



Art in Embassies

U.S. DEPARTMENT *of* STATE

Art in Embassies Exhibition: United States Embassy Skopje

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

More than 700 years ago, Italian Renaissance painter Giotto di Bondone observed that “every painting is a voyage into a sacred harbor.” I had initially intended my artistic voyage to be quite different. When I visited the State Department’s Office of Art in Embassies one rainy September day, I knew exactly what I hoped to find: black and white photography of my beloved hometown, Washington, D.C. Ironically, not one of these magnificent works by gifted American artists is that. Instead, every painting I selected that day captivated me with its rich profundity. The result is a very personal collective of artists and works that exemplify the enormous beauty and strength of simplicity.

Red Screen with Line of Trees by George Edward Chaplin took my breath away when I first saw it. Richard Serra—known best for his monumental sculptures—brings a fierce and mesmerizingly textured abstraction to his two *Afangar Icelandic* Series paintings. And Dennis Masback’s *Untitled* seascape has a haunting stillness. Each of the twelve artworks in this exhibition greets us with exquisite beauty, a sense of intention, and serenity.

The art in this exhibition has created my sacred harbor here at the lovely Residence in Skopje. I hope these paintings will embrace and inspire its many visitors as they do me, every day.

Ambassador Angela P. Aggeler
Skopje, North Macedonia
April 2024

Artist Biographies

George Edwin Chaplin (born 1931)

George Edwin Chaplin investigates the emotional effect and meditative, poetic qualities of color in his oeuvre.⁹⁰⁷ His trademark style involves large-scale horizontal works that create the illusion of an expansive horizon line. Chaplin applies oil paint in massive areas of the canvas,

then uses a large paint scraper to blend his saturated oil paints. Gradient color tones progress from light to dark shadows, starting from the top and ending at the bottom of his compositions. “I see color as light and atmosphere and celebrate it for its emotional impact and beauty,” he says. “The changeable nature of color, both intrinsically and from external conditions, fascinates me, and I am particularly involved in how it can appear to alternately expand and contract.”

Chaplin first learned and pursued color theory with famed German abstract artist Joseph Albers during his graduate studies at Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut. He served as the Charles S. Nutt professor at Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut, until retiring in the 1990s. Along with a retrospective at the Mattatuck Museum and group exhibition at the New Britain Museum of American Art—both in Connecticut—his work was displayed in the diplomatic lobby of the U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Red Screen with Line of Trees



Format: Oil on canvas

Dimensions: 73 × 108 in. (185,4 × 274,3 cm)

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

Susan Goldsmith (born 1955)

Susan Goldsmith's art focuses on the natural world, whether sturdy tree branches, flying birds, or gliding koi fish—as seen in *Kin Gin Gin*. After photographing her subjects, Goldsmith digitally edits her images before transferring them to canvas or wood panels. She creates and builds up layers of resin, translucent paint, gold or silver leaf, and oil pastel so that the composition radiates with light and energy. “As you walk by one of my paintings, you will see the colors change...Similar to how colors change based on the different times of day or how the wind modifies the effect of sunlight on leaves and branches,” she says.

With additional studies at the Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles, Goldsmith earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts and Master of Fine Arts degrees in painting, printmaking, and drawing from the California College of the Arts, Oakland. She worked on digital plate restoration for Industrial Light & Magic, Los Angeles, in the optical and computer graphics departments, before becoming a two-dimensional painter and rotoscope artist at the Lucas Digital Arts Facility at the Presidio, San Francisco. Her work has been exhibited at Gallery Henschel, New York, and the National Museum of Wildlife Art, Jackson, Wyoming, and she teaches at the Academy of Art, San Francisco.

Title of Artwork Displayed: *Kin Gin Gin*



Year Created: 2012

Format: Silver leaf with pigment print, oil pastel, acrylic paint, metallic watercolors, and resin on panel

Dimensions: 24 × 24 in. (61 × 61 cm) each of 3

Collection of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.; Gift of the artist

Dennis Masbach (born 1948)

Dennis Masbach utilizes his background as an accomplished printer in his painting process. By drawing an edger, a tool commonly used by commercial painters to paint baseboards, across the canvas, he “pulls” the painting as he would pull a print. With the canvas placed on a cart, Masbach pours and spreads paint in various directions using the edger, then applies thirty to forty coats of watery glaze before rigorously scraping the transparent colors to “create a tactilely smooth, though optically variegated surface.” This contributes to the slate-like quality of his paintings, with surfaces that imitate reflective stone or marble.

Masbach received his Bachelor of Fine Arts and Master of Fine Arts degrees from Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri. He is a retired professor of fine arts at Pratt Institute, New York. Along with featured reviews in Artforum, the New York Times, and ARTNews, his paintings were shown at the Pelham Art Center, New York; the Cape Cod Museum of Art, Massachusetts; and the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence.

Title of Artwork Displayed: **Untitled**



Year Created: 1983-1985

Format: Oil on canvas

Dimensions: 25 ½ × 41 ½ in. (64,8 × 105,4 cm)

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

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. Inspired by Russian artist Kazimir Malevich's Black Square, his later series Black Paintings was not made of purely black paint but consisted of numerous dark colors applied in multiple layers. "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.

Born and raised in New York, Reinhardt studied art history at Columbia University and painting at the National Academy of Design. A member of the American Abstract Artists, he worked for the Works Progress Administration's Federal Art Project, which hired hundreds of artists to create art for municipal buildings, schools, and hospitals in the United States. Reinhardt taught at Brooklyn College, New York, and held his first solo exhibition at the Columbia Teachers College in 1943. His work can be found in the collections of the Tate Gallery, London; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Art Institute of Chicago; and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Black Series #11 (S)

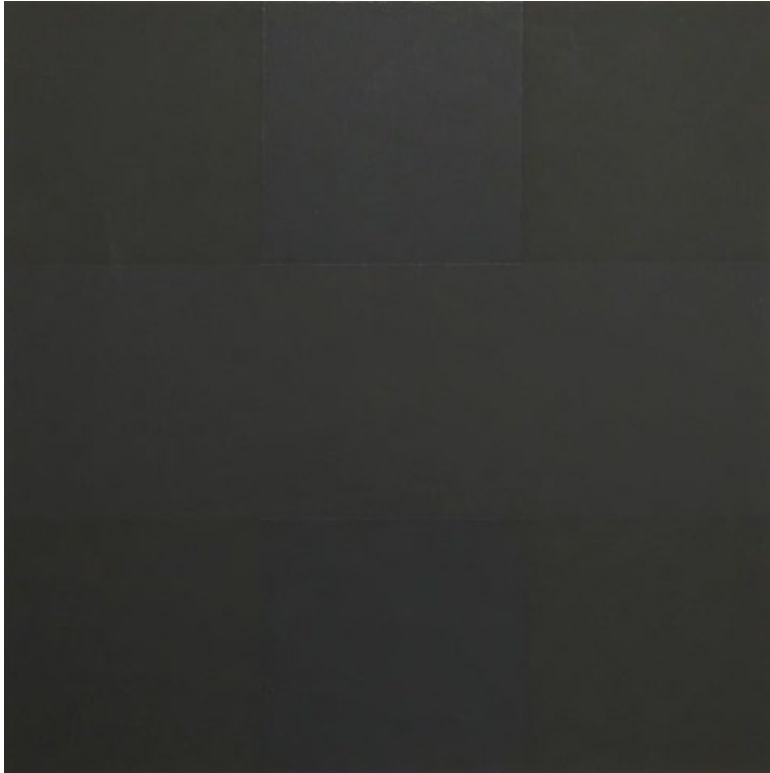


Format: Screenprint

Dimensions: 30 ½ × 26 ½ in. (77,5 × 67,3 cm)

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

Title of Artwork Displayed: Untitled



Year Created: circa 1964—1967

Format: Screenprint

Dimensions: 28 ¼ × 26 in. (71,8 × 66 cm)

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

Title of Artwork Displayed: Untitled



Year Created: circa 1964—1967

Format: Screenprint

Dimensions: 28 ¼ × 26 in. (71,8 × 66 cm)

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

Richard Serra (1938-2024)

Although widely known for his monumental, site-specific sculptures, Richard Serra also specializes in fierce, large-scale black-and-white abstract drawings made of oil on paper. Serra begins each drawing by pouring a mix of silicon ink and paintstick on his worktable; he then places the paper on top and uses a steel tool to rub the back before pulling it up to view his composition. First exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, his Afangar Icelandic Series featured over a dozen encrusted black etchings—printed on textured paper affixed to Oriental paper layers—portraying Icelandic basalt found along the perimeter of a small island near Reykjavik. The imposing images seem to “loom upward from the lower edges of the sheets, starkly evoking the environment that inspired them.”

Serra graduated with Bachelor of Fine Arts and Master of Fine Arts degrees in painting at Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut. Since his first solo exhibition at the Leo Castelli Warehouse, New York, he has placed over 100 commissioned sculptures around the world—from Philadelphia to the deserts of Doha, Qatar. His works on paper were recently shown at the Gagosian Gallery, New York.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Afangar Icelandic Series, Iceland



Year Created: 1991

Format: Oil on handmade paper

Dimensions: 40 ½ × 60 ½ in. (102,9 × 153,7 cm)

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

Title of Artwork Displayed: Afangar Icelandic Series, Hreppholar II



Year Created: 1991

Format: Oil on handmade paper

Dimensions: 40 × 50 in. (101,6 × 127 cm)

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

Robert Stark (born 1939)

Robert Stark's focus is abstract expressionist landscape painting and photography. Stark first copied well-known artists—namely Georges Braque, Henri Matisse, and Vincent van Gogh—but with time and practice, he became a confident painter with a distinct artistic style.

For over forty years, Stark has lived and painted in Union Dale, Pennsylvania. After earning his Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of Denver, he studied photography and later learned conservation and restoration from American painter Robert Scott Wiles at the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. His paintings are in the Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.;

Cheekwood Estate & Gardens, Nashville, Tennessee; and the Bibliotheque Nationale de France, Paris.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Untitled



Format: Acrylic on canvas

Dimensions: 51 × 71 in. (129,5 × 180,3 cm)

Courtesy of the lender; Collection of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Untitled



Format: Acrylic on canvas

Dimensions: 61 × 71 in. (154,9 × 180,3 cm)

Courtesy of the lender; Collection of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.

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Washington, D.C.

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