



Art in Embassies

U.S. DEPARTMENT *of* STATE

Art in Embassies Exhibition: United States Embassy Doha

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

The story of a nation, a town, or even a family is best represented through the free expression of artistic talent. The power of art to transcend borders and forge meaningful connections is greater than any diplomacy. The story of my family—and many like ours—was not told in history books. We preserved our journey through storytelling, song, painting, and sculpture; in short, through art. It is with this appreciation for art's power to tell one's own story that we present our hometown, our family, and our history in this exhibition: *The Pass: Lyrics of History and Nature*. A pass is a pathway forged by time and the unrelenting nature of water. This initiative underscores the importance of creating vital pathways for cross-cultural dialogue and fostering mutual understanding through visual arts and dynamic artist exchanges.

The theme of this exhibition is particularly poignant, as it highlights the deep and enduring connections between Qatar and the Gulf Coast region of the United States. These connections are rooted in the ties between people and the mutual respect and understanding inherent in our strong relationship.

In Ellen Priest's *Jazz Cubano* works I hear the music of New Orleans; in Shawn Augustson's *Where Solitude Stays* and *Color Catalyst*, I see the melancholy and peace of a former soldier. Brian McClean's *Craggy Mountain*, *North Carolina Golden Sunset* and *Ocean Beach, San Diego Pier Sunset* take me back to my youth in North Carolina and Marine Corps years in San Diego. Alan Shuptrine's *Dancing Man* shows a tree reminiscent of the oaks in Audubon Park. Russel Lee's *Unloading oysters from packet boat arriving at New Orleans, Louisiana* could be a photo of pearl divers in Doha at the end of their day, and the colors in Richard Dempsey's *Untitled* reflect the vibrancy of the Gulf Coast.

This exhibition pays tribute to the shared history and military partnership between the United States and Qatar. Through the inclusion of artwork by military veterans, we seek to convey the profound respect and gratitude we hold for those who serve our countries. Their inclusion in *The Pass* represents the bonds of friendship and security between our nations.

I invite you to engage in the profound conversations this art provokes. This art—like Doha—feels like home to us. In this shared experience, let us reflect on the threads that bind us and the shared values that will define our future. Through these brushstrokes and images, let us find inspiration in our common history and optimism in our shared future.

I extend my deepest gratitude to the artists who have generously contributed their talents to this exhibition, as well as to the curator, the Art in Embassies team, my wife Patti, and all those who have made this exhibition possible. *The Pass* is an ode to the enduring friendship between us.

Ambassador Timmy Davis

Doha, Qatar

April 2024

Artist Biographies

Shawn Augustson (born 1973)

Shawn Augustson, a U.S. Army veteran, discovered art as a form of therapy for post-traumatic stress disorder after serving in Iraq. Through CreatiVets, an organization devoted to helping veterans heal through music and art, Augustson was introduced to numerous art forms, ranging from ceramics to photography. Upon completing the program, he set out to teach himself new techniques while fully embracing art as a conduit for creative and emotional expression. In his paintings, Augustson employs a bright palette with colors that hold deep symbolic value. For example, red represents the mental struggles he faces, but it also carries transformative potential. As he explains, “So that’s the negative, and I put it on the canvas and leave it there...then I turn it into something bright and happy and beautiful to me.”

Augustson’s work has been exhibited at the Kurt Vonnegut Museum, Indianapolis; the National Veterans Art Museum, Chicago; and the Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio. He volunteers for

CreatiVets and Project Healing Waters, a therapeutic outdoor program that promotes fly fishing as a rehabilitation tool for disabled active military service personnel and veterans.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Where Solitude Stays



Year Created: 2021

Format: Acrylic on canvas

Dimensions: 40 x 30 in (101,6 x 76,2 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Reynoldsburg, Ohio

Title of Artwork Displayed: Color Catalyst



Year Created: 2021

Format: Acrylic on canvas

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

Courtesy of the artist, Reynoldsburg, Ohio

Richard Dempsey (1909-1987)

Richard Dempsey was an illustrator and painter who often drew inspiration from his frequent trips to Jamaica and Haiti. Born in Ogden, Utah, he spent much of his youth in Oakland, California, where he developed an interest in art. In 1941, he moved to Washington, D.C., where he first worked as an engineering draftsman with the Federal Power Commission and later transferred to the General Services Administration, where he worked as an illustrator for nearly thirty years. In 1946, he was awarded a fellowship from the Julius Rosenwald Fund to create one hundred portraits of prominent African American individuals, including Duke Ellington, Thurgood Marshall, and Adam Clayton Powell.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Untitled



Year Created: Undated

Format: Ink on paper

Dimensions: 21 x 29 in (53,3 x 73,7 cm)

Courtesy of Stella Jones Gallery, New Orleans, Louisiana

Russell Lee (1903-1986)

Russell Lee was a photographer best known for his compassionate and unaffected images of everyday Americans during the era of the Great Depression. Lee initially used photography to refine his skills as a painter, but he soon recognized it as a powerful medium for social documentation. After his work was featured in several magazines, he was hired by the Resettlement Administration (later renamed the Farm Security Administration), a federal government-relief program established, in part, to document the conditions of farmers and urban workers at the peak of the Great Depression. Living out of his car, Lee photographed life in twenty-nine states between 1936 and 1942, capturing 19,000 images of such diverse subjects as migrant laborers, rice farmers, and sharecroppers. In 1938, Lee spent several weeks in rural and urban Louisiana, where he took this picture of men hauling oysters in New Orleans.

Although he was born in Ottawa, Illinois, Lee earned his degree in chemical engineering from Lehigh University, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. During World War II, he served as a photographer

in the Air Transport Command, documenting airfields and routes. After the war, he settled in Austin, Texas, and established the first photography curriculum at the University of Texas.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Unloading oysters from packet boat arriving at New Orleans, Louisiana



Year Created: 1938

Format: Digital reproduction of black and white negative

Dimensions: 13 ¼ x 20 in (33,7 x 50,8 cm)

Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

Brian McClean

Brian McClean began his photography practice to cope with the stressors of active military duty. McClean served in the U.S. Coast Guard for twelve years, during which time he was a Presidential Honor Guardsman in the White House and an IT Specialist. He first began photographing as a hobby while stationed in Alaska, where he was inspired by the beauty of the wildlife and scenery. Upon transitioning to civilian life, McClean decided to pursue photography professionally, refining his skills while still using the medium as a form of healing and therapy for his anxiety and depression. For his richly colored photographs, McClean will often combine various shots of the same scene with varied lighting or exposure to create a single composition with enhanced detail and clarity. A native of Philadelphia, McClean primarily

shoots landscapes in San Diego, where he resides, but he has also photographed across the United States and internationally.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Ocean Beach, San Diego Pier Sunset



Year Created: Undated

Format: Color photograph printed on aluminum

Dimensions: 32 x 48 in. (81,3 x 121,9 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, San Diego, California

Title of Artwork Displayed: Craggy Mountain, North Carolina Golden Sunset



Year Created: Undated

Format: Color photograph printed on aluminum

Dimensions: 32 x 48 in. (81,3 x 121,9 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, San Diego, California

Ellen Priest (born 1951)

“Jazz evokes in me what I want my artwork to evoke in the viewer — joy, energy, inspiration.”

For more than thirty years, Ellen Priest has centered her abstract multimedia paintings on jazz. Basing a series of works on a single musical composition, she begins by listening to the score and creating quick, improvisational “brush studies” to visually capture the essence of the piece’s rhythm and sound. Priest then superimposes layers of opaque and translucent paper while also cutting away and collaging other forms, resulting in a dynamic interplay of movement and depth. These two paintings are inspired by a collaboration between American jazz artists—including vibraphonist Stefon Harris—and Cuban jazz pianists, recorded in Havana, Cuba.

Priest grew up in Duluth, Minnesota, and received her Master of Divinity degree from Yale Divinity School, New Haven, Connecticut. The Pollock-Krasner Foundation has twice awarded Priest major grants to support her work, which has appeared in solo exhibitions at the Delaware Division of the Arts Gallery, Wilmington; the Yale Institute of Sacred Music; and the Berklee College of Music, Boston.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Jazz Cubano #7: Stefon's "Brown Belle Blues"



Year Created: 2014

Format: Papers, oil, flashe, pencil, MSA gel

Dimensions: 42 x 42 in. (106,7 x 106,7 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Wilmington, Delaware

Title of Artwork Displayed: Jazz Cubano #11: Stefon's "Brown Belle Blues"



Year Created: 2014

Format: Papers, oil, flashe, pencil, MSA gel

Dimensions: 42 x 42 in. (106,7 x 106,7 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Wilmington, Delaware

Alan Shuptrine (born 1936)

Alan Shuptrine is known for his realistic, delicately rendered watercolors of southern Appalachia. A resident of Lookout Mountain, Tennessee, Shuptrine's highly detailed paintings highlight traditions of the area such as quilting, farming, regional architecture, and serene landscapes of the Appalachian Mountains. He also hand crafts, carves, and adds gold leaf to custom frames for his paintings. His works have been featured in such publications as *Fine Art Connoisseur*, *American Artist* magazine, and *Watercolor Artist* magazine. His paintings have been displayed at and are in the collections of the Tennessee State Museum, Nashville; the Morris Museum of Art, Augusta, Georgia; and the Huntsville Museum of Art, Alabama.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Dancing Man



Year Created: 2023

Format: Hand printed Giclee canvas

Dimensions: 36 x 36 in. (91,4 x 91,4 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Chattanooga, Tennessee

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