



Art in Embassies

U.S. DEPARTMENT *of* STATE

Art in Embassies Exhibition: United States Embassy Nicosia

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

In late 2022, as I prepared for my confirmation hearing for the nomination to be U.S. Ambassador to Cyprus, I, like many Americans, was mesmerized by the possibilities of the launch of NASA's James Webb Space Telescope. Designed with the European and Canadian Space Agencies to view objects too distant or too faint for the Hubble Telescope—launched thirty-one years earlier—the Webb would orbit the sun, studying the first luminous glows of ancient light and with unprecedented clarity, reveal to us clues about the origins of our universe.

This gave me an opportunity to reflect on the evolution of tools and the passing of time, which have shaped our understanding of our place in the universe. In this exhibition, for example, the contrasts between the *Carina Nebula* images—captured first by the Hubble Telescope in 2007 and fifteen years later by the Webb—allow us to further unravel what we understand and can explain of our origins. I am deeply grateful to NASA for making these images available to Art in Embassies. These cosmic time capsules offer unparalleled insights into our distant past and potential future.

The scientific endeavors and discoveries of NASA and the United States are unique gifts offered to humanity. We publish the data, encourage international collaboration of the brightest minds, and inspire young people to pursue studies and seek careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. This exhibition celebrates the curiosity, exploration, discovery, openness, and transparency embodied in the American spirit.

In Tatiana Gulenkina's series *Things Merging and Falling Apart*, we see the dualities of existence and the beauty that often emerges from the interplay of opposing forces. Ad Reinhardt's *Black Series* and Katharine Heyl's *June* leave room for many interpretations of the same work. *Between a Mussel and a Whale* challenges assumptions in a delightful way, while Saya Benham's *Saffron Nebula* and Nana Bagdavadze's *Silver DNA* present unique artist views of our skies and the fundamental building blocks of life.

I hope these works will remind those who view them of the profound teachings of time, the tools we possess to explore the unknown, the beauty inherent in contrast, and the transformative power of variable perspectives.

Ambassador Julie Davis Fisher

Nicosia, Cyprus

January 2024

Artist Biographies

Nana Bagdavadze

“Made of two spirals, moving opposite directions, with ladder-like steps made of four bases, ‘A – T’, and ‘G – C,’ DNA is a ‘text,’ containing the universal memory of organic life. The tiny building block that makes us all the same and yet, paradoxically grants us distinct individuality... Like the DNA ladder, Arts and Science have evolved together by influencing and feeding off each other throughout the history. In my work, Double Helix represents a symbol of life and a force of perpetual rebirth and healing.”

Nana Bagdavadze is widely known for her paintings of symbolic DNA molecule structures as well as for her figurative art and portraiture. She earned a Master of Fine Art degree in painting and pedagogy at the Academy of Fine Arts in Tbilisi, Georgia, where she also taught for several years before moving to the United States in 1990. Her works are included in numerous permanent collections, such as NASA Goddard Space Flight Center, Greenbelt, Maryland; the National Library of Georgia, Tbilisi); and the University of Kansas, Lawrence, among others. Bagdavadze is developing a cross-disciplinary platform in her native Georgia to create a dialogue between various fields of the arts and sciences for the Caucasus region and beyond.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Silver DNA



Year Created: 2019

Format: Oil on canvas

Dimensions: 48 × 24 in. (121,9 × 61 cm)

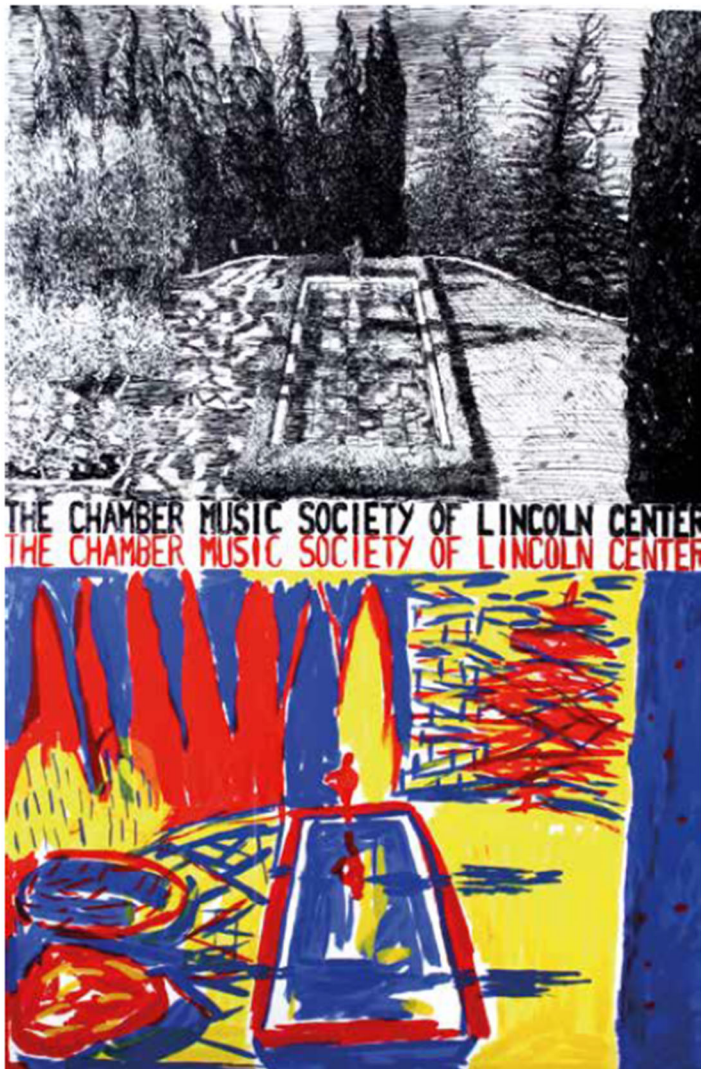
Courtesy of the artist, Washington, D.C.

Jennifer Bartlett (1941—2022)

Jennifer Bartlett “seamlessly combined the refined aesthetic of minimalism with expressive and emotional painting, and [created] a vast and varied body of work.” The installation artist,

painter, printmaker, and sculptor studied at Mills College, Oakland, California, and at the Yale School of Art and Architecture, New Haven, Connecticut. The progressive approach to modern art taught at Yale and the nearby thriving art scene of New York were instrumental in her early development. Her ambivalent use of systems to establish an order and to oppose it allowed her to explore the material and the conceptual process of making images and objects. Bartlett often combined multiple types of print in a single work, including drypoint, aquatint, screenprint, woodcut and lithography. Her work has been exhibited in the loft of artist Alan Saret and at the Paula Cooper Gallery, New York; Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York; the Venice Biennale; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and Locks Gallery, Philadelphia, among many others.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Untitled



Year Created: 1989

Format: Screenprint

Dimensions: 42 x 30 1/4 in. (106,7 x 76,8 cm)

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

Saya Behnam

“I used Saffron ink and threads, other plants such as Weld, Henna, and mineral pigments together with 24K gold leaf on paper or canvas. I don't filter Saffron and Henna inks since I like to have their pieces and pigments on the paper for the unique texture they make. Also, in most of my work, I add the Saffron threads on the wet paper to spread the colors and create the effect that I have no control over it (Co-Creating with Nature).”

Sayeh “Saya” Behnam, born in Tehran, fled to the United States from war and turmoil in Iran, and has lived on three continents. Those experiences, coupled with the cultural and traditional barriers she has faced, have profoundly influenced her art and her life. For Behnam, art is where she can find and establish an identity that easily could have been lost and undefined. Her art focuses on the fundamental concepts of being human: life, death, freedom, being present, time, and more. Behnam is actively engaged in the social and humanitarian art space collaborating with organizations in the Middle East and the United States, particularly in projects involving children.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Saffron Nebula



Year Created: 2018

Format: Saffron, hibiscus flower, ink, and gold on paper mounted on board

Dimensions: 45 1/2 × 22 in. (115,6 × 55,9 cm)

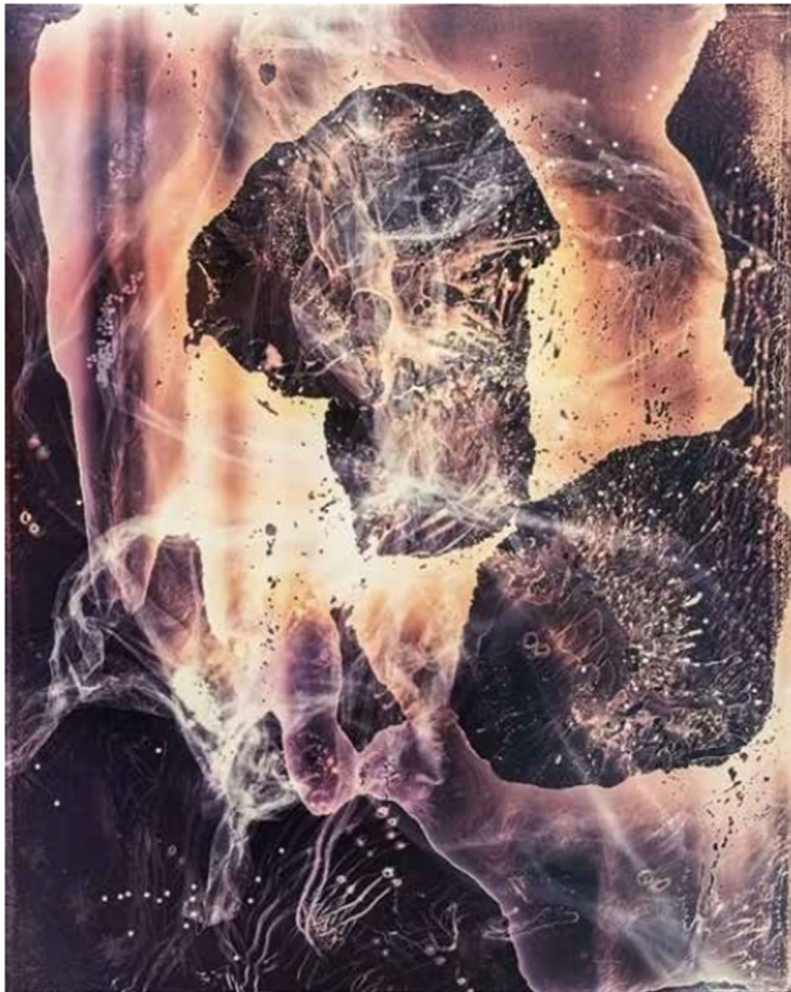
Courtesy of the artist, Alexandria, Virginia

Tatiana Gulenkina

“My interest in camera-less photography came from [a] desire to capture not a decisive moment but a time lapse, a movement or transformation of fragile organic objects caught on a light-sensitive surface. I started off working with recognizable shapes that after long darkroom manipulations often would turn out looking completely abstract yet more appealing to me; physically acting on paper surface, they became tangible imprints of ephemeral emotional states. Instead of imitating the illumination and depicting formal qualities, these images challenge the expectations and capture the light itself; they bring viewers’ attention to the performative nature of creative process and elaborate on chance effects and intuitive states of being.”

San-Francisco-based Tatiana Gulenkina is a photographer, visual artist and designer who employs digital technology and traditional darkroom equipment, video, and mixed media in her practice. She graduated from the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, and since then, her work has been featured in the *British Journal of Photography*, *Harper's* magazine, *The Week*, *Wired*, *Juxtapoz* magazine, the *Calvert Journal*, the *Photo Review*, *Tank* magazine, and other publications, as well as exhibited nationally and internationally.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Untitled #11, Things Merging and Falling Apart



Year Created: 2014

Format: Photogram on type C paper

Dimensions: 20 × 16 in. (50,8 × 40,6 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Berkeley, California

Title of Artwork Displayed: Untitled #12, Things Merging and Falling Apart



Year Created: 2014

Format: Photogram on type C paper

Dimensions: 20 × 16 in. (50,8 × 40,6 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Berkeley, California

Katharine Heyl

“Thread work is ritual; repetitive behavior systematically used to neutralize or prevent anxiety. The result is unique. With a different path, a new color interaction, or a new shape. The work changes, the colors shift, and a contrast of fragility and strength evolves, much like my own

evolution of self. Thread work is my repetitive ritual,” says artist Katharine Heyl. Her work *June* is part of a series called Repetition Studies: Thread on Canvas and “was created from a place of joy and spontaneity that differs from the other pieces centered around ritual and repetition. *June* celebrates what comes from a new behavior, pattern, and direction—named *June* to honor the artist's birth month, which for her, is a time of new beginnings and growth, much like the work itself.”

Heyl received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in studio art from Wheaton College in Norton, Massachusetts. While she focused her studies on sculpture and painting, she remains heavily influenced by color theory and the work of Josef Albers. She currently lives in Washington, D.C.

Title of Artwork Displayed: June



Year Created: 2023

Format: Thread on acrylic canvas

Dimensions: 48 × 36 in. (121,9 × 91,4 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Washington, D.C.

NASA Hubble Space Telescope

Named in honor of the trailblazing astronomer Edwin Hubble, the Hubble Space Telescope is a large, space-based observatory that has revolutionized astronomy since its launch and deployment by the space shuttle Discovery in 1990. Positioned far above rain clouds, light pollution, and atmospheric distortions, the Hubble provides a crystal-clear view of the universe. Scientists have used Hubble to observe some of the most distant stars and galaxies yet seen, as well as the planets in our solar system. Hubble has conducted more than 1.5 million observations over the course of its lifetime. Its discoveries have contributed to the publication of over 19,000 peer-reviewed science papers, and every current astronomy textbook includes contributions from the observatory.

The Carina Nebula: Star Birth in the Extreme represents one of the largest panoramic images ever taken with Hubble's cameras. It spans fifty light-years across the central region of the Carina Nebula, where a maelstrom of star birth—and death—is taking place. Contained within this immense nebula are at least a dozen brilliant stars that are estimated to be at least fifty to 100 times the mass of our Sun. The image is a mosaic of the Carina Nebula assembled from forty-eight frames taken with Hubble's Advanced Camera for Surveys. *Eagle Nebula's Pillars of Creation* revisits one of Hubble's most iconic subjects, the "Pillars of Creation" within the Eagle Nebula. In this image, three towering structures of gas and dust, each one stretching light-years into space, serve as the birthplace for new stars hidden within their dusty columns. The image was taken using Wide Field Camera 3, providing a sharper view of the pillars and a wider vista, revealing the base of these pillars and more of the surrounding region.

Title of Artwork Displayed: The Carina Nebula: Star Birth in the Extreme, April 24



Year Created: 2007

Format: Photo print

Dimensions: 118 x 59 in. (299,7 x 149,9 cm)

Courtesy of HubbleSite and Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Eagle Nebula's Pillars of Creation



Year Created: 2015

Format: Photo print

Dimensions: 40 × 40 in. (101,6 × 101,6 cm)

Courtesy of NASA, ESA/Hubble and the Hubble Heritage Team and Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.

NASA James Webb Space Telescope

“NASA’s James Webb Space Telescope represents the most advanced development in spaced-based telescope astronomy, advancing upon the powerful imaging capabilities of the Hubble Space Telescope and the ability of the Spitzer Space Telescope to detect light beyond the visible spectrum into the mid-infrared range. By utilizing infrared light, which can penetrate dense gas clouds that block visible light, Webb reveals *Pillars of Creation* and “*Cosmic Cliffs*” in the *Carina Nebula*, are images of the same nebulas shown on the previous page.

Pillars of Creation combines Webb’s near infrared and mid-infrared images to illuminate this star-forming region with unprecedented detail. Primarily showing up in near infrared light, the stars reveal thousands of newly formed stars—bright orange spheres that lie just outside the dusty pillars. In the mid-infrared light, the dust is on full display, most apparent in the cascading layers of orange that drape at the top and culminate into a V shape. The densest dust regions take on deep indigo hues, obscuring our view of the activities inside the pillars. “*Cosmic Cliffs*” in the Carina Nebula, captured in infrared light by Webb’s Near Infrared Camera (NIRCam), resembles craggy mountains on a moonlit evening. However, it is the edge of a nearby, young, star-forming region within the Carina Nebula. The cavernous area has been carved by the intense ultraviolet radiation and stellar winds emanating from extremely massive, hot, young stars located in the center of the bubble, above the area shown in this image. NIRCam unveils hundreds of previously hidden stars, as well as numerous background galaxies.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Pillars of Creation



Year Created: 2022

Format: Photo print

Dimensions: 40 × 40 in. (101,6 × 101,6 cm)

Collection of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.; Image courtesy of NASA and the Space Telescope Science Institute

Title of Artwork Displayed: “Cosmic Cliffs” in the Carina Nebula



Year Created: 2022

Format: Photo print

Dimensions: 29 × 50 in. (73,7 × 127 cm)

Collection of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.; Image courtesy of NASA and the Space Telescope Science Institute

Ad Reinhardt (1913—1967)

Ad Reinhardt pioneered hard-edged grid painting and specialized in abstract geometric and monochromatic paintings. His early works, collages with pasted paper layers in irregular, rectilinear forms, had similar compositions. In the 1950s, Reinhardt limited his palette to one color, moving from red to blue before transitioning to black. “As an artist, I would like to

eliminate the symbolic pretty much, for black is interesting not as a color but as a non-color and as the absence of color," he said.

Reinhardt was born in Buffalo, New York, and studied art history at Columbia University and painting at the American Artists School, both in New York. He worked for the WPA Federal Art Project and was a member of the American Abstract Artists group before continuing his studies at the New York University Institute of Fine Arts.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Black Series #2 (G)



Format: Screenprint

Dimensions: 23 1/2 x 21 in. (59,7 x 53,3 cm)

Collection of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Philip Berman

Title of Artwork Displayed: Black Series #4 (G)



Year Created: Circa 1964-1967

Format: Screenprint

Dimensions: 23 3/4 x 23 3/4 in. (60,3 x 60,3 cm)

Collection of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Philip Berman

Title of Artwork Displayed: Black Series #7 (G)



Year Created: Circa 1964-1967

Format: Screenprint

Dimensions: 28 3/4 x 18 1/2 in. (73 x 47 cm)

Collection of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Philip Berman

Title of Artwork Displayed: Black Series #10 (G)



Format: Screenprint

Dimensions: 30 1/2 x 16 1/2 in. (77,5 x 41,9 cm)

Collection of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Philip Berman

Title of Artwork Displayed: Black Series #12 (S)

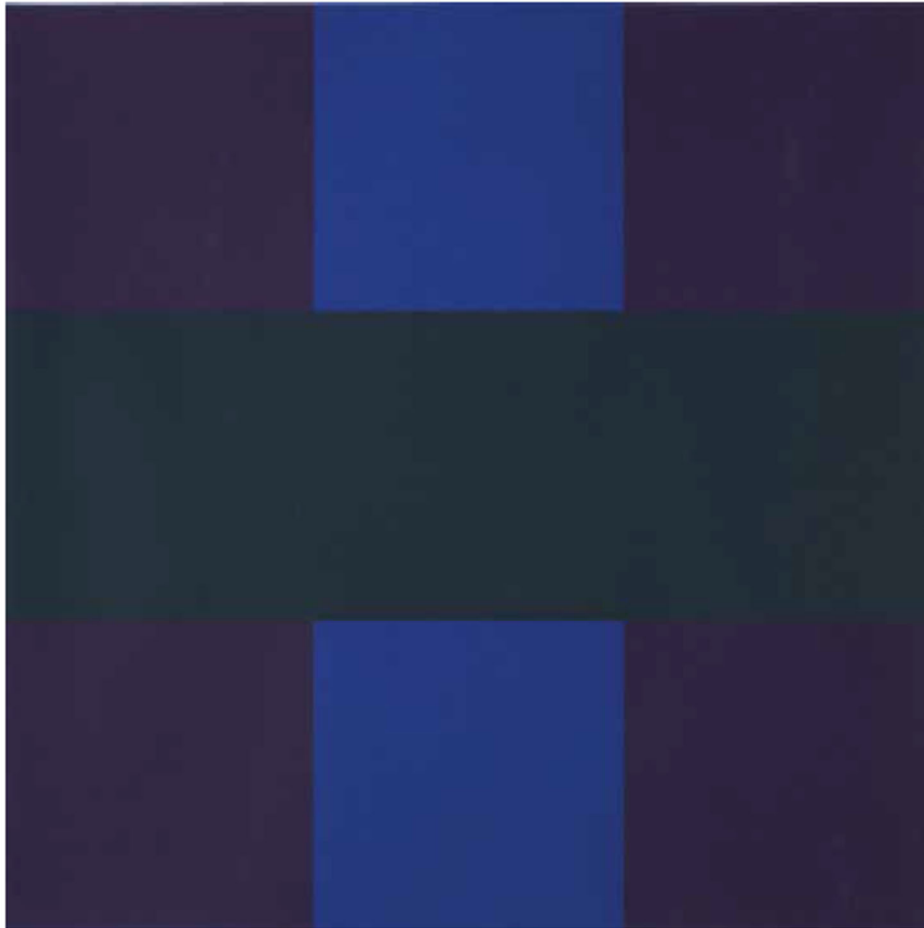


Format: Screenprint

Dimensions: 29 x 19 in. (73,7 x 48,3 cm)

Collection of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Philip Berman

Title of Artwork Displayed: Black Series #16 (S)



Year Created: Circa 1964-1967

Format: Screenprint

Dimensions: 26 × 24 in. (66 × 61 cm)

Collection of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Philip Berman

Elena Volkova (born 1975)

Elena Volkova is an interdisciplinary artist, educator, and curator whose creative practice uses historical and contemporary photographic techniques to explore complex themes of domesticity, liminality, and subjective experience. “When you gaze into the sky, are you aware that you are gazing into emptiness? Do you see the sky as a barrier between you and infinity? If you perceive something as being empty, is it because you understand the concept of fullness, or is it because of fullness you perceive emptiness? My artistic curiosity lie[s] in the interchange

between nothing and something and its manifestation in everyday reality. While focused on natural elements, I am interested in the threshold between the two, their connotative values, and the ways in which they inform and question each other,” she says.

Ukrainian-born Volkova received both her Bachelor of Fine Arts and Master of Fine Arts degrees from the Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore. She has exhibited her work nationally and internationally and has received several recognitions and awards, including the Maryland State Arts Council Creativity Grant. Volkova has been a social practice resident artist at the Maryland Center for History and Culture and the Anacostia Arts Center. She teaches photography at Stevenson University in Baltimore.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Seascape #1096



Year Created: 2004

Format: Photograph, inkjet print

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

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

Kevin “Gig” Wailgum

Connecticut-based Kevin “Gig” Wailgum is an artist, writer, and illustrator best known for his self-published Santa Clops holiday children’s books. He earned a master’s degree in illustration from the School of the Visual Arts in New York. His work has been featured in the New York Times Book Review, The New Yorker magazine and other newspapers and publications.

Title of Artwork Displayed: *Between a Mussel and a Whale*



Year Created: 1993

Format: Pastel

Dimensions: 21 x 17 in. (53,3 x 43,2 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Greenwich, Connecticut

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