 41 x in. (78,7 x 104,1 cm)

Collection of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.; Gift of the Estate of Nancy Long Arneson

Phoebe Beasley (born 1943)

Collage artist Phoebe Beasley's work highlights diverse themes of American life and has featured prominently in the political realm. Notably, President Clinton presented the Ambassadors of the Diplomatic Corps with *Clinton Inaugural*, one of Beasley's monoprints that had been accorded the Presidential Seal. This marked the second time Beasley had received such distinction; the first was a commissioned artwork for the inauguration of President George H.W. Bush. In 2012, Beasley was among the forty-four artists commissioned to create a collage on a life-size bust of President Barack Obama.

Beasley's work is included in several prominent collections, such as the New York Public Library; the Savannah College of Art and Design, Georgia; Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah; the University of Texas, Austin; Neiman Marcus; and the Gillette Company, among others.

Title of Artwork Displayed: *Wheels Down at LAX*, and View the Elegance and Style of Paul R. Williams, Architect.



Year Created: 2010

Format: Collage

Dimensions: 38 × 38 in. (96,5 × 96,5 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Los Angeles, California

Title of Artwork Displayed: Fish Posse



Year Created: 2008

Format: Collage

Dimensions: 37 1/8 × 37 1/8 in. (94,3 × 94,3 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Los Angeles, California

Dorothy Gillespie (1920 – 2012)

Painter, sculptor, and installation artist Dorothy Gillespie's work encompassed many significant twentieth-century art trends, including abstract expressionism, decorative abstraction, site-specific installations, the women's movement, and public art. Gillespie pioneered new directions for metal sculpture, and she is best known for large-scale, colorfully painted arrangements of cut aluminum strips that radiate, undulate, or curl like giant arrangements of ribbon, enchanted towers, or bursting fireworks.

Born in Roanoke, Virginia, Gilliespie studied at the Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, and later moved to New York City, where she studied at the Art Students League and Atelier 17. She was one of the first artists to allow her work to be displayed in the lobbies of public institutions and governmental centers such as the Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota; EPCOT Center, Orlando, Florida; and the Delta Terminal at the Fort Lauderdale Airport, Florida. Among many honors, Gillespie received an Alice Baber Art Fund Inc. Grant Award, a Distinguished Alumni Award from the Maryland Institute College of Art, an Outstanding Services Award from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, and the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Women's Caucus for Art.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Untitled



Year Created: 1989

Format: Screenprint

Dimensions: 43 1/2 x 35 1/2 in. (110,5 x 90,2 cm)

Collection of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.; Gift of Lincoln Center / Vera List Art Program

Jacob Lawrence (1917 — 2000)

Jacob Lawrence is best known for his narrative series of tempera paintings based on his life and the lives of his peers. His vivid canvases are characterized by bold planes of color and symbolic elements reflecting the African American experience of struggles, aspirations, and accomplishments. His style uniquely blends narrative mural painting, social realism, and modernist abstraction.

Lawrence was born in Atlantic City, New Jersey, and in 1946 began teaching at Black Mountain College in North Carolina at the invitation of Josef Albers. He also taught in New York at the Art Students League, the New School for Social Research, and the Pratt Institute, and in Maine at the Skowhegan School. In 1971, he became a professor of art at the University of Washington in Seattle, where he retired in 1986 as professor emeritus. Throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, Lawrence continued to paint, focusing on subjects that referenced racial and social issues. He also devoted himself to commissions, especially for murals and limited-edition prints, to benefit nonprofit organizations, such as Supermarket Flora, created for New York's Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Supermarket Flora



Year Created: 1997

Format: Silkscreen

Dimensions: 38 x 30 in. (96,5 x 76,2 cm)

Collection of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.; Courtesy of the Foundation for Art and Preservation in Embassies, Washington, D.C.

Peter M. Loftus (born 1948)

“It is the light that invigorates and compels me to paint. I sometimes wonder if light and atmosphere are more vital to our sense of place than the physical character of the land. Conditions of light engender a scene with wholly different color ranges, which, in turn, strike different emotional chords, evoking a variety of moods. Faithfully representing the light is at the heart of my paintings. I love the paradox of making an illusion of light, space, and atmosphere out of paint on a flat canvas surface. To make an illusion that looks almost

photographic from a distance but dissolves into mysterious paint surfaces upon close inspection is what I delight in.”

Landscape painter Peter M. Loftus captures the intensity of our planet, focusing on the mountainous Santa Cruz and Tahoe regions of Northern California, western rivers and valleys, and the tropical beauty of Hawaii. Born in Washington, D.C., he received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, and a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. Loftus later moved to Santa Cruz, painting and teaching art at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and Cabrillo Community College, Aptos. His work has been exhibited widely on the east and west coasts and is held in numerous public and private collections, including General Electric and the Heinz Corporation.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Dusk: Pescadero Marsh



Format: Oil on canvas

Dimensions: 65 x 73 in. (165,1 x 185,4 cm)

Courtesy of the Foundation for Art and Preservation in Embassies, Washington, D.C.

Don Resnick (1928 — 2008)

Don Resnick was a landscape painter enchanted by the beauty and magnificence of Long Island, New York's terrain, sea, and sky. He would often sketch and draw from nature, but he never painted outdoors. Depicted with loose brushwork and "watercolor-like lucidity," Resnick's luminous paintings sought to communicate his vision of the environment. According to Resnick: "the inspiration for my paintings is the intense experience of a place—its particular light, its particular space—at a unique moment in time."

Resnick lived and worked at his studio in Rockville Centre, Long Island, New York, until his death. He attended Hobart College, Geneva, New York; the New School for Social Research, New York; and the Internationale Sommerakademie für Bildende Kunst, Salzburg, Austria. His work is in several prominent collections, namely the New York Public Library; the Hood Museum of Art, Hanover, New Hampshire; and the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, Lincoln, Nebraska.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Acacias



Year Created: 1992

Format: Oil on canvas

Dimensions: 42 3/4 x 51 in. (108,6 x 129,5 cm)

Collection of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.; Donated by David Resnick and Iwonka Piotrowska, Rockville Center, New York

Title of Artwork Displayed: Fog Lifting



Format: Oil on canvas

Dimensions: 48 × 62 in. (121,9 × 157,5 cm)

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

Joan Thorne (born 1943)

"I consider myself a metaphysical abstractionist, making images [that have] come out of my life experience. The images in my paintings are not only drawn from visual inspiration, but from memory, dreams, travel, nature and reverie as well as the intuitive process of painting. I am interested in connecting the poetic image with the painted and in the metaphysical content of the painting. Color and light are of foremost importance in my work."

Conceptual artist Joan Thorne's work investigates the relationships between forms and esoteric shapes. Her parents recognized her early talents and enrolled her at age six in the Little Red Schoolhouse in New York's Greenwich Village, a progressive school that focused on nurturing creative children. Her work has been exhibited throughout the United States and in Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean. She has been the recipient of the Prix de Rome Fellowship to paint at the American Academy in Rome, two National Endowment for the Arts grants for painting, and two Pollock Krasner Foundation Grants, among other awards.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Untitled



Year Created: 1982

Format: Screenprint

Dimensions: 46 3/4 x 39 1/8 in. (118,7 x 99,4 cm)

Collection of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.; Gift of Lincoln Center / Vera List Art Program

James Van Der Zee (1886 — 1983)

Portrait photographer James Van Der Zee is best known for chronicling the growing middle class in Harlem, New York, during the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s and 1930s. His hundreds of photographs do more than just document; they celebrate the lives of Harlem residents, capturing the personalities and aspirations of celebrities and ordinary people in his studio and in the vibrant and prosperous neighborhood. Often portraying a degree of affluence, Van Der Zee's work allowed African Americans to see themselves as "the center of the universe," encouraging a sense of racial pride.

Van Der Zee began experimenting with photography as a teenager when he won an eight-dollar camera; his first subjects were friends and family in Massachusetts, New York, and Virginia. Later, he became a darkroom assistant and opened a studio in New York. His work gained significant recognition in 1969 with the Harlem on My Mind exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, propelling him to the forefront of the fine art world.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Couple, Harlem



Year Created: 1932

Format: Digital photograph from original photographic print

Dimensions: 11 x 14 in. (27,9 x 35,6 cm)

Collection of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.; Library of Congress, catalogue# 2002711328

Title of Artwork Displayed: Dancer, Harlem



Year Created: 1925

Format: Acrylic on canvas

Dimensions: Digital print from original photograph

Collection of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.; Library of Congress, catalogue #91783911

Wendy V. Watriss and Frederick C. Baldwin

Photographers Wendy V. Watriss and Frederick C. Baldwin had traveled and worked abroad for years before meeting in the late 1960s. Watriss grew up in Greece and Spain and later covered conflicts in Europe, Central America, and Africa for *Newsweek* and the *New York Times*, and Swiss-born Baldwin traversed the globe on assignment for *National Geographic*. As a couple, they decided to shift their professional focus to the American South. Their photographs record some of the most notable events of the twentieth century—including the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War, and the feminist movement—but they also show rural life, poverty, and the struggles for survival and dignity in small communities throughout the South. Rich in humanity, Watriss' and Baldwin's work is also matter of fact.

In 1983, Watriss and Baldwin co-founded FotoFest International, hoping to garner appreciation for photography as an art form. In 1986, they launched the first FotoFest Biennial, a month-long, citywide celebration in Houston featuring exhibitions and lectures, with a public portfolio review component. As the first international photography biennial in the U.S., it was one of the few places where photographers could meet and present and sell their work to museums and collectors. A global community of photographers, curators, dealers, and collectors still gather in Houston every other spring for the biennial, each iteration exploring a particular issue of global concern.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Black Rodeo, Houston, Texas, 1978



Year Created: 1978

Format: Silver gelatin, black and white photographic print

Dimensions: 24 3/4 x 20 3/4 in. (62,9 x 52,7 cm)

Collection of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.; Gift of the Menil Foundation, Houston, Texas

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