



Art in Embassies

U.S. DEPARTMENT *of* STATE

Art in Embassies Exhibition: United States Embassy Bucharest

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! ¡Bienvenidos! Bine ați venit! to the U.S. Ambassador's Residence. My husband Mark Taplin and I are excited to share this exhibition featuring six Mexican American artists from California and Texas.

I was raised near San Diego, on California's southern border with Mexico. Thanks to California's Spanish and Mexican heritage, I grew up speaking both English and Spanish. In this multicultural environment, ties of history, immigration, language, and culture bind California and the Southwest United States with Mexico. The border crossing at San Ysidro between San Diego and Tijuana is the busiest land border in the world, with over 100 million individual crossings each year. Today, forty percent of all Californians claim Mexican heritage, and Spanish is widely spoken, along with English, throughout the state.

This is why I have chosen to highlight artists who draw on the region's rich Mexican American traditions and the impact of the border in their work. For example, the de la Torre brothers, who split their time between San Diego and the Mexican state of Baja California, juxtapose materials and motifs to create surprising multimedia works that cross cultures.

Francisco Palomares, who hails from East Los Angeles, celebrates the immigrant spirit and everyday objects from his neighborhood against a classical European backdrop. Consuelo Jiménez Underwood, from Sacramento, California, engages viewers on border issues using images of desert flowers that bring us into the shared landscape that unites our countries.

A native of Riverside, California, Maggie Tello Case uses textiles, humor, and whimsy to weave together colorful creations that delight the eye and soul. Joe Peña, from Laredo, Texas, explores identities from a cultural, social, and familial perspective.

We are grateful to the artists who generously agreed to loan their works for this exhibition. It would not have been possible without the expert support of the U.S. State Department's Art in Embassies, especially of curator Claire D'Alba.

Ambassador Kathleen Kavalec

Bucharest, Romania

June 2024

Artist Biographies

Maggie Tello Case (born 1976)

Inspired by memories from her childhood, pop culture, and a love of color, Maggie Tello Case creates imaginative mixed media works that demonstrate her sense of humor and whimsy. Her mother, a talented seamstress, taught Case to sew and embroider. Today, she peruses thrift stores and yard sales for vintage fabric, buttons, clothing, and trims, which she incorporates into her textile creations. Her practice is a deeply personal endeavor, as she notes, “Each piece has a story to tell that resonates from within my soul.”

Case is a native of Riverside, California, where she is involved in the local arts community. She has participated in group shows at the Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art & Culture, the Riverside Art Museum, and the Norco College Art Gallery.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Primas Hermanas



Year Created: 2022

Format: Textile collage

Dimensions: 48 x 26 in (121,9 x 91,4 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Riverside, California

Title of Artwork Displayed: Luna de la Cosecha



Year Created: 2022

Format: Textile collage

Dimensions: 23 ½ x 17 ½ in (59,7 x 44,5 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Riverside, California

Einar and Jamex de la Torre (born 1963 and 1960)

For over three decades, brothers Einar and Jamex de la Torre have collaborated to create densely layered, richly embellished multimedia works and installations. Their work features humorous and sometimes jarring juxtapositions of seemingly incongruent materials and motifs, which include delicately blown glass, mass-produced trinkets, religious iconography, and Mexican vernacular arts, all reflecting the brothers' bicultural identities living and working in both Mexico and the United States. As Einar explains, “[J]ust crossing the border is surreal business in our changing world when it comes to the differences in cultures.”

The de la Torre brothers were born in Guadalajara, Mexico, and currently split their time between San Diego and Baja California, Mexico. They are recipients of numerous honors, including the United States Artists fellowship award, a Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation grant,

and a Joan Mitchell Foundation grant. They have exhibited extensively in the United States and internationally and their work is in the collections of institutions such as the National Museum of Mexican Art, Chicago; the Corning Museum of Glass, New York; and the Lowe Art Museum at the University of Miami.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Faun in the Big City



Year Created: 2014

Format: Blown glass, lenticular, LED light box, and aluminum

Dimensions: 37 ¾ x 37 ¾ x 10 in (95,9 x 95,9 x 25,4 cm)

Courtesy of the artists and Koplín Del Río Gallery, Seattle, Washington

Title of Artwork Displayed: Transdifferentiation IV



Year Created: 2016

Format: Lenticular print, resin castings, LED light box

Dimensions: 52 x 42 in (132,1 x 106,7 cm)

Courtesy of the artists and Koplín Del Río Gallery, Seattle, Washington

Francisco Palomares (born 1989)

Francisco Palomares is a painter, educator, and performance artist whose work honors and brings visibility to East Los Angeles, where he grew up and currently works. As a first-generation Mexican American, Palomares celebrates the immigrant spirit, entrepreneurship, and the American dream within that community while advocating for its recognition in the face of gentrification. His still lifes, landscapes, and portraits blend techniques from classical European painting with ordinary scenes from his neighborhood, including storefronts, helium balloons, flowers, and piñatas. In his words, this creative strategy “provide[s] a platform for stories unheard, people unseen, and places overlooked.”

Palomares earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in drawing and painting from California State University, Long Beach. His work was recently acquired by the Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art & Culture in Riverside, California. He is currently an associate artist educator at LA

Commons, a community organization that facilitates public art projects through youth leadership development.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Mariposas, Flores y Escobas



Year Created: 2022

Format: Oil on canvas

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

Courtesy of the artist and Bermudez Projects, Los Angeles, California

Title of Artwork Displayed: Piñata in a 17th Century Landscape



Year Created: 2022

Format: Oil on canvas

Dimensions: 72 x 60 in (182,9 x 152,4 cm)

Courtesy of the artist and Bermudez Projects, Los Angeles, California

Joe Peña (born 1971)

Joe Peña’s paintings explore cultural, familial, and social identity, specifically in relation to his Mexican heritage. Over the past decade, his subject matter has ranged from portraits of his community to delicately rendered still lifes of meat typically prepared in Hispanic households. His most recent work shifts the focus to food trucks and storefronts depicted at night, a theme which he views as a “metaphor for the notion of home as an internal sense of place, not merely a physical location.”

Born in Laredo, Texas, Peña earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Corpus Christi State University, Texas, and a Master of Fine Arts degree from Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, where he currently serves as an associate professor of painting. His work is held in the collections of the Cheech Marin Center for Chicano Art & Culture, Riverside, California; the Art Museum of South Texas, Corpus Christi; and the Pyramid Hill Sculpture Park & Museum, Hamilton, Ohio, among others.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Katz, Thailand, Humid Summer



Year Created: 2023

Format: Oil on canvas

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

Courtesy of the artist, Corpus Christie, Texas

Title of Artwork Displayed: Night Ending, Cool Breeze



Year Created: 2022

Format: Oil on canvas

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

Courtesy of the artist, Corpus Christie, Texas

Title of Artwork Displayed: Late Winter, Late Evening



Year Created: 2021

Format: Oil on canvas

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

Courtesy of the artist, Corpus Christie, Texas

Title of Artwork Displayed: Late Evening, Early July



Year Created: 2022

Format: Oil on canvas

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

Courtesy of the artist, Corpus Christie, Texas

Consuelo Jiménez Underwood (born 1949)

“I’d like my work to have a positive effect on a negative reality.”

Consuelo Jiménez Underwood’s socially engaged fiber-arts practice addresses themes such as environmental justice, spirituality, immigration, and her Mexican and Indigenous heritage. Born to agricultural laborers in California, Underwood learned to weave at an early age from her Mexican American mother and her father, a migrant worker of Huichol Indigenous descent from Mexico. After briefly pursuing painting in college, she began creating rebozos (traditional shawls worn by women in Mexico), tapestries, and quilts in the 1960s. Since then, she has incorporated politically and personally relevant materials like corn husks, barbed wire, and plastic bags into her weavings and installations, thereby producing a body of work that continually expands the formal and conceptual boundaries of fiber art.

After working alongside her parents in the fields and ranches of California, Underwood was the first member of her family to graduate high school. She went on to earn bachelor’s and master’s degrees from San Diego State University and a Master of Fine Arts degree from San José State University, where she served as a professor for two decades. Her work is showcased in several permanent collections across the United States, including the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; and the National Museum of Mexican Art, Chicago.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Soaring: American Landscape



Year Created: 2022

Format: Woven linen, wire, metallic threads

Dimensions: 30 ½ x 92 in. (77,5 x 233,7 cm)

Courtesy of the artist and Ruiz Healy Art, New York, New York

Title of Artwork Displayed: Kaut: Border Flowers



Year Created: 2021

Format: Woven and mixed media, linen, wire, and fabric

Dimensions: 50 x 92 in. (127 x 233,7 cm)

Courtesy of the artist and Ruiz Healy Art, New York, New York

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