



Art in Embassies

U.S. DEPARTMENT *of* STATE

Art in Embassies Exhibition: United States Embassy Brasilia

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

Ambassador's Statement

Welcome to this enchanting exhibition of art inspired by the beauty and diversity of Brazil, a country where culture, nature, radiance, and creativity converge into artistic expression. With its lush rainforests, vibrant streets, endless beaches, and intoxicating music, Brazil has inspired the hearts and minds of artists worldwide. Through these works, I hope to express the deep connection between the United States and Brazil as we celebrate the bicentennial of our diplomatic relations in 2024. Our nations' friendship and partnership reflect a vast range of achievements, especially a rich exchange of ideas and expression in the arts.

It brings me great pride to showcase these artworks at my Chief of Mission Residence.

I immediately fell in love with the premier work in the exhibition, *Brazil* by James Rosenquist, because it displays many of the elements that make this nation colorful and distinct: vibrant flora and fauna, Indigenous and Afro-Brazilian culture, natural gemstones, coffee beans, and the famous architecture of Brasilia. The vivid tapestry of Brazil was also a great inspiration to American artist Patton Blackwell, who spent years in the country before creating the colorful abstract works included here.

The exhibition includes several paintings by renowned abstract expressionist artist Helen Frankenthaler, who invented the "soakstain" technique of color field painting, using color to express the artist's concerns for women's empowerment and the environment, two priority issues for both of our countries.

These beautiful works complement some of the Embassy's longheld treasures: a still-life portrait by Candido Portinari, one of Brazil's most talented and prolific artists of the twentieth century, who painted compelling murals for the U.S. Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., and the famous *War* and *Peace* murals at United Nations headquarters in New York City. The Embassy's collection also includes a piece by James Rosenberg hanging directly opposite this painting, which beautifully complements the vibrant works of color and imagery by Helmut Koller, Bonnie Lautenberg, and Dave Wetherell loaned by Art in Embassies (AIE).

I am grateful to the dedicated curators with AIE for their passion and expertise in facilitating the shipment of these pieces to create this exhibition. AIE was founded in 1963 to showcase the work of American artists at U.S. ambassadorial residences worldwide.

The art is obtained through lending agreements with the nation's leading museums, galleries, institutions, corporations, individual artists, and collectors. Without their generosity, this exhibition would not exist.

Please join me as we embark upon an exploration of the unique energy and perspective of our dynamic diplomatic relationship through this exhibition. I am thrilled when visitors see the art in person, knowing that it conveys my deep respect and admiration for Brazil and the close and enduring ties between our nations.

Ambassador Elizabeth Frawley Bagley

Brasilia, Brazil

July 2024

Artist Biographies

Patton Blackwell (born 1949)

Influenced by nature and her surroundings, Patton Blackwell investigates the intensity of color, the fluidity of paint, and the personal inner landscape in her oeuvre. *Desabrochar*, a Portuguese word meaning “to bloom” in a transcendent sense, and *Untitled (Sem Título)* were painted in her Rio de Janeiro studio with the same brushes and colors she uses for all her paintings. “My strong physical strokes coexist with the ‘accidents’ created by paint dripping down the canvas as [I] search for balance between seeming opposites: the will of the artist versus the inevitability of chance; the tangibility of paint versus the emptiness of raw canvas and [the] internal desire to find resolution,” she says.

Blackwell earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Macalester College, Saint Paul, Minnesota, along with a concentration in painting from the Escola de Artes Visuais do Parque Lage, Rio de Janeiro. She completed artist residencies at the Dorland Mountain Arts Colony, Temecula, California, and the Borgo Santo Pietro Hotel, Palazzetto, Italy. Her work is housed in the permanent collections of the Columbia Museum of Art and the South Carolina House of Representatives.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Untitled (Sem Titulo)



Year Created: 1989

Format: Acrylic on canvas

Dimensions: 55 x 55 in (139,7 x 139,7 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Columbia, South Carolina

Title of Artwork Displayed: Desabrochar



Year Created: 1986-1998

Format: Acrylic on canvas

Dimensions: 74 ½ x 74 ½ in (189,2 x 189,2 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Columbia, South Carolina

Helen Frankenthaler (1928-2011)

With a career spanning six decades, pioneering twentieth-century artist Helen Frankenthaler was part of the second generation of postwar American abstract painters who also experimented with ceramics, sculpture, tapestry, and printmaking. Frankenthaler is credited with fostering the shift from abstract expressionism to color field painting due to her invention of the soak-stain technique. In this technique, she applied washes of thinned paint to an unprimed canvas or paper to produce vivid, flowing blocks of color that dissolved and bled onto the surface. Starting in the 1960s, Frankenthaler favored acrylic, a medium that dried quickly and created opaque, abstract forms. “What concerns me when I work is not whether the picture is a landscape, or whether it’s pastoral, or whether somebody will see a sunset in it. What concerns me is—did I make a beautiful picture?” she said.

Born and raised in New York, Frankenthaler graduated from Bennington College, Vermont, and studied under German abstract expressionist Hans Hofmann and Mexican abstract and

surrealist painter Rufino Tamayo. A member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, she received the National Medal of Arts and was awarded first prize at the Premiere Biennale de Paris. Her first major solo exhibition was at the Jewish Museum, New York, and her second at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Untitled



Year Created: 1978

Format: Acrylic and crayon on paper

Dimensions: 20 x 25 ¾ in. (50,8 x 65,4 cm)

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Title of Artwork Displayed: Untitled



Year Created: 1983

Format: Acrylic on paper

Dimensions: 30 ¾ x 41 ¾ in. (78,1 x 106 cm)

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Title of Artwork Displayed: Untitled



Year Created: 1989

Format: Acrylic on paper

Dimensions: 25 x 37 in. (63,5 x 94 cm)

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Title of Artwork Displayed: Santa Fe I



Year Created: 1990

Format: Acrylic on paper

Dimensions: 19 ¼ x 25 ¾ in. (49,5 x 65,4 cm)

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Title of Artwork Displayed: Untitled



Year Created: 1993

Format: Acrylic on paper

Dimensions: 22 ½ x 30 ½ in. (50,8 x 65,4 cm)

© 2024 Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, Inc. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Title of Artwork Displayed: Untitled



Year Created: 2002

Format: Acrylic on paper

Dimensions: 31 x 40 ½ in. (78,7 x 102,9 cm)

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Helmut Koller (born 1954)

Helmut Koller is renowned for his boldly colorful and festive paintings of animals and wildlife. He defines his style as Kollerism, or “the realistic representation of the form and abstraction of colors.” Despite his neon palette, Koller’s extravagantly saturated and highly detailed animals serve a deeper purpose. “Don’t let the esthetics fool you!” Koller says. “These paintings are powerful symbols, for not agreeing with how things are.”

A native of Austria, Koller completed his photography training in Hartberg and Graz and later became the official photographer for the Vienna State Opera. After immigrating to Manhattan, New York, and later Palm Beach, Florida, he transitioned from photography to painting—first portraying historic portraits of Indigenous peoples before specializing in animals. His works have been exhibited at institutions like the Suppan Fine Arts, Vienna, and the Galleria di Sorrento at Caesar’s Palace, Las Vegas.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Purple Monkey on Red



Year Created: 2016

Format: Acrylic on linen

Dimensions: 55 ½ x 55 ½ in. (140 x 140 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, West Palm Beach, Florida

Title of Artwork Displayed: Parrot on Red



Year Created: 2021

Format: Acrylic on linen

Dimensions: 31 ½ x 55 ⅞ in. (80 x 140 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, West Palm Beach, Florida

Title of Artwork Displayed: Black Leopard on Dark Blue



Year Created: 2015

Format: Acrylic on canvas

Dimensions: 48 x 48 in. (122 x 122 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, West Palm Beach, Florida

Title of Artwork Displayed: Lion on Green



Year Created: 2010

Format: Acrylic on linen

Dimensions: 47 ¼ x 63 in. (120 x 160 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, West Palm Beach, Florida

Title of Artwork Displayed: Purple Leopard on Dark Blue



Year Created: 2015

Format: Acrylic on linen

Dimensions: 40 ¼ x 70 ⅞ in. (120 x 180 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, West Palm Beach, Florida

Title of Artwork Displayed: Jaguar with Red Spots



Year Created: 2008

Format: Archival pigment print on paper

Dimensions: 32 x 50 in. (81,3 x 127 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, West Palm Beach, Florida

Bonnie Lautenberg

Bonnie Lautenberg has photographed a wide range of subjects—from politicians and international celebrities to landscapes of Antarctica, Florida, New York, and Cuba. *Even Lady Liberty Lost Some of Her Freedom* depicts the statue and symbol of democracy located in New York. Lautenberg composed this work in response to the COVID-19 pandemic when much of the world wore masks to prevent the disease’s spread. Lady Liberty is wearing an American flag mask, “representing all of us who yearned for the freedom we had always taken for granted and sadly, the over 1 million who died in the United States from Covid,” Lautenberg said.

In addition to photography, Lautenberg is a writer, philanthropist, and businesswoman. In 2022, she was appointed by President Biden to the President’s Advisory Committee on the Arts. Her work can be seen in the collections of the Newark Museum of Art, New Jersey, and the National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington, D.C.

Title of Artwork Displayed: *Even Lady Liberty Lost Some of Her Freedoms*



Year Created: 2020

Format: Dye sublimation on aluminum

Dimensions: 33 ½ x 26 ½ in. (85,1 x 67,3 cm)

Courtesy of the Clymer Museum of Art, Ellensburg, Washington

Candido Portinari (1903-1962)

Candido Portinari, renowned as one of Brazil's foremost painters, left behind a notable artistic legacy that delves into the core of Brazilian culture, intertwined with strong social awareness. Born to Italian immigrants, Portinari's early success at the Escola Nacional de Belas Artes in Rio de Janeiro allowed him to immerse himself in the works of old masters during his later studies in Europe. Upon his return to Brazil, he embarked on a mission to encapsulate the essence of his homeland, aspiring to cultivate a distinctive artistic style. He ultimately garnered acclaim for his embrace of neo-realism, a genre through which he sought to elucidate the plight and raw beauty of the Brazilian populace. A respected voice within artistic and literary circles, he played an active role in cultural and aesthetic transformations throughout twentieth-century Brazil and later ventured into politics. In a momentous testament to his international renown, Brazil selected Portinari in 1956 to produce artwork for the United Nations headquarters in New York City. *War and Peace*, the murals he created over four years, now adorn the entrance of U.N. Headquarters, serving as enduring symbols of inspiration for the U.N. General Assembly.

The painting is a registered work of art in the Projeto Portinari. (<http://www.portinari.org.br/>).

Title of Artwork Displayed: Vase of Anthuriums



Year Created: 1949

Format: Oil on canvas

Dimensions: 35 x 30.3 in. (89 x 77 cm)

Collection of the U.S. Embassy Brasilia, Cultural Heritage

James Rosenberg (1874-1970)

James Rosenberg's passion for art emerged early in life as he collected art throughout his career as a New York lawyer before fully committing to his artistic endeavors later in life. In his art practice, Rosenberg worked with pastels and oils, gaining recognition for his skillful brushwork, particularly in his landscapes portraying the serene beauty of the Adirondack Mountains. Additionally, his urban compositions resonated with viewers, adeptly portraying the intricacies of urban life with a palpable sense of drama and disarray. Among Rosenberg's work, one standout creation remains the lithograph titled *Dies Irae (Day of Wrath)*, immortalizing the tumultuous events surrounding the stock market crash of 1929 in New York City and encapsulating Rosenberg's ability to infuse his art with emotional depth and narrative significance.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Road to Mimville



Year Created: 1944

Format: Oil on canvas

Dimensions: 46 x 35.4 in. (117 x 90 cm)

Collection of the U.S. Embassy Brasilia, Cultural Heritage

James Rosenquist (1933-2017)

One of America's leading pop artists, James Rosenquist fashioned bold, surreal, and enigmatic compositions inspired by print advertisements, periodicals, and photographs. With themes ranging from romantic to ecological to existential, Rosenquist's monumental, eye-catching paintings are developed from fragmented images from popular culture with inconsistent scale and juxtaposition. With *Brazil*, Rosenquist endeavored to "illuminate the spirit of a diverse, dynamic land." Featuring gemstones, coffee beans, and citrus fruit—among Brazil's many natural resources—an image of the Brazilian flag is also projected through a clear acrylic rod located at the painting's bottom center.

Along with continued studies at the Art Students League of New York, Rosenquist received an Associate of Arts degree in studio art from the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis. Before becoming a full-time artist, he painted billboards in New York City, an experience reflected in his own art. Museum collections with his work include the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; the Guggenheim Museum, New York; and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Brazil



Year Created: 2004

Format: Oil on canvas, with optical element (back-lit printed-image transmitted through a clear acrylic rod)

Dimensions: 93 x 288 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (236,2 x 732,5 x 18,4 cm)

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Dave Wetherell

David Wetherell obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree in mathematics from Ohio Wesleyan University, Delaware, Ohio, and an honorary doctorate from Bryant University in Smithfield, Rhode Island. Along with his artistic pursuits, Wetherell has spent over twenty years as a chief executive officer in the high-tech industry, as well as seventeen years in venture capital. Wetherell pursues abstract expression and impression with a focus on the harmonic tensions between order and disorder, as well as with optical illusions, leveraging the dynamic interplay of color.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Abstract Build



Year Created: 2019

Format: Oil on canvas

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

Courtesy of the artist, Palm Beach, Florida

Title of Artwork Displayed: Abstract Build



Year Created: 2020

Format: Oil on canvas

Dimensions: 44 x 40 in. (118,8 x 101,6 x 121,9 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Palm Beach, Florida

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