



Art in Embassies

U.S. DEPARTMENT *of* STATE

Art in Embassies Exhibition: United States Embassy Havana

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 to America's Home in Cuba

It is our pleasure to welcome you to the Residence of the United States Chief of Mission to Cuba, a grand home inaugurated in February 1942. With exterior walls made of Jamanitas, a pinkish grey limestone native to Cuba, and an interior finished in marble, greenstone, hardwood, and bronze, this spacious and sunlit residence provides a perfect setting for an exhibition of a colorful, dynamic mix of modern and Native American art.

Margrét and I fell in love with Native American art during our first visit to the Southwest in 1988, a month before joining the Foreign Service. Having just finished our Master's degrees at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, where Margrét and I met, we bought our first Navajo rug, Acoma Pueblo pot, and lithograph that are now on display at our residence. When we began this journey, we dreamt of being able to one day show our pieces as part of an exhibition from the Art in Embassies program. Upon learning of our appointment to Havana, we returned to New Mexico where we were able to obtain, on loan, a spectacular painting by artist Alvin Gill-Tapia, born in Santa Fe, descendent from generations of New Mexican ranchers. It appeals to us because of its bright colors and geometric shapes, which are in harmony with the rest of the exhibition. We were struck by his spectacular depiction of Taos pueblo, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, home to the Puebloan people, one of the oldest continuously inhabited communities in the United States. We also borrowed a stunning antique Navajo rug, courtesy of the Medicine Man Gallery in Tucson, Arizona.

We hope that you will enjoy the mix of art from New Mexico's "land of enchantment" with abstract works, including by Sam Gilliam, who elevated the Washington D.C. art scene, which happens to be my hometown. We also included vintage photographs from the early 20th century by world renown Edward Curtis, who captured the essence and character of Native Americans.

The exhibition reflects the rich diversity which makes the United States the great nation it is today. A nation where a first generation, American-born citizen of Spanish descent can become a two-time Ambassador and with his Icelandic born wife, represent the United States in Havana. As you admire the art, Margret and I would like for the Residence to be a place where

people can express themselves freely and forge indelible bonds as we strive to overcome difficult challenges and achieve a better future.

Our appreciation goes to the Art in Embassies program, particularly Curator Camille Benton for her work in helping shape this exhibition. We would also like to thank the artists and galleries who loaned works, as well as all those Embassy Havana personnel who helped make the exhibition possible.

Enjoy, and come back often!

Chief of Mission Mike Hammer and Margrét Björgúlfsdóttir
Havana, Cuba

Artist Biographies

Alice Baber

Composed of undulating, organic shapes, Alice Baber's abstract paintings and watercolors vibrate with color. To achieve this luminous effect, she applied transparent layers of diluted oil paint to her primed canvases, a time-consuming process that often required further thinning with a turpentine-soaked rag. While Baber used a variety of abstract forms in her work, she preferred elongated circles, believing they conveyed the greatest sense of motion across the composition.

Baber began painting at the age of eight, later studying art at Indiana University in Bloomington. She also traveled extensively, exhibiting and lecturing in thirteen Latin American countries under the auspices of the State Department. Her legacy is honored at the Baber Midwest Modern Art Collection of the Greater Lafayette Museum of Art in Indiana and the Alice Baber Memorial Art Library in East Hampton, Long Island, New York. Her paintings are in major museum collections throughout the world.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Blue Drum of the Jaguar's Ladder



Year Created: 1978

Format: Oil on canvas

Dimensions: 58 x 77 in (147,3 x 195,6 cm)

Collection of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.; Gift of The Estate of Alice Baber

Title of Artwork Displayed: Purple Melting Point



Year Created: 1977

Format: Watercolor

Dimensions: 36 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 28 $\frac{1}{2}$ in (93,3 x 72,4 cm)

Collection of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.; Gift of The Estate of Alice Baber

Eleanore Berman

Painter Eleanore Berman's work encompassed a variety of abstract idioms throughout her three-decade career. Her pieces—ranging from large, bold canvases to delicate, embossed intaglios—often incorporated organic forms derived from the natural world. Born in New York, Berman began drawing as a child, sketching the trees, bridges, and ponds of Central Park. In the 1990s, she also painted impressionistic still lifes of plants and flowers, inspired by the garden she tended at her Los Angeles home.

Berman studied with modernist painter Josef Albers at the Black Mountain College in Asheville, North Carolina, and earned a bachelor's degree from the University of California, Los Angeles. Her work was the subject of more than thirty solo exhibitions throughout her lifetime and can be found in the collections of such institutions as the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Brooklyn Museum, New York.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Paradigm



Year Created: c. 1980

Format: Acrylic on paper

Dimensions: 40 x 29 in. (101,6 x 73,7 cm)

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

Heimir Björgúlfsson

Heimir Björgúlfsson evaluates how animal species adapt to and interact with the everchanging urban world. Growing up in Iceland, he aspired to be an ornithologist and constantly sketched birds; upon moving to the Netherlands for school, he was exposed to “a country significantly altered by human intervention.” This contrast shaped his artistic direction, and he continues to compose animal-based works like *Alles ist möglich* , or, *Everything is possible*. “Through such

examples of unpredictable consequences, what do we know and think about the so-called laws of nature and species adaptation?" he asks.

Born in Reykjavík, Iceland, Björgúlfsson now lives and works in Los Angeles. He received a Master of Fine Arts degree from the Sandberg Institute and a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the Gerrit Rietveld Academy, both in Amsterdam, and he graduated from the Sonology program at the Royal Conservatory in The Hague, the Netherlands. His work has been exhibited widely in Europe and the United States.

Title of Artwork Displayed: *Alles ist möglich*



Year Created: 2024

Format: Acrylic on canvas

Dimensions: 32 x 24 in. (81,3 x 61 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Los Angeles, California

Edward S. Curtis

Edward S. Curtis was renowned for documenting the American West and Indigenous Peoples in his photography. He won widespread acclaim for his gold-toned platinum prints called “Curt-Tones.” Curtis produced a luminous effect in his pictures by printing a reversed image on glass and backing it with a mixture of powdered gold pigment and banana oil. He also experimented with silver and platinum pigments.

Between 1907 and 1930, Curtis published *The North American Indian*, a photographic and ethnographic record consisting of twenty volumes and 2,200 photogravures that documented over eighty Native American nations and tribes. Curtis attempted to photograph the Indigenous tribes before their continued contact with Anglo cultures, “revealing people whose traditional ways of life were coming to an end as the U.S. frontier began to fade.” Today, his photographs receive criticism for their romanticized portrayal of Native American life, while disregarding the often times harsh and oppressive reality.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Sioux Chiefs



Year Created: c. 1905

Format: Contemporary digital photograph of a platinum print

Dimensions: 17 x 19 in. (43,2 x 48,3 cm)

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

Title of Artwork Displayed: Curley, Apsaroke



Year Created: c. 1905

Format: Contemporary digital photograph of a platinum print

Dimensions: 19 x 17 in. (48,3 x 43,2 cm)

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

Gene Davis

Celebrated for his lively compositions of thin, multicolored, and hard-edged vertical stripes, Gene Davis also specialized in collage, silhouette self-portraits, and other conceptual pieces. He utilized an observational, musical approach when painting, comparing his “playing by eye” to a jazz musician who plays by ear. In the 1960s, he experimented with complex schemes that lend themselves to sustained periods of viewing. “Instead of simply glancing at the work, I select a specific color—and take the time to see how it operates across the painting. Enter the painting

through the door of a single color, and then you can understand what my painting is all about,” Davis said.

A lifelong resident of Washington, D.C., Davis was a prominent member of an artist collective that created abstract works in acrylic colors on unprimed canvas. His works are in several museum collections, notably the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; and the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Black Watch Series III



Year Created: 1974

Format: Silkscreen

Dimensions: 82 x 55 in. (208,3 x 139,7 cm)

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

Stuart Davis

Early American modernist painter Stuart Davis was known for his jazz-infused, abstract art that united the bold, geometric style of advertising with European avant-garde painting. Davis “created an art endowed with the vitality and dynamic rhythms that he saw as uniquely modern and American. In the process, he achieved a rare synthesis: an art that is resolutely abstract, yet at the same time exudes the spirit of popular culture.” He possessed the uncanny ability to “transform the chaos of everyday life into a structured yet spontaneous order that communicates the wonder and joy that can be derived from the color and spatial relationships of everyday things.”

Davis was invited to participate in the 1931 Armory Show, the first exhibition of European avant-garde art in the United States. As a political and social activist, he took on numerous roles as Editor in Chief of *Art Front* and muralist for the Federal Art Project of the Works Projects Administration. He represented the United States at the Venice Biennale and earned the Guggenheim International Award in 1958 and 1960.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Composition



Year Created: 1964

Format: Silkscreen

Dimensions: 23 ½ x 26 ½ in. (59,7 x 67,3 cm)

Collection of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Philip Berman

Sam Gilliam

Abstract artist Sam Gilliam was an innovative figure in American painting during the 1960s. Taking inspiration from the improvisational nature of jazz, he created experimental work that embodied “an increasing variety of forms, moods, and materials.” Gilliam was known for his hallmark drape paintings, in which lengths of painted canvas were suspended from the walls or

ceilings of exhibition spaces. “We need to continue to think about the whole of what art is, what it does,” he said.

Gilliam’s work has been exhibited extensively and is included in over fifty permanent collections, including the Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; Tate Modern, London; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and the Art Institute of Chicago.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Untitled



Year Created: 2001

Format: Screenprint

Dimensions: 40 5/8 x 47 3/4 in. (103,2 x 121,3 cm)

Collection of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.; Gift of Lincoln Center / Vera Liszt Art Program

Alvin Gill-Ta[oa

Alvin Gill-Tapia's work honors the historical and sacred structures of the American Southwest, specifically the land beneath the Sangre de Cristo Mountains in New Mexico, an area cultivated by his family for four generations. The adobe buildings there functioned as meaningful and spiritual locations for the community to come together. *Enchanting Taos* was painted after Gill-Tapia's tour of Taos Pueblo, a UNESCO World Heritage site. "I felt connected to the earth and the buildings, they feel as if they have risen from below. Sheltering and embracing their occupants, as if to hug and protect. The air was filled with family, friends and happiness."

Gill-Tapia studied with weaver and painter Maud Henon in Belgium, immersing himself in the art and culture. Later, he took classes in painting, drawing, and anatomy at the Art Student's League of New York, the New York Academy, and the National Academy of Art. Today, Gill-Tapia lives in a home built by his family and paints every day, inspired by the sacred places of his home state.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Enchanting Taos



Year Created: 2024

Format: Gold/copper leaf and acrylic on linen

Dimensions: 48 x 60 in. (121,9 x 152,4 cm)

Courtesy of the artist and Manitou Galleries, Santa Fe, New Mexico

Larry McNeil

Photographer and printmaker Larry McNeil's work is largely informed by his Native American identity and his awareness of the intersections and conflicts within American culture. "I love the idea of making art that was designed to act so specifically as an ambassador for our people. I was thinking of who we really are as Americans, both Indigenous and proverbial 'melting pot' that forms our collective identity," McNeil said.

First Light, Winter Solstice injects a dose of subversive humor into a familiar, iconic depiction of Indigenous Peoples. “Something is a bit amiss though; the bottom of the pictograph is pixilated. The image of the Indians riding their horses into the sunrise has them taking a fleeting look at a weathered ‘Rez car.’ A Rez car is often old and beat up, sometimes barely running, sometimes trying to blend back into the earth. Rez cars have become part of our identity. This image is a revised mythological view of Indians because it includes a Rez car and is not the romanticized view of Indians as being a vanishing race.”

Title of Artwork Displayed: First Light, Winter Solstice



Year Created: 2007

Format: Six color lithograph printed on white Somerset satin paper

Dimensions: 31 ½ x 39 in. (80 x 99,1 cm)

Collection of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.; In collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C.

Navajo Tribe Unknown Weaver

Dated around the 1920s and 1930s, this Navajo Diné weaving originates from the Red Mesa trading post area in northeastern Arizona—a place that is considered one of the most isolated areas in the United States. The weavers are known for their intricate designs, interlocking colors, and quality patterns.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Navajo Red Mesa Rug



Year Created: circa 1920-1930

Format: Wool

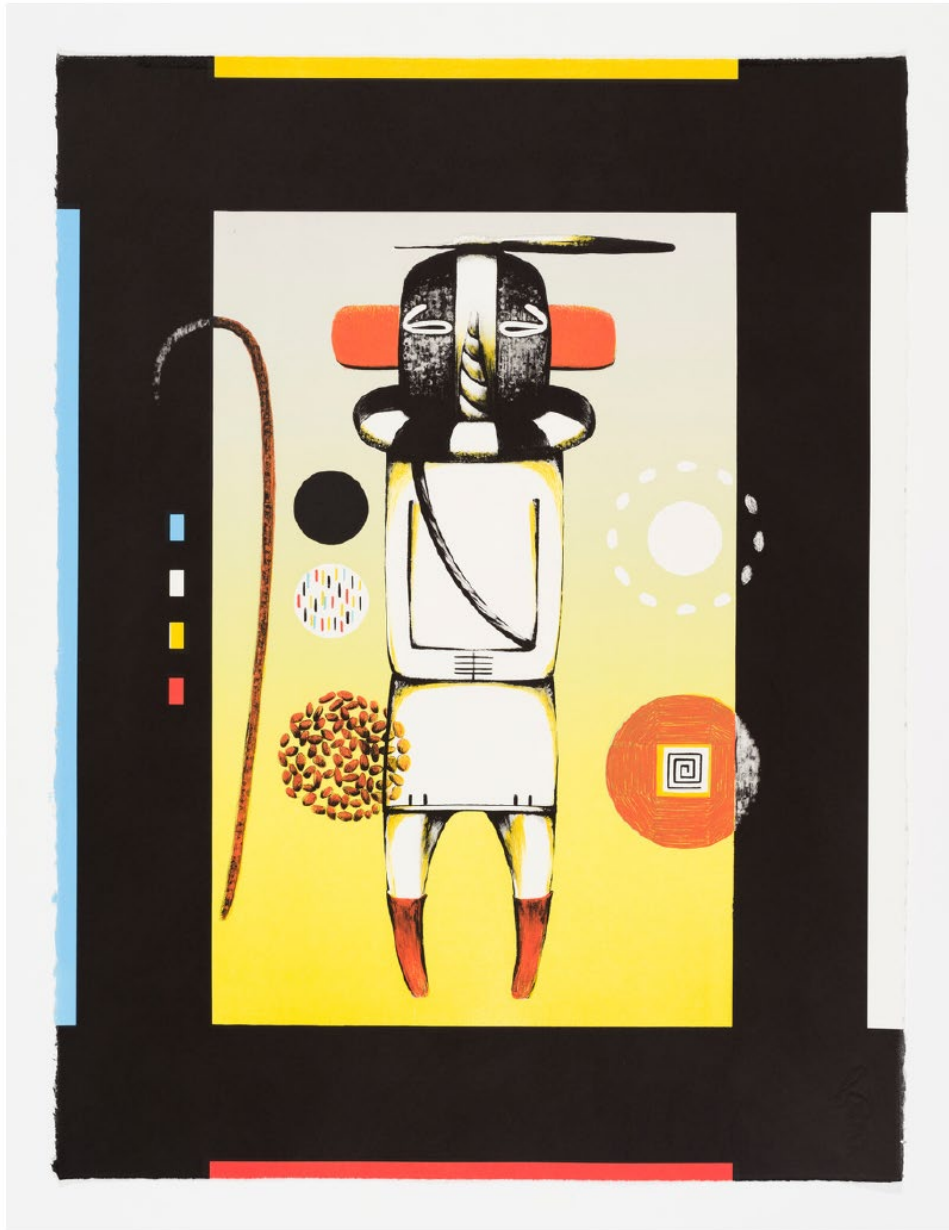
Dimensions: 68 ½ x 42 in. (174 x 160,7 cm)

Courtesy of Mark Sublette Medicine Man Gallery, Tucson, Arizona

Dan Namingha

Painter and sculptor Dan Namingha creates images of his homeland and the Hopi people that convey an unwavering respect for the earth and his ancestry. In his work, the viewer gets a guarded glimpse of sacred traditions such as *kachinas* —spirit messengers that represent blessings, ancestors, and cloud people. “Through a process of fragmentation and assembly, I visually condense my subject matter to convey the greatest artistry with minimal elements. I see myself as a kind of bridge between worlds trying to find that centerline of balance,” Namingha says. *Hopi Montage* was created as part of a collaboration between Art in Embassies and the Institute of American Indian Arts to highlight the vitality of Native American contemporary art. Namingha has won numerous awards, including the Living Treasures Award from the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture, Santa Fe, New Mexico; the Abbott Sekaquaptewa Award from Futures for Children, Albuquerque, New Mexico; and the Visionary Award from the Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Hopi Montage



Year Created: 2015

Format: Hand printed multi photo-plate lithograph

Dimensions: 36 ¾ x 29 in. (93,3 x 73,7 cm)

Collection of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.; In collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C.

LeRoy Neiman

LeRoy Neiman's artwork merged "a Pop Art sensibility with impressionist brushwork and vibrant color." He was known for painting numerous public figures, particularly athletes. Rapidly executing his canvas paintings by quickly applying paint, Neiman presented life's epic, dramatic moments as seen in *Bucking Bronc*. "I do not depart from the colors borrowed from life. But I use color to emphasize the scent, the spirit, and the feeling of the thing I've experienced," he said.

An artist skilled in drawing and selling artworks, Neiman first created posters for local merchants to advertise their store sales. After painting stage sets for shows by the American Red Cross during his stint with the U.S. Army, he used his G.I. Bill to attend the Saint Paul School of Art—now the Minnesota Museum of American Art, Saint Paul— and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Neiman was the official artist of the Olympiad through five Olympics, often painting or sketching on live television.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Bucking Bronc



Year Created: 1977

Format: Serigraph

Dimensions: 31 1/8 x 31 1/8 in. (79,1 x 79,1 cm)

Collection of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Philip Berman

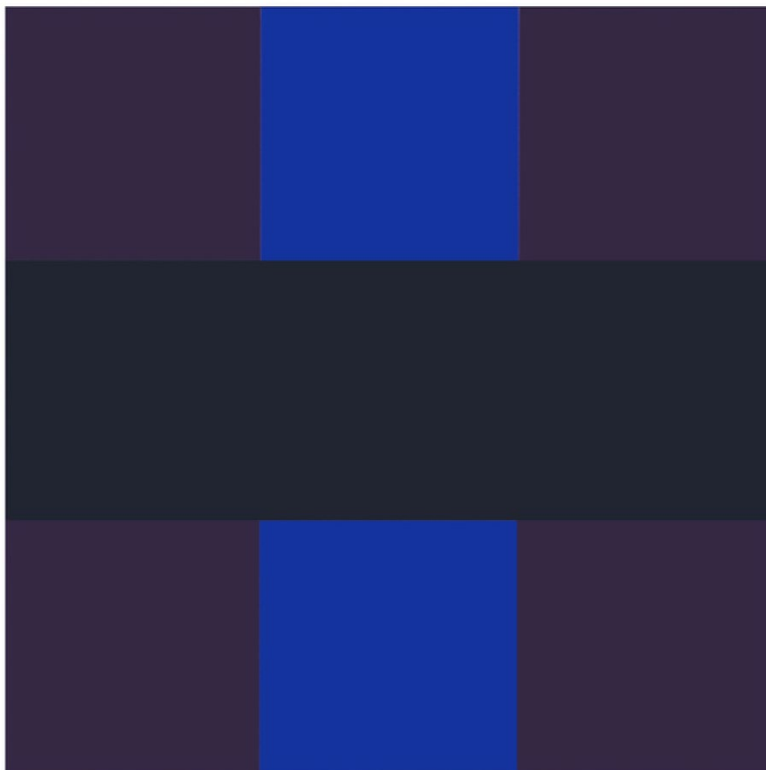
Ad Reinhardt

Ad Reinhardt pioneered hard-edged grid painting and specialized in abstract geometric and monochromatic paintings. In the 1950s, Reinhardt limited his palette to one color, moving from

red to blue before transitioning to black. Inspired by Russian artist Kazimir Malevich's *Black Square*, his later series *Black Paintings* was not made of purely black paint but consisted of numerous dark colors applied in multiple layers. "As an artist, I would like to eliminate the symbolic pretty much, for black is interesting not as a color but as a non-color and as the absence of color," he said.

Born and raised in New York, Reinhardt studied art history at Columbia University and painting at the National Academy of Design. He worked for the Works Progress Administration's Federal Art Project, which hired hundreds of artists to create art for municipal buildings, schools, and hospitals in the United States. His work can be found in the collections of the Tate Gallery, London; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Art Institute of Chicago; and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Black Series #6 (G)



Format: Screenprint

Dimensions: 22 x 21 ½ in. (55,9 x 54,6 cm)

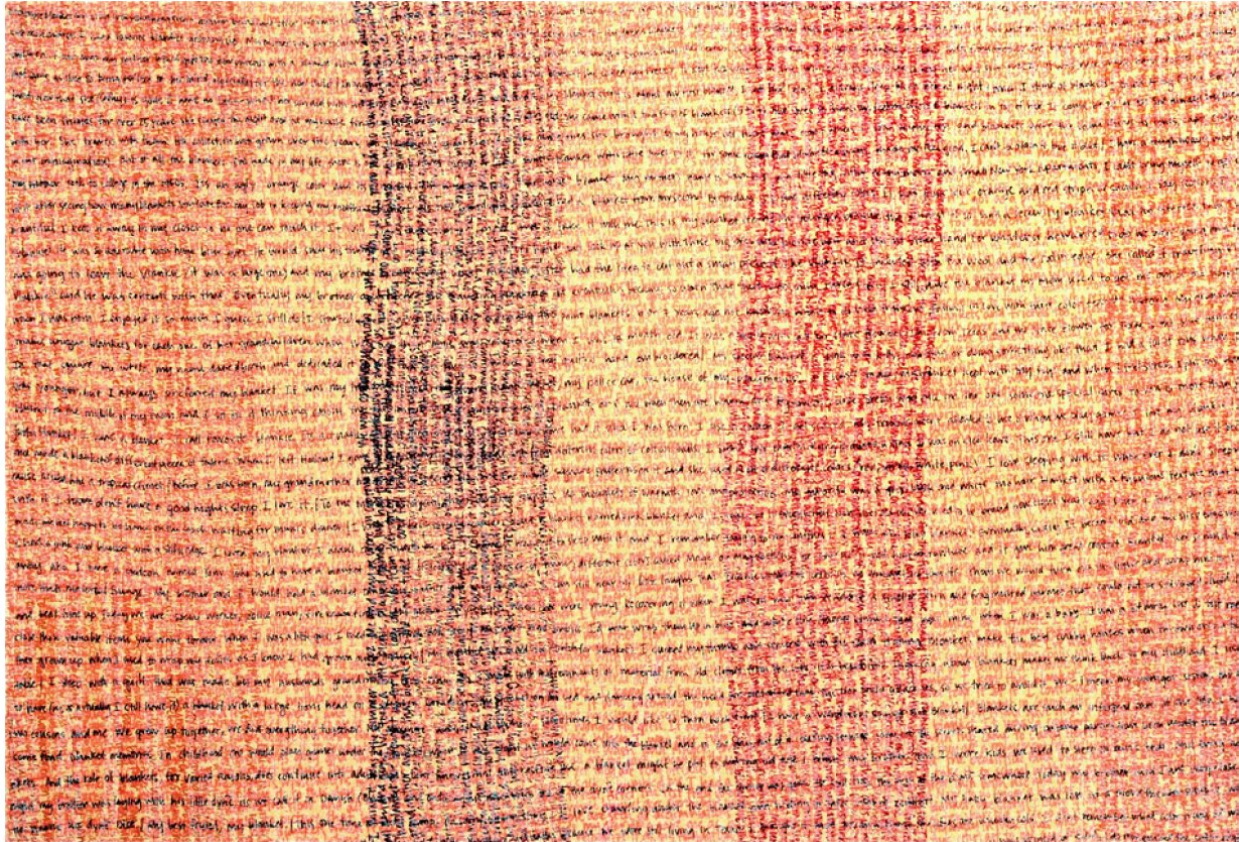
Collection of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Philip Berman

Marie Watt

Marie Watt's work celebrates her Native American heritage and reexamines the objects and traditions associated with Indigenous cultures. At once abstract and concrete, ephemeral and tangible, *Blanket Stories: Continuum (Book I / Book III)* at first appears to be a detail of a woven blanket but reveals itself to be lines of text that mimic the warp and weft of a woven textile. The lithograph's language 'tapestry' reveals the "personal, societal, and cultural histories" embedded in ordinary household items. "My work explores human stories and rituals implicit in everyday objects. I consciously draw from Indigenous design principles, oral traditions, and personal experience to shape the inner logic of the work I make," she said.

Watt, a member of the Seneca Nation of Indians, earned a Master of Fine Arts degree in printmaking from Yale University, Connecticut. Her work has been exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art, both in New York; the Seattle Art Museum; the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C.; and the Denver Art Museum, among others.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Blanket Series: Continuum (Book I / Book III)



Year Created: 2007

Format: Six-color lithograph printed on natural Sekishu on white Arches paper

Dimensions: 31 ½ x 39 in. (80 x 99,1 cm)

Collection of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.; In collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C.

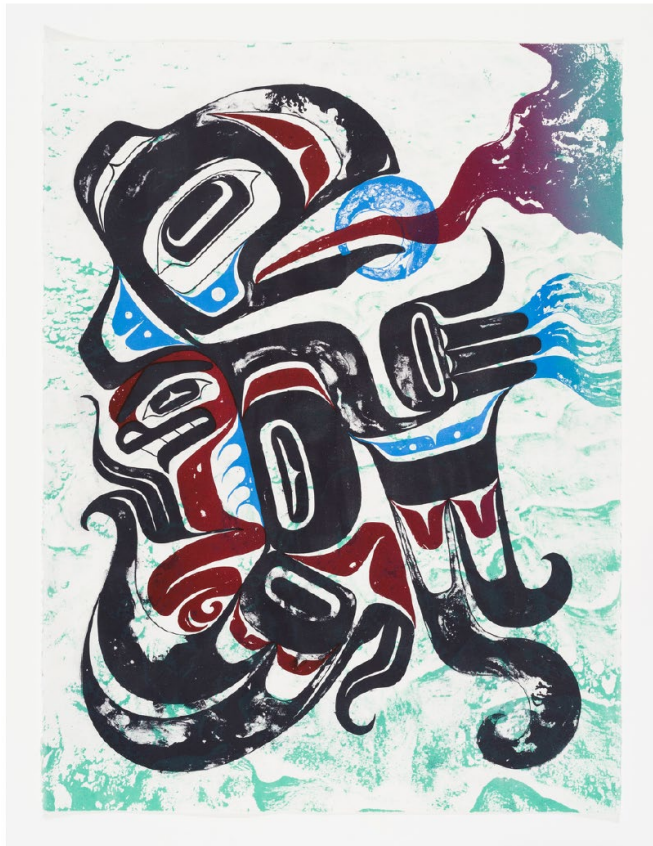
Crystal Worl

Crystal Worl explores the relationships and bonds between her people (she is Tlingit Athabascan), the land, and its animals. Her work includes kiln-cast glass, printmaking, painting, and silversmithing focused on traditional Tlingit forms and Athabascan beadwork patterns. The idea of creating a raven intertwined with a sea serpent came to Worl in a dream: “I was really, really thirsty in my sleep, and I was flying around looking for water, and I saw this huge range of mountains, and I knew there was water on the other side. So, I flew over the mountain, and

there was this huge body of clear water, and I dove into it to quench my thirst and to soak my feathers,” she explained. “As I flew over the land, the water that was in my feathers began to drip and create rain, because the rest of the world was thirsty.”

Worl lives in Juneau, Alaska, where she focuses on Northwest Coast art and exploration of themes and issues in Native culture. She earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the Institute of American Indian Arts, Santa Fe, New Mexico, and her work has been exhibited throughout the Pacific Northwest and abroad.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Into Water



Year Created: 2015

Format: Hand printed, combination of photo-plate lithography with hand built waterless lithography plates

Dimensions: 36 x ¾ x 29 in. (93,3 x 73,7 cm)

Collection of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.; In collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, D.C

Jack Youngerman

Jack Youngerman helped shape the post-abstract expressionist era of American art. His boldly colored work is distinct for his organic forms, crisp outlines, and exploration of shape, particularly noteworthy in his deft handling and dynamic arrangement of positive and negative space. In the 1970s, he began creating elaborate wall reliefs using irregularly shaped canvases and later constructions made of fiberglass, polystyrene, epoxy, and other materials. “People seem to have noticed my surfaces, edges, etc., but not my primary concern, which is finding and inventing new shapes. I am working for something organic and lyrical. I like the expressiveness of locked, meshed, or tension provoking shapes in opposition, a union in combat,” Youngerman said.

Youngerman studied at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; the University of Missouri, Columbia; and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Paris. His work can be found in many public collections, including those of the Art Institute of Chicago; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; and the Museum of Fine Art, Houston.

Title of Artwork Displayed: Images #4



Format: Screenprint

Dimensions: 32 ¼ x 32 ¼ in. (81,9 x 81,9 cm)

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

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