



Art in Embassies

U.S. DEPARTMENT *of* STATE

Art in Embassies Exhibition: United States Embassy Sofia

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

Welcome to the United States Ambassador's Residence in Sofia, Bulgaria. Susan and I are delighted and honored to have these works by distinguished American artists on display for the many visitors we receive at the Residence. We are particularly pleased to show the two paintings by Saba Shere, someone whose work we have admired for years. Her work is showcased across the United States, and we are now pleased to add an overseas element to her increasing popularity. The pieces by Susan Pear Meisel are joyful renditions of Washington, D.C., the city where my wife and I met back in 1984 and where we return regularly and call home. The large sculpture *Ductile 2* by Foon Sham, formerly displayed in Venice, complements the modern design and materials of the Residence. Overall, these modern works of art reflect a love of color, nature, and whimsy, exuding brightness and hope for those who take the time to appreciate.

Ambassador Kenneth Merten

Sofia, Bulgaria

April 2024

Artist Biographies

Susan Pear Meisel (born 1947)

For over fifty years, Susan Pear Meisel has created whimsical scenes of landmarks in New York, Washington, D.C., and other major cities. Her “use of ink and lines create[s] a playful layering within the composition.” Whether it’s a print or silkscreen, “the inked hues carry their tonalities to the surface of the paper. The layering of multiple colors builds up a ground pattern that engages with one another in a vibrancy of color.”

Meisel studied at the Art Students’ League, the School of Visual Arts, and the Parsons School of Design, all in New York. She helped open the Louis K. Meisel Gallery in New York’s Soho neighborhood, where it continues to exhibit original photorealist artists, realist painters, and sculptors. Her works are in the collections of the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, Connecticut; the Erie Art Museum, Pennsylvania; and the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Title of Artwork Displayed: The Capitol



Format: Screenprint

Dimensions: 32 x 26 1/2 in. (81,3 x 67,3 cm)

Collection of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.; Gift of Allen Brill

Title of Artwork Displayed: The Washington Monument



Format: Screenprint

Dimensions 26 1/2 x 32 in. (67,3 x 81,3 cm)

Collection of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.; Gift of Franklin Wilk

Foon Sham (born 1953)

For over three decades, Foon Sham has sculpted and installed wood works—sawing, cutting, laminating, stacking, carving, and assembling a variety of soft and hard wood into organic and geometric forms. These range in size from small pieces to massive installations. His art reflects his feelings about nature, disaster, and the environment in which he is working.

Since 1980, Sham has had twenty-eight solo exhibitions and has participated in over 115 group exhibitions in galleries and museums in the United States, Canada, Norway, Mexico, Australia, and China. He earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the California College of Arts and Crafts, San Francisco, and a Master of Fine Arts degree from Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, and he is a sculptor and professor at the University of Maryland, College Park.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Ductile 2



Year Created: 2023

Format: Pine

Dimensions: 111 × 53 × 41 in., 950lb. (274,4 × 137,2 × 106,7cm, 430.9kg)

Courtesy of the artist, and Gallery Neptune and Brown, Washington, D.C.

Sahba Shere (born 1967)

Sahba Shere's works, characterized by vibrant colors and rich textures, draw inspiration from her extensive travels. She "has absorbed a sense of fluidity and flexibility which translates through her art as a form of meditative expression. Through experimentations in food and being moved by the sensations of taste and memory, she offers points of entry into her world at her loft studio, often hosting gatherings as opportunities for community exchange. Shown through her descriptive titles, she invites the viewer to bear witness as she navigates self-discovery—of motherhood, [of] letting go and returning to her art. In all the journeys animated

by her creations, the work calls for the viewer to find themselves mirrored through the understanding of wanderlust and the joy of nostalgia.”

Shere’s work can be found in private collections such as Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut; Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts; Apple; Google; LinkedIn; and Hilton Hotels. Her work has been exhibited widely throughout California, and she was an artist in residence at L’AiR Arts in Paris.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Ethereal Landscape



Year Created: 2022

Format: Acrylic and mixed media on canvas

Dimensions: 72 × 36 in. (182,9 × 91,4 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Palo Alto, California

Title of Artwork Displayed: Spring Flowers



Year Created: 2022

Format: Acrylic on canvas

Dimensions: 40 × 60 in. (101,6 × 152,4 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Palo Alto, California

Acknowledgements

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