



Art in Embassies

U.S. DEPARTMENT *of* STATE

Art in Embassies Exhibition: United States Mission to Yemen

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

I am delighted to host an Art in Embassies exhibition at the Residence of the U.S. Ambassador to Yemen. I decided to focus the exhibition on Yemeni American and other Yemeni diaspora artists to underscore the deep, long-standing connections between the United States and Yemen and between our two peoples, to celebrate our shared history and the immigrant experience.

The people of Yemen have a long history, and the artists showcased in this exhibition are the modern standard bearers of a rich cultural heritage. Each one of these works conveys its own powerful message, but in the complete collection, they tell us something emotional and transformative.

With *Lalaland II*, Amr Attamimi takes us to Old Town Sana'a, a city famous for its beauty, bathed in the golden light that precedes the cool air of night. The eyes of his subject, however, are swathed in what appears to be a soft and gentle cloud, but one that is, in fact, obscuring the city from his sight. It calls to my mind the many possibilities that peace will bring to Yemen, including that one day the Yemenis who fled, and, hopefully even Americans like me, will freely see the beauty of Sana'a in person once again.

Ibi Ibrahim's *America* embodies everything I know and admire about the Yemeni people—their dignity, strength, and kindness. Even though the subject's eyes are closed, she turns her face to the light, reveling in its warmth. The Yemeni women I have met carry extraordinary responsibilities, and the serenity depicted of the woman in this photo is one I hope all Yemenis will know in the future. The work also celebrates the extraordinary diversity of the United States, enriched by so many immigrant communities.

Two works in the exhibition, *Forgotten Yemen!* and *Life's Twists and Turns*, are by Nuha Moretz. Because her art is abstract, Moretz invites us to participate in the art itself and to discover what she conveys through her work. The paintings connect two opposites: a moment of stillness and contemplation and a sense of motion. In *Forgotten Yemen*, it is easy to imagine grief for what has been lost in Yemen; we know not why, but perhaps due to conflict, the desert winds, or

difficult choices. In *Life's Twists and Turns*, motion brings to mind evolution and change and the importance of working together to build resilience for the future—universal sentiments to which we can all relate.

Finally, Noor Qwfan's two works, *Vote* and *Bara'a Kids*, evoke both the passion of those actively striving to help their communities through civic participation and the joy of children dancing and laughing together. Yemenis and Americans share the same passions and love for family, and it makes me proud to stand with the people of Yemen as they work to help their children meet their potential and build peace for generations to come.

I am deeply grateful to the artists who have allowed me to share their works, and I thank the Art in Embassies staff for their hard work in putting together this exhibition and accompanying catalog.

Ambassador Steven H. Fagin
U.S. Mission to Yemen
May 2024

Artist Biographies

Amr Attamimi (born 1990)

“Growing up in Yemen comes with a number of limitations, and that is where the alternative inside me was born. Through my photographs, I was able to travel through time and space to reflect my feelings, my imagination and my protesting. I like to take my viewers to a journey where objects and matters are not bound to dimensions, to see how many of us in places like Yemen struggle, indulge and go on with our lives. Through digital photography and manipulation, I bring together the past into the future.”

Photographer Amr Attamimi conveys his experiences and emotions through his art in a country where, it is often challenging to overcome tradition and a conservative society. The inspiration

for his *Lalaland* series was “mixed feelings of wanting to live in the land of imagination. *Lalaland*, however, is not a perfect land for everyone, but it is perfect for [him].” Born and raised in Yemen, Attamimi now lives in England. His work has been exhibited at the Basement Foundation, Sana'a; Paddle 8 Auction; and the European Union Embassy, Sana'a.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Lalaland II



Year Created: 2014

Format: Digital photography

Dimensions: 27 9/16 × 41 5/16 in (70 × 105 cm)

Courtesy of the artist and Emergeast

Ibi Ibrahim (born 1987)

“At times, I see it as a privilege to be Yemeni, artist or not. This is a place as old as history can be. With all its complications, conflicts, and endless wars, I am still very fortunate that I am one who comes from that world. On the other hand, there is a social responsibility towards bringing Yemeni stories to the surface and creating an awareness on Yemeni matters rather than presenting other bodies of work. It's a sacrifice at times.”

In his work, artist, writer, filmmaker, and musician Ibi Ibrahim conveys ideas of home, displacement, and what it means to be dispossessed. Drawing inspiration from his life experiences, Ibrahim often addresses issues of sexuality, gender, and tradition in juxtaposition with the conservative Yemeni society from which he comes. His images have started conversations between Yemeni youth about “the social and cultural effects of the widespread conservatism which has grown in his country and the region over the last forty years.” Ibrahim’s work has been exhibited across the globe and is part of the permanent collections of multiple institutions. He founded of the Romooz Foundation, an independent nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting emerging art and literature in Yemen, and Makan, a New York-based initiative on art and food from countries of conflict and beyond.

Title of Artwork Displayed: America



Year Created: 2020

Format: Digital print on Hahnemuhle photo rag fine art paper

Dimensions: 15 3/4 × 23 5/8 in (40 × 60 cm)

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

Nuha Moretz (born 1948)

“As a largely self-taught artist, I like to use shape, form, colors, and textures to create depth with unique layering of materials. I allow colors and movement to guide my art process in creating original one-of-kind art pieces. Art is a form of communication, and I paint to channel inspiration drawn from my surroundings or to express what I cannot convey through mere words. I like to explore ideas that can be widely interpreted and have different meanings to individuals. My goal is to connect with people through my art in a way that is freeing and emotionally engaging.”

World traveler and Fulbright Scholar Nuha Moretz has been making art for over thirty-five years. Her travels through North and East Africa, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East inform her work; she took art classes, connected with communities, and collected artwork throughout this time. Yemeni American Moretz currently lives and works in Utah.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Forgotten Yemen!



Year Created: 2019

Format: Mixed media, acrylic on canvas

Dimensions: 27 × 21 × 2 in (68,6 × 53,3 × 5,1 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Salt Lake City, Utah

Title of Artwork Displayed: Life's Twists and Turns



Year Created: 2019

Format: Mixed media, acrylic on canvas

Dimensions: 20 × 16 × 1 in (50,8 × 40,6 × 2,5 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Salt Lake City, Utah

Noor Qwfan (born 1990)

“When I am creating, it’s an entire experience where memories of my time [in Yemen] come rushing back, and there are parts of it I remember so beautifully that I am desperate to share them with the world.”

Noor Qwfan is the creator of Noor's Nook, a channel for her creative tendencies. Qwfan’s illustrations are more than just a creative outlet for her; they are also a way to remember her life in Yemen, connect with her culture, and showcase it to the world. “A few of my pieces

depict people dancing, and I really love those because it's still of a celebratory moment, which I think is special in a time like now where Yemen is suffering a lot. As much as I want to raise awareness about what is happening there, I still want to have hope that a time like that can exist again," she says. Born in Yemen and raised in the Central Valley of California, she is also the creator and host of This Muslim Girl Podcast, a platform started in 2017 to amplify the voices of Muslim women.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Vote



Year Created: 2020

Format: Print

Dimensions: 24 x 24 in. (61 x 61 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Bakersfield, California

Title of Artwork Displayed: Bara'a Kids



Year Created: 2020

Format: Print

Dimensions: 24 x 24 in. (61 x 61 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Bakersfield, California

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