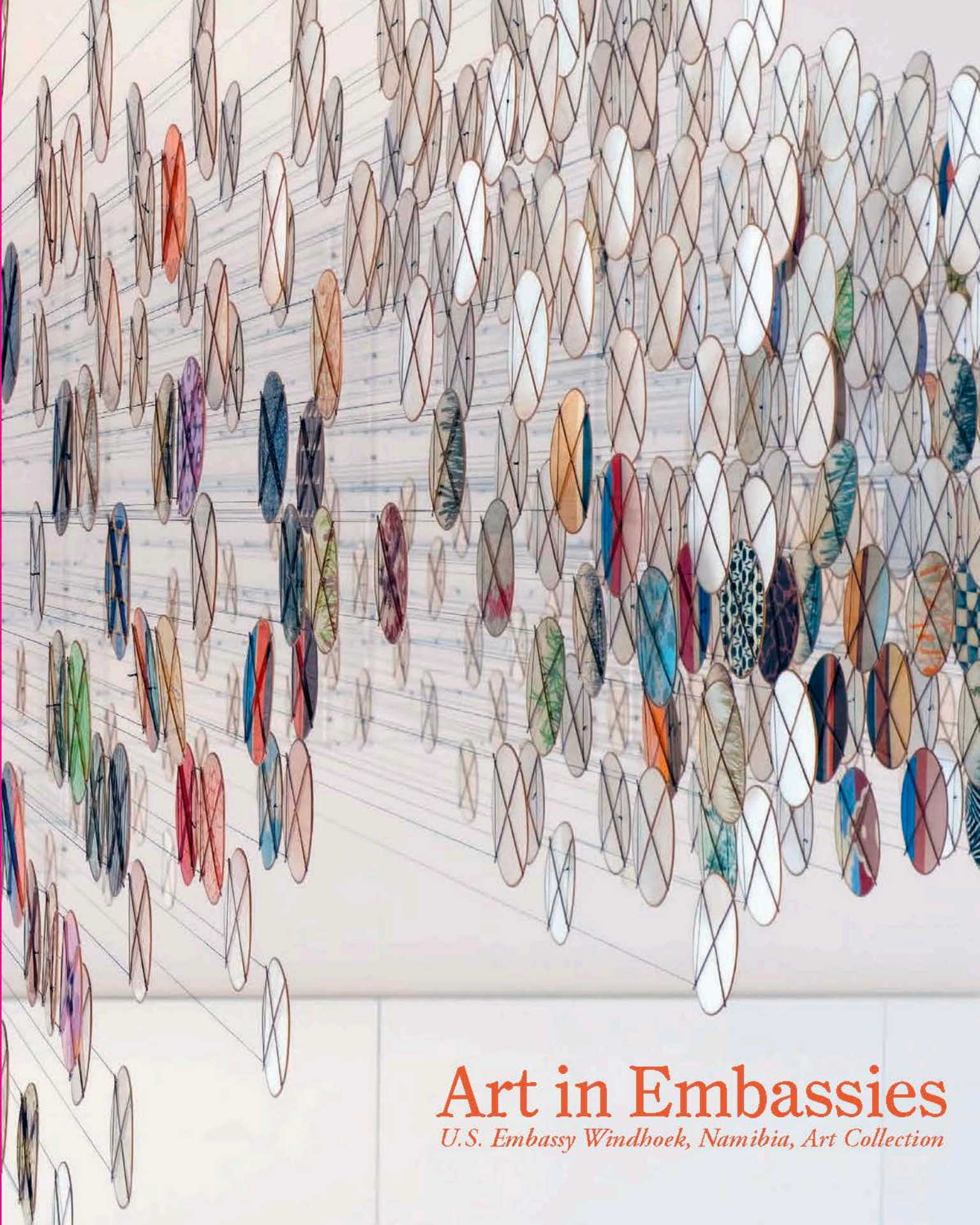




Art in Embassies

U.S. Embassy Windhoek, Namibia, Art Collection

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INTRODUCTION

Windhoek

The permanent collection for the U.S. Embassy in Windhoek, Namibia, curated by Art in Embassies and created by twenty American and Namibian artists, offers visitors and staff an experience of interwoven narratives. Featuring a range of media, the artworks explore connections between land and lineage, tradition and transformation. Together, they celebrate the shared values and distinct perspectives of two nations. Artists Jacob Hashimoto and Walton Ford draw inspiration from Namibia's vast landscapes to create site-specific works that immerse viewers in the country's iconic environment. Hashimoto's suspended installation of 1,200 kites evokes the boundless freedom of Namibia's open skies and horizons, with each printed kite referencing a classic cultural motif. Ford's monumental watercolor, *Namib*, was inspired by the unique conditions that allow lions to roam the beach on the Skeleton Coast. Through their specificity, the works reveal thematically linked visions that enrich the interior of the Embassy while evoking the vastness of Namibia beyond its walls.

Namibian artists Fillipus Sheehama and Tuli Mekondjo delve into themes of cultural heritage and perseverance, blending traditional materials and contemporary narratives. Sheehama's intricate wall hanging, crafted from makalani nut shells sourced from his family's home in northern Namibia, symbolizes sustainability and the strength of communal ties. Mekondjo's multimedia canvases layer historical remnants with contemporary materials, offering a textured exploration of Namibia's evolving identity.

California artist Eric Roinestad and Namibian artist Ismael Shivute draw from traditional forms to craft works that reflect a shared connection to community and cultural practices. Roinestad's black-and-white ceramic vessels reinterpret the intricate ornamentation of the Himba people, a semi-nomadic pastoralist tribe in northwest Namibia. Shivute's soapstone sculptures highlight the enduring bond between materials and meaning, drawing parallels between the landscapes of Namibia and the United States.

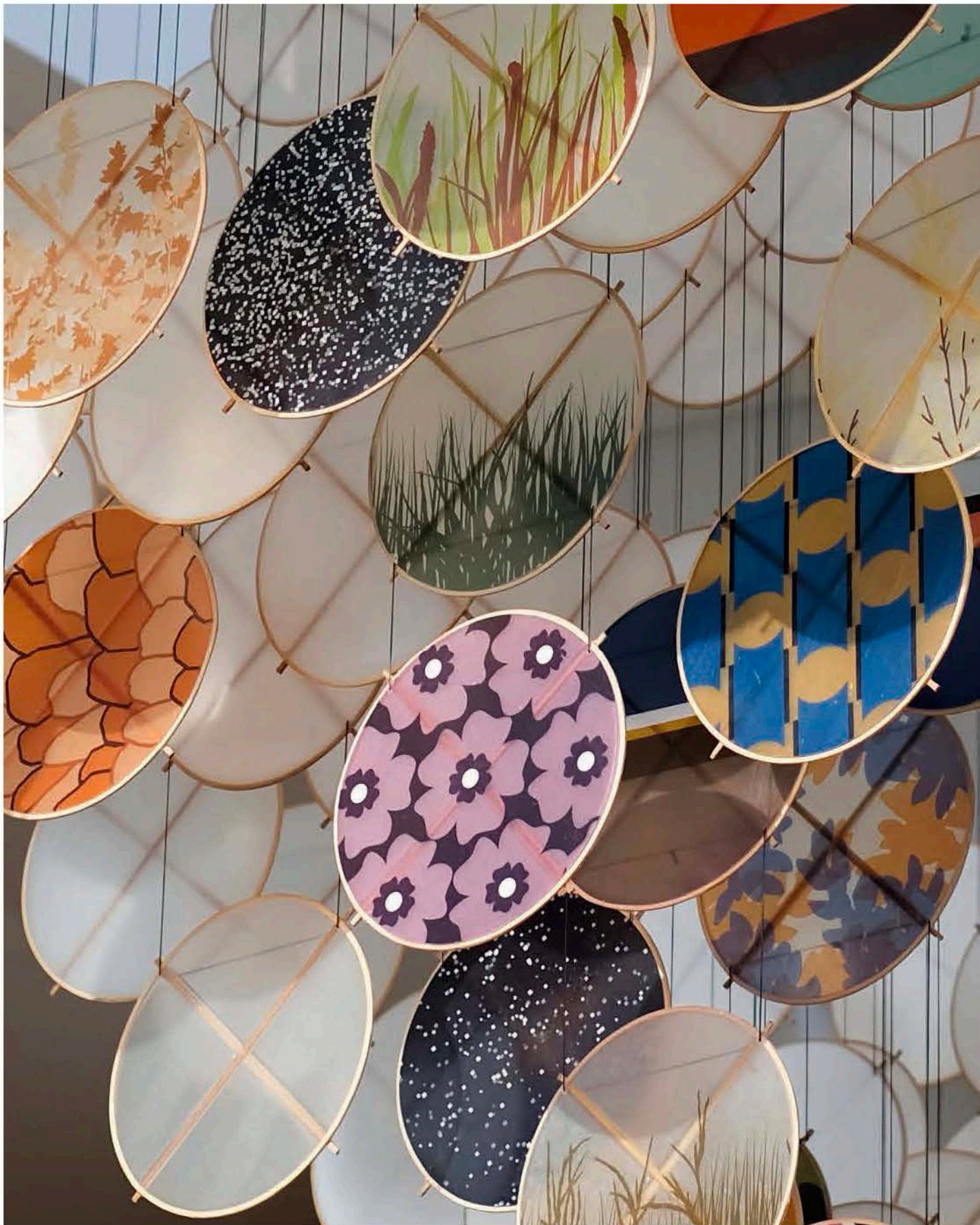
Explorations of personal and collective identity take form in the works by Maria Mbereshu, Jordan Ann Craig, Chelsea Ryoko Wong, and Jo Rogge. Mbereshu's vibrant textiles and abstract paintings honor her Kavango heritage, and Craig's intricate patterns and bold colors explore her North Cheyenne roots. Ryoko Wong's large-scale canvas celebrates moments of joy and kinship within multigenerational families and communities, set against dreamlike landscapes. In contrast, Rogge's reflective drawings confront societal belonging, offering viewers an introspective lens into community dynamics.

The natural world is another prominent thread throughout the collection, exemplified in the photographs of Mark Citret, whose images depict the stark beauty of California's Death Valley, and the vibrant embroideries by Namibia's ArtiSan collective, which reflect the visual language of the San peoples. These works convey a shared reverence for land and tradition across cultures.

Through abstraction, artists Brie Ruais, Lisa Corinne Davis, Nicky Marais, and Elisabeth Condon reimagine the boundaries of transformation through shifts in form, space, and perception—where material becomes both gesture and idea. Ruais's expressive ceramic works document her physical engagement with clay, tracing her movements across the surface to reflect one's relationship to the land. Davis's map-like compositions reinterpret traditional grids, encouraging open-ended interpretations of space and form. Marais's layered paintings evoke transition and convergence, and Condon's lush canvases reinterpret existing landscapes. Collectively, these works establish a vibrant space for cultural dialogue—celebrating the significance of the arts and the importance of cross-cultural exchange between the United States and Namibia.



JACOB HASHIMOTO
The Asymmetrical Mathematics of Memory, 2022
Resin, bamboo, UV prints, Spectra thread, acrylic,
and stainless-steel rods
44 × 11 × 27 feet (1341,5 × 335,4 × 823,2 cm)









TULI MEKONDJO

*Tu yeni oku twadja, komlonga / Let us tread back to the lake,
from where we came from, 2022*

Image transfer, mahangu, resin, acrylic ink, paint marker,
cotton embroidery thread, cotton crochet yarn,
spray paint, and wild silk

83 1/8 x 72 1/2 in. (211,1 x 184,2 cm)





FILLIPUS SHEEHAMA

Ancient Beads iii, 2023

Vegetable ivory from makalani nuts,
whole dried makalani, and rope

102 $\frac{3}{8}$ $\times$ 102 $\frac{3}{8}$ $\times$ 1 $\frac{3}{16}$ in. (260 $\times$ 260 $\times$ 3 cm)









WALTON FORD

Namib, 2023

Watercolor, gouache, and ink on paper

67 3/4 x 127 1/4 in. (172,1 x 323,2 cm)







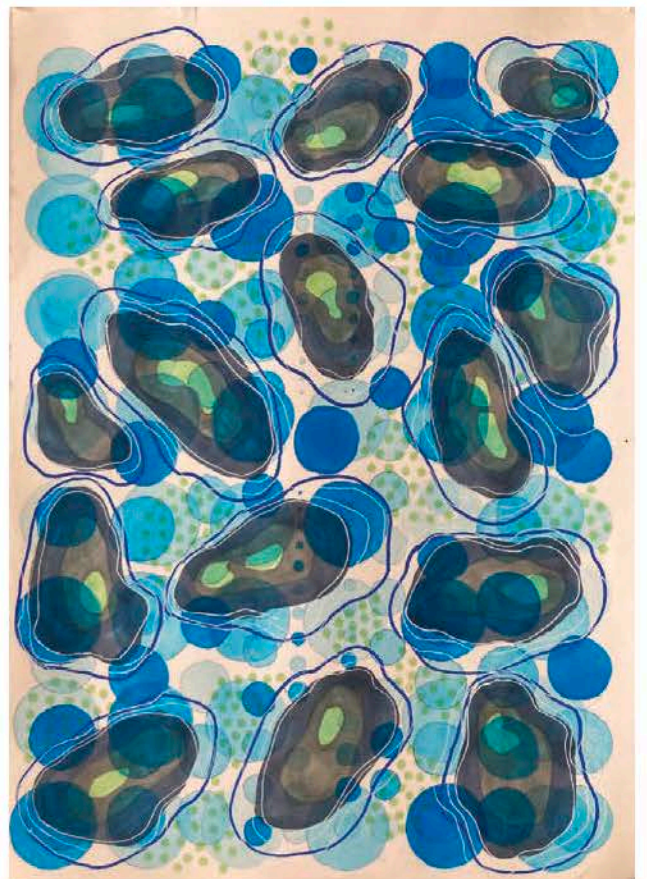
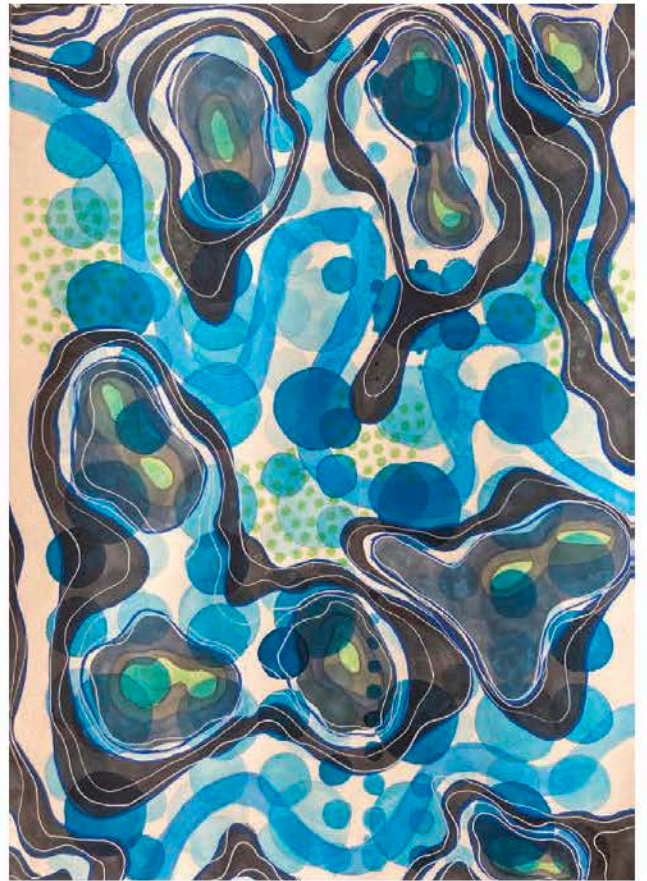


ERIC ROINESTAD
Untitled, 2023
Ceramic
Dimensions variable











JO ROGGE

Detour I, 2022

Detour II, 2022

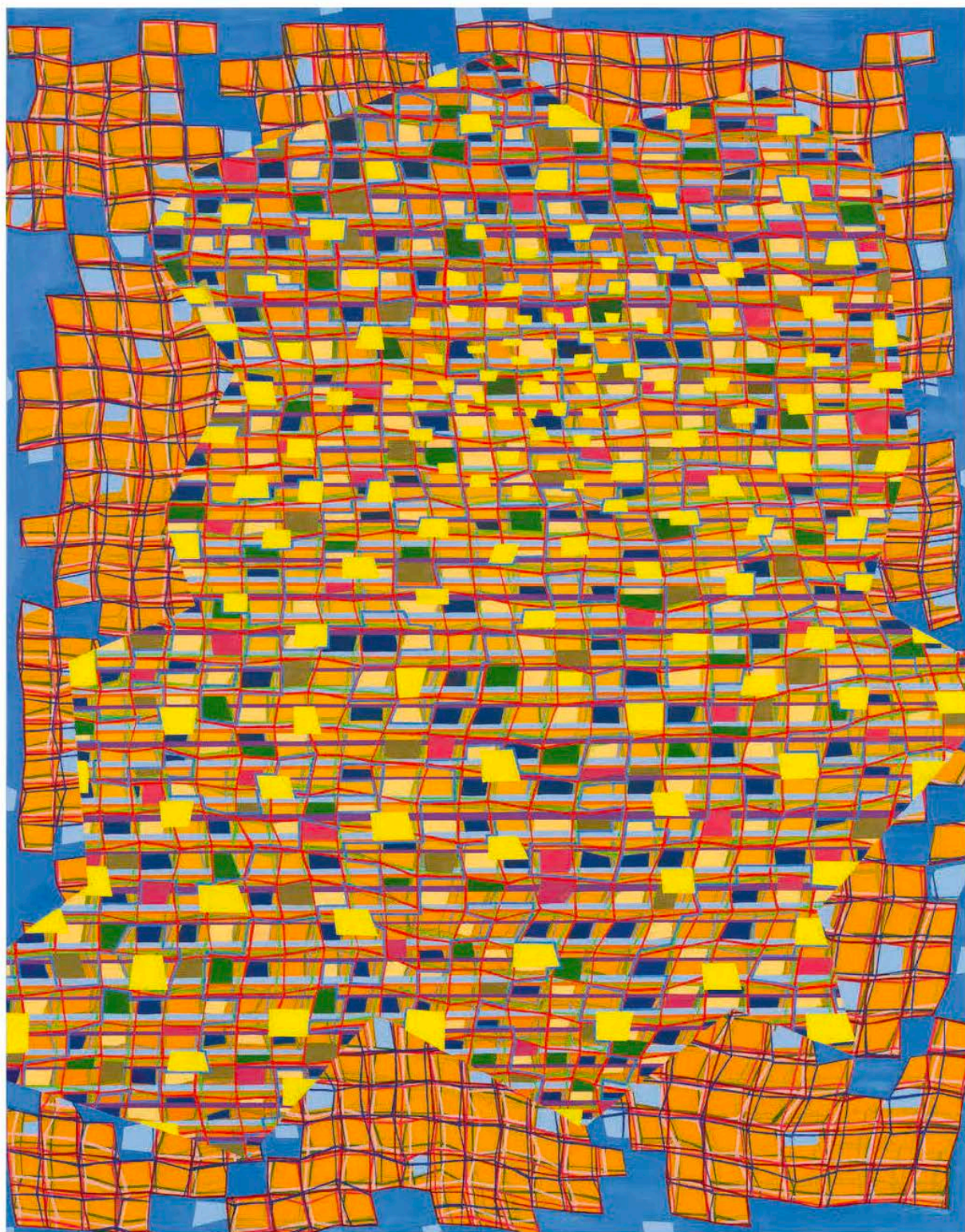
Alcohol marker on paper (2)

22 1/16 x 16 1/8 in. (56 x 41 cm)

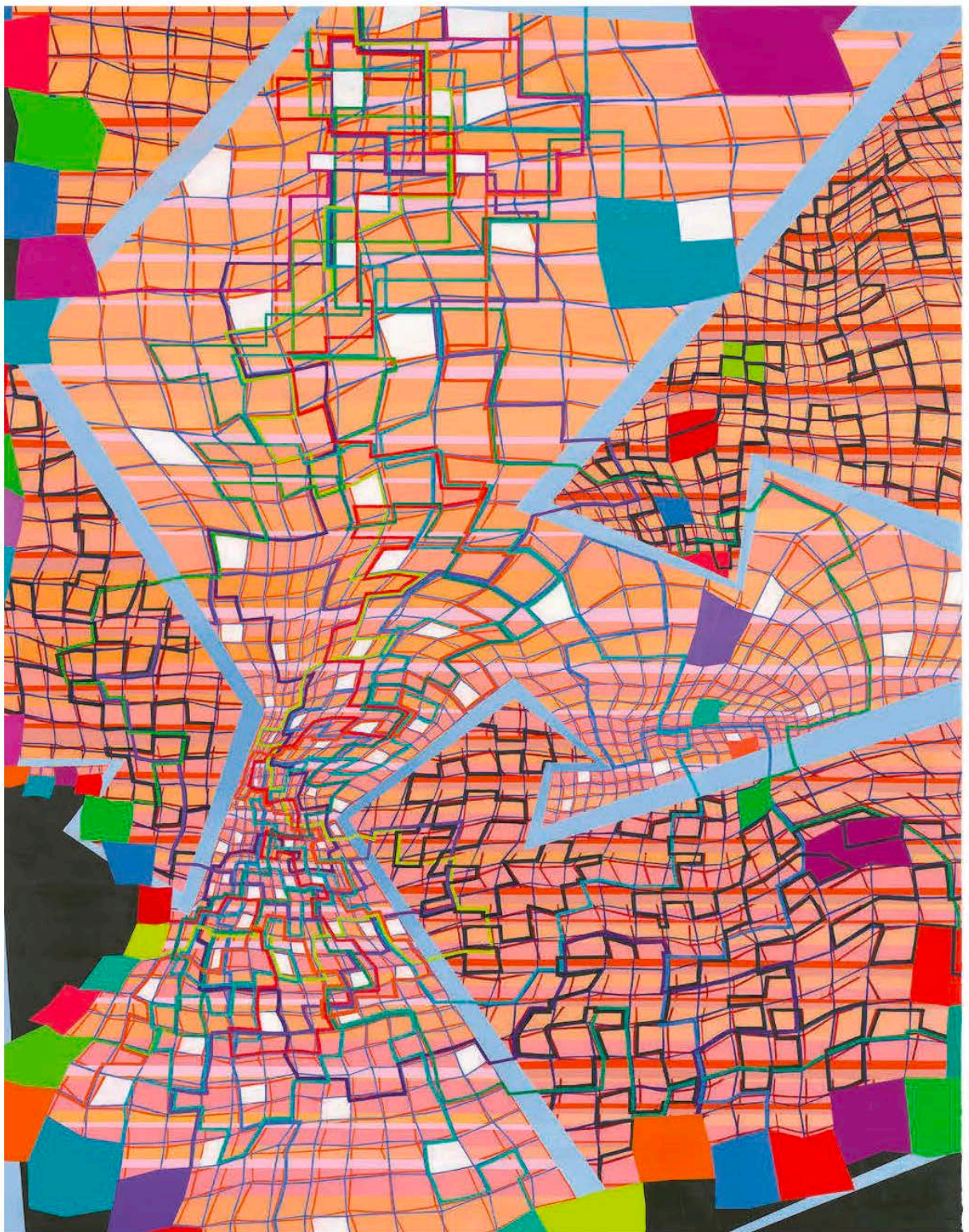


NICKY MARAIS
All Good Dreamers, 2021
Acrylic on canvas
64 ¹⁵/₁₆ × 64 ¹⁵/₁₆ in. (165 × 165 cm)





LISA CORINNE DAVIS
Transient Tally, 2023
Oil on canvas
70 × 55 in. (177,8 × 139,7 cm)



Episodic Precision, 2023
Oil on canvas
70 × 55 in. (177,8 × 139,7 cm)



BRIE RUAIS

Star Made by Punching the Sky (13), 2021

Star Made by Punching the Sky (25), 2021

Star Made by Punching the Sky (3), 2021

Glazed Stoneware (3)

Dimensions variable





 **CHELSEA RYOKO WONG**
To Catch a Dream, 2024
Acrylic on canvas
48 × 72 in. (121,9 × 182,9 cm)









MARK CITRET

Walnut Tree, Sutter Basin, 2003

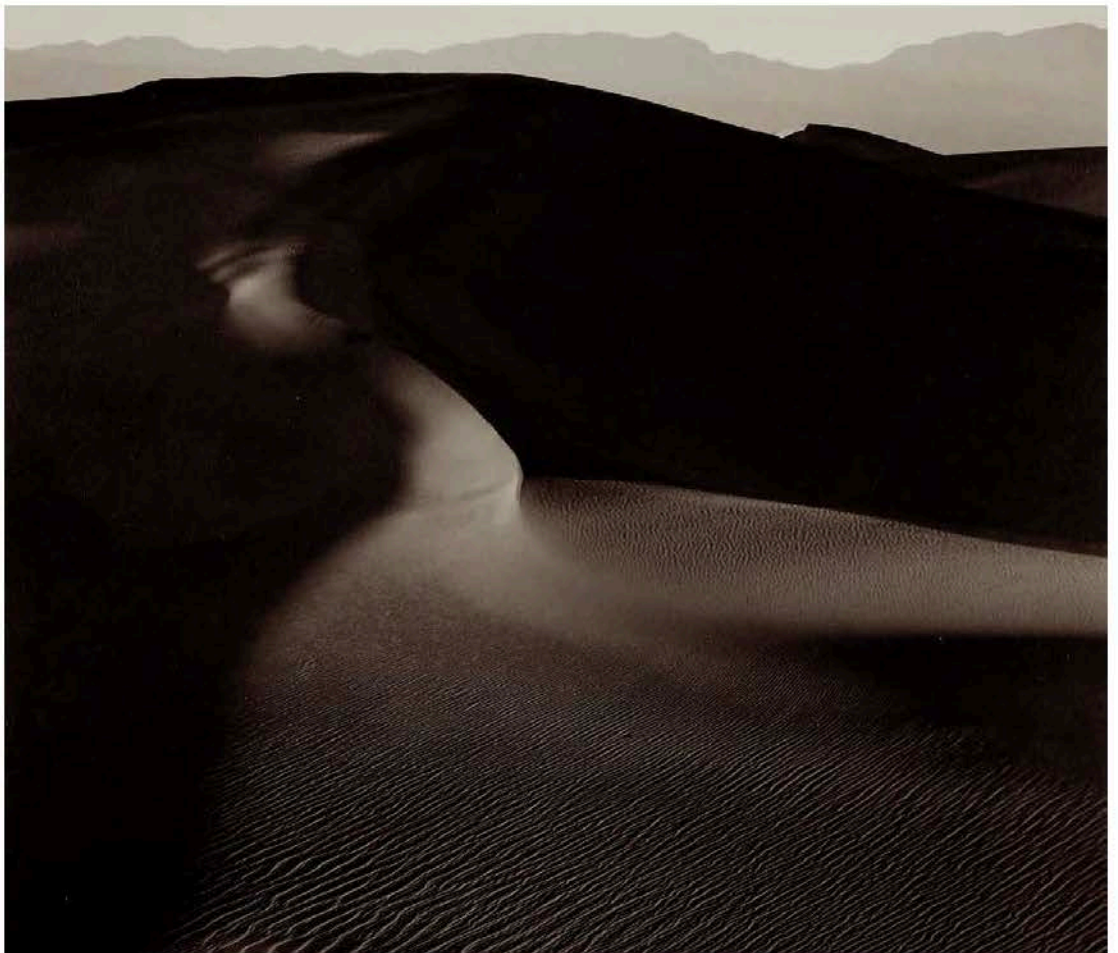
Gelatin silver print

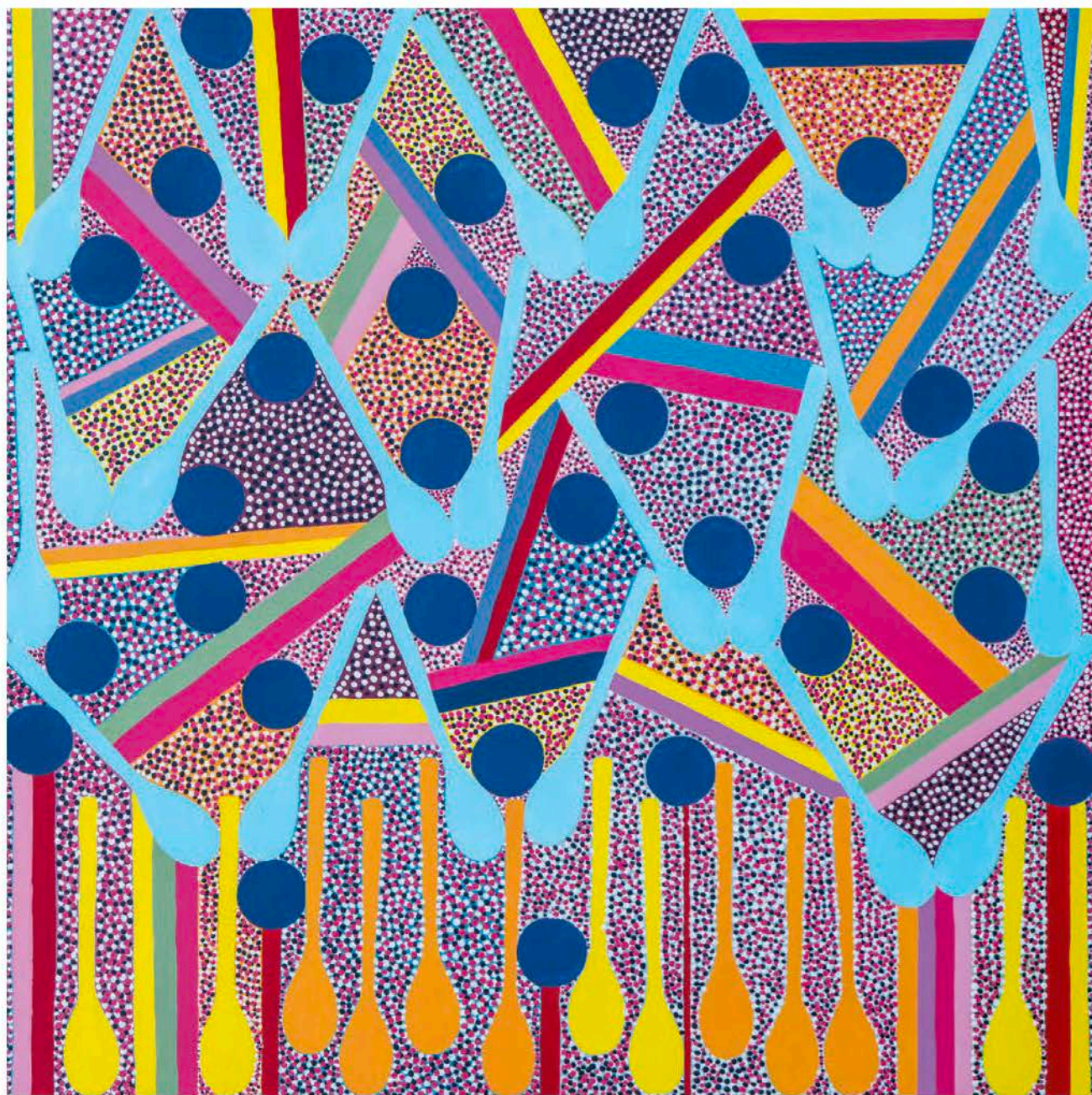
9 ¼ × 11 in. (23,5 × 27,9 cm)

Dunes #28, Death Valley, 2001

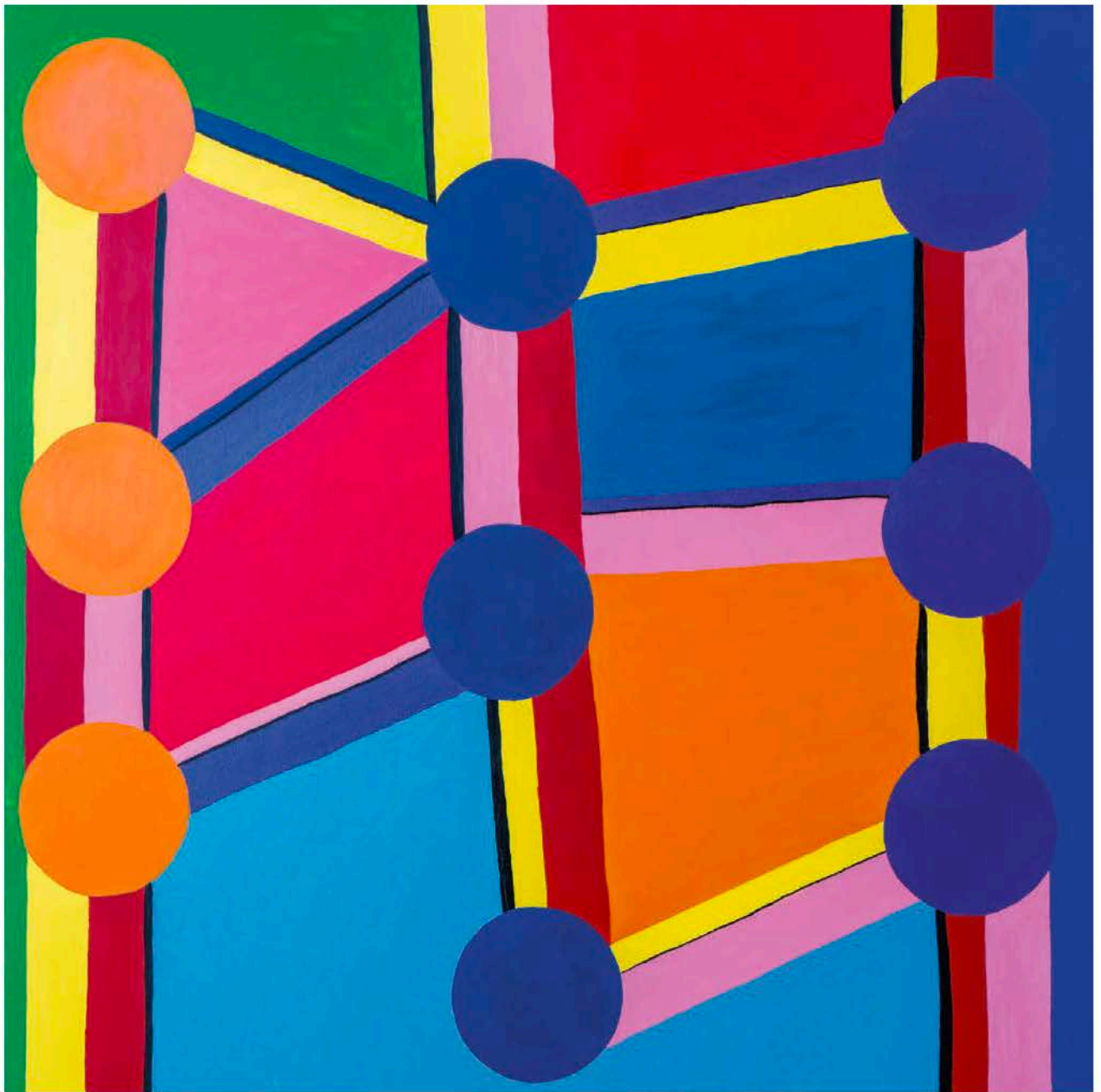
Toned gelatin silver print

8 ½ × 11 in. (21,6 × 27,9 cm)





MARIA MBERESHU
Untitled, 2023
Oil on canvas
51 $\frac{15}{16}$ × 52 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (132 × 133 cm)



Untitled, 2023
Oil on canvas
51 ¹⁵/₁₆ × 52 ³/₈ in. (132 × 133 cm)



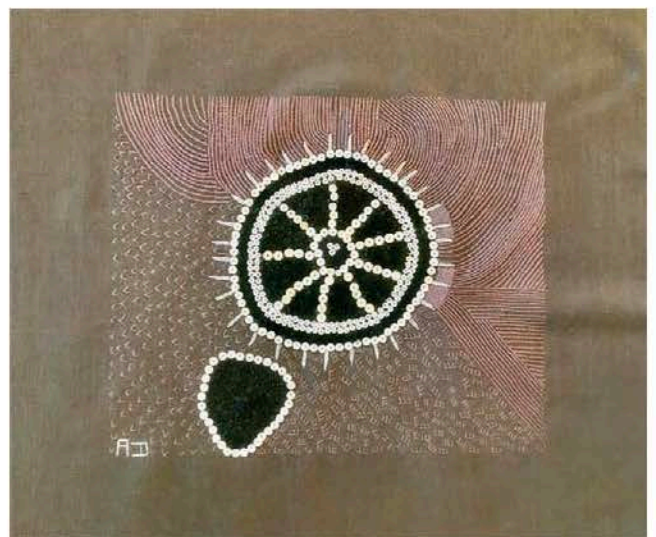
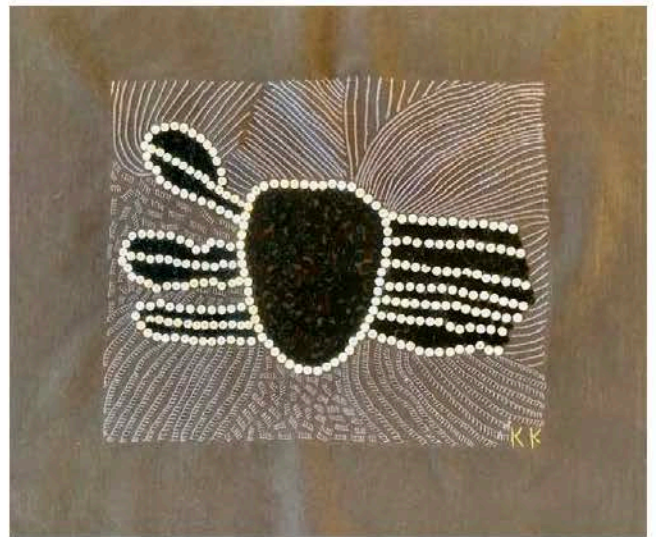
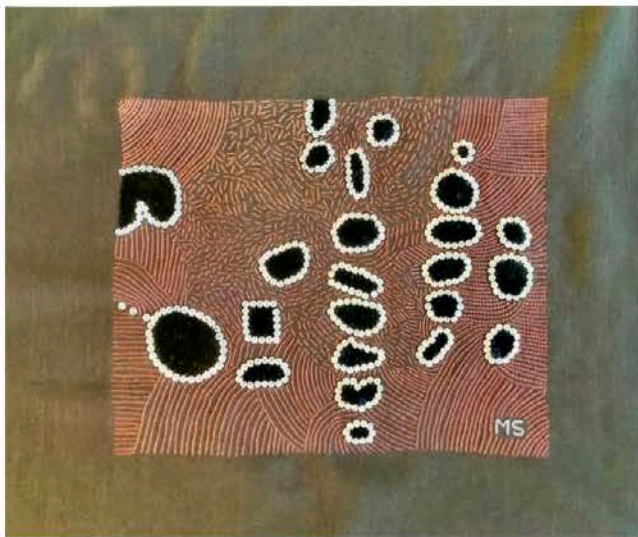
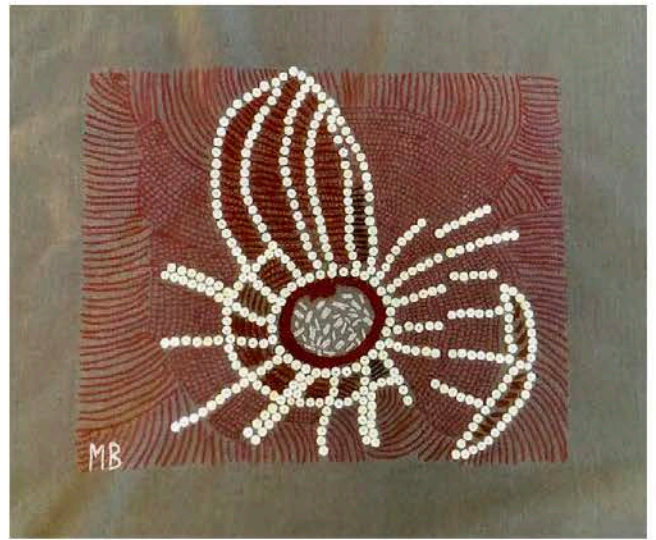
ARTISAN COLLECTIVE: MARA BRITZ, MAGDALENA
STUURMAN, KATRINA KOUS, JOSEPHINE STUURMAN,
AND ANNA DOESES

è !gam /gausi arè-é !ga #khã /ã

/xoa /haū (Pride in Our History), 2022

Ostrich eggshell beads, embroidery cotton on linen

Textile panels, each of six: 23 ⁷/₁₆ × 21 ¹/₁₆ in. (59,5 × 53,5 cm)







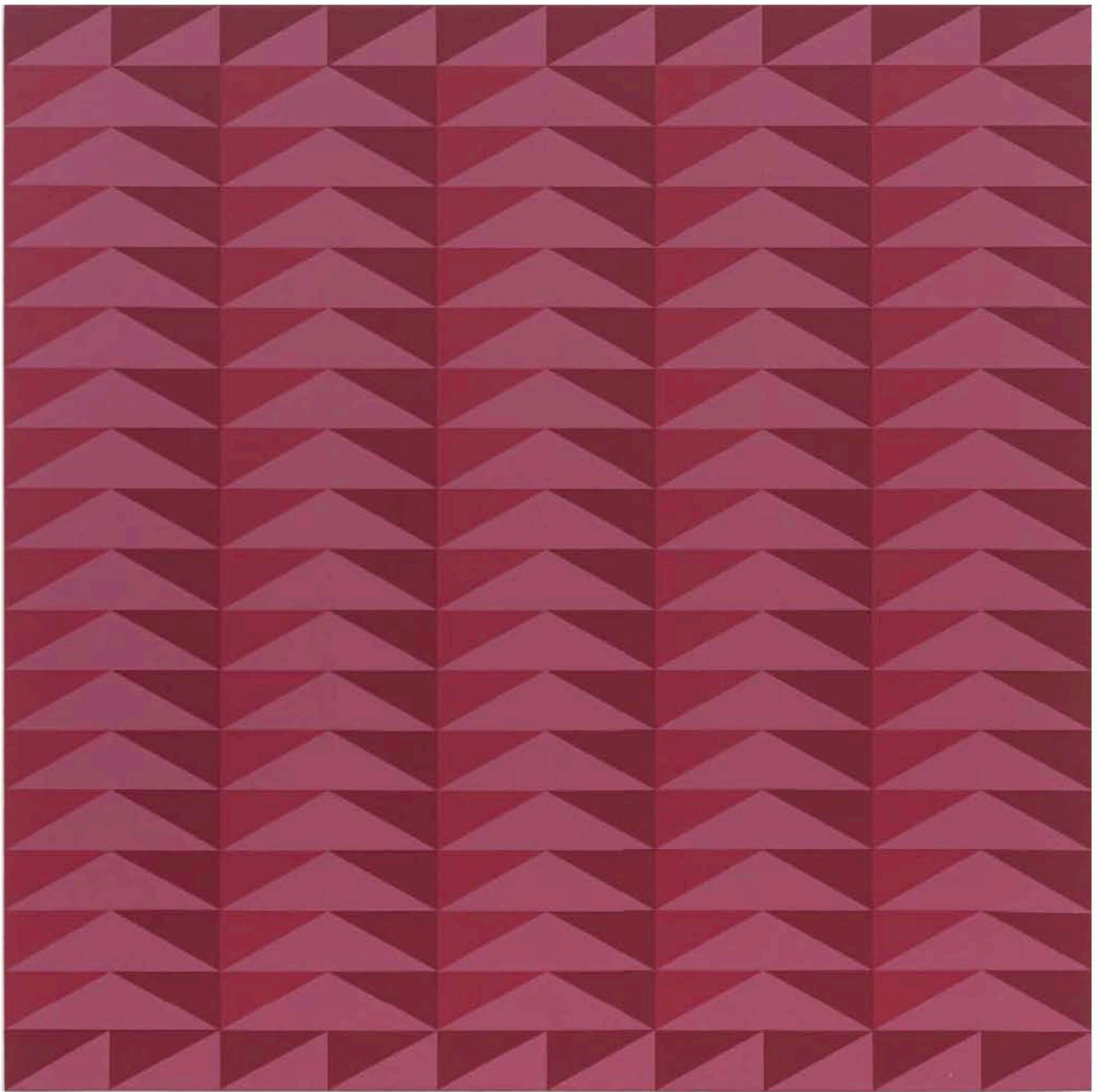


ISMAEL SHIVUTE
Circle of Tomorrow II, 2024
False Entry, 2023
Infinity, 2022
Soapstone (3)
Dimensions variable





JORDAN ANN CRAIG
Soft Like, 2021
Acrylic on canvas
45 ¼ × 45 ½ in. (114,9 × 114,6 cm)





ELISABETH CONDON

Dateline, 2022

Acrylic on canvas

72 × 72 in. (182,9 × 182,9 cm)



LIST OF WORKS

MARK CITRET

Walnut Tree, Sutter Basin, 2003
Gelatin silver print
9 ¼ × 11 in. (23,5 × 27,9 cm)

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Toned gelatin silver print
8 ½ × 11 in. (21,6 × 27,9 cm)

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72 × 72 in. (182,9 × 182,9 cm)

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70 × 55 in. (177,8 × 139,7 cm)

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Resin, bamboo, UV prints, Spectra thread, acrylic, and stainless-steel rods
44 × 11 × 27 feet (1341,5 × 335,4 × 823,2 cm)

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64 15/16 × 64 15/16 in. (165 × 165 cm)

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Untitled, 2023
Oil on canvas
51 15/16 × 52 ¾ in. (132 × 133 cm)

TULI MEKONDJO

Tu yeni oku twadja, komlonga / Let us tread back to the lake, from where we came from, 2022
Image transfer, mahangu, resin, acrylic ink, paint marker, cotton embroidery thread, cotton crochet yarn, spray paint, and wild silk
83 ½ × 72 ½ in. (211,1 × 184,2 cm)

JO ROGGE

Detour I, 2022
Alcohol marker on paper
22 ¼ × 16 ½ in. (56 × 41 cm)

Detour II, 2022
Alcohol marker on paper
22 ¼ × 16 ½ in. (56 × 41 cm)

ERIC ROINESTAD

Untitled, 2023
Ceramic
10 ½ × 20 in. (26,7 × 50,8 cm)

Untitled, 2023
Ceramic
7 × 26 in. (17,8 × 66 cm)

Untitled, 2023
Ceramic
10 ½ × 22 in. (26,7 × 55,9 cm)

Untitled, 2023
Ceramic
7 × 23 in. (17,8 × 58,4 cm)

Untitled, 2023
Ceramic
16 ½ × 12 ½ in. (41,9 × 31,8 cm)

Untitled, 2023
Ceramic
7 ½ × 22 in. (19,1 × 55,9 cm)

Untitled, 2023
Ceramic
12 × 17 in. (30,5 × 43,2 cm)

BRIE RUAIS

Star Made by Punching the Sky (13), 2021
Glazed stoneware (3)
9 × 9 × 1 in. (22,9 × 22,9 × 2,5 cm)

Star Made by Punching the Sky (25), 2021
Glazed stoneware
9 × 9 × 1 ½ in. (22,9 × 22,9 × 3,8 cm)

Star Made by Punching the Sky (3), 2021
Glazed stoneware
9 × 9 ¼ × 1 in. (22,9 × 23,5 × 2,5 cm)

ARTISAN COLLECTIVE: MARA BRITZ, MAGDALENA STUURMAN, KATRINA KOUS, JOSEPHINE STUURMAN, AND ANNA DOESSES

è !gam /gausi arè-é !ga #khã /ã /xoa / haü (Pride in Our History), 2022
Ostrich eggshell beads, embroidery cotton on linen
Textile panels, each of six:
23 7/16 × 21 1/16 in. (59,5 × 53,5 cm)

FILLIPUS SHEEHAMA

Ancient Beads iii, 2023
Vegetable ivory from makalani nuts, whole dried makalani, and rope
102 ¾ × 102 ¾ × 1 ¾ in. (260 × 260 × 3 cm)

ISMAEL SHIVUTE

Circle of Tomorrow II, 2024
Soapstone
33 7/16 × 21 5/8 × 5 1/2 in. (85 × 55 × 14 cm)

False Entry, 2023
Soapstone
22 7/16 × 18 7/8 × 5 7/8 in. (57 × 48 × 15 cm)

Infinity, 2022
Soapstone
26 ¾ × 14 ¾ × 7 7/8 in. (68 × 36 × 20 cm)

CHELSEA RYOKO WONG

To Catch a Dream, 2024
Acrylic on canvas
48 × 72 in. (121,9 × 182,9 cm)

ARTISTS' BIOGRAPHIES

MARK CITRET (BORN 1949)

For more than fifty years, Mark Citret has created tonally rich, black-and-white photographs, ranging in subject from the expansive landscapes of U.S. National Parks to expertly composed views of buildings and bridges. His diverse body of work is rooted in a lifelong fascination with all aspects of the visual world. As he explains, "I can say that I find the rebar and concrete of a construction site every bit as beautiful as fir trees delicately outlined by freshly fallen snow, and the apparent solidity of an office building as lyrical and ephemeral as fog floating over a sunlit ocean."

Though modest in scale, *Walnut Tree*, *Sutter Basin* and *Dunes #28*, *Death Valley* highlight the stark beauty of arid landscapes, evoking the dramatic terrain of the Namib Desert.

Born in Buffalo, New York, Citret grew up in San Francisco, where he assisted his father, an amateur photographer, in the darkroom. He began taking photographs in 1968 and soon thereafter trained as an assistant to renowned American landscape photographer Ansel Adams. He earned both a bachelor's degree and master's degree from San Francisco State University, and he has taught photography extensively at the University of California Berkeley Extension, and the University of California Santa Cruz Extension. His work can be found in many public collections, including the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the Art Institute of Chicago.

ARTISAN COLLECTIVE

MARA BRITZ, MAGDALENA STUURMAN, KATRINA KOUS,
JOSEPHINE STUURMAN, AND ANNA DOES

"We are the roots of the first tree that was planted here."

—Mara Britz

Widely considered the earliest inhabitants of southern Africa, the Indigenous San peoples have several linguistically and culturally diverse communities, each with distinct histories and traditions. In Namibia, approximately 30,000 San live in self-identifying subgroups, including the Jul'hoansi, !Kung, Naro, and Khwe. Despite surviving brutal campaigns of dispossession and violence during the colonial era, the San communities remain among the most marginalized populations in Namibia, facing widespread societal discrimination and poverty.

In response to these challenges, contemporary San artists maintain cultural continuity through creative self-expression, often employing ancestral imagery—rock paintings, carvings, and body art. For over thirty years, the non-profit organization Omba Arts Trust has supported their practice by bolstering the sustainable livelihoods of artisans—particularly San women—while preserving local traditions. Meticulously crafted by a group of Jul'hoansi women and facilitated by Omba Arts Trust, the textile panels of *è !gam /gausi arè-é !ga ǀkhā /ā /xoa /haū (Pride in Our History)* are embroidered with delicate ostrich eggshell beads—adornments first crafted and exchanged in the region more than 50,000 years ago.

Although the artists have no formal training, their work conveys enduring relationships with land, memory, and identity. Their compositions blend precision and spontaneity, balancing individual perspective with communal heritage.

ELISABETH CONDON (BORN 1959)

Elisabeth Condon explores how natural landscapes are “translated, abbreviated, and reinvented” through art. Drawing on sources as varied as mid-century abstraction, American interior décor, Chinese scrolls, and her own memories and immediate surroundings, she creates densely layered compositions where color, surface, and spatial depth synthesize the material logic of painting.

For the past two decades, Condon has begun each work by liberally pouring paint onto the surface, allowing for the organic—and sometimes unpredictable—emergence of forms. In *Dateline*, this process is evident in the soft, semi-translucent contours of the flower’s petals, which expand outward in a vibrant interplay of color against areas of unprimed canvas. By contrast, the opaque, patterned leaves introduce a taut, formal tension that Condon considers vital to the creation of a successful work. When asked whether her floral imagery takes on new meaning in Namibia’s arid climate, she replied, “It amplifies the painting by layering associations—from canvas to sand, and [from] the liquidity of poured paint to ocean. The hybridity of wet and dry, form and formless resonates with a geography ‘where the desert meets the sea’ in a drive under four hours. There’s no way now that Namibia is not a part of *Dateline*, and vice versa.”

Born and raised in Los Angeles, Condon earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles, and a Master of Fine Arts degree from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She is a recipient of the Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters and Sculptors Grant and a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant. Her work is included in the collection of the Tampa Museum of Art, Florida; the Pérez Art Museum Miami; and the Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, New York.

JORDAN ANN CRAIG (BORN 1992)

Blending vivid color, repeating patterns, and interwoven geometric forms, Jordan Ann Craig’s large-scale abstract paintings are informed by archival research and the material culture of Indigenous nations—particularly her Northern Cheyenne heritage. Reflecting on the cultural significance of her visual vocabulary, she states, “All of these shapes are rooted in the environment, in a meaningful place, in your home, or in your community. When you’re wearing these patterns, it signifies what tribe you’re from, what family you are from, what your status is—it presents a picture of who you are.”

Craig’s practice often begins with extensive research in museum collections and archives, where she studies Cheyenne and other Indigenous art forms, such as beadwork, pottery, quillwork, and textiles. She then digitally transforms the designs and motifs, experimenting with color and scale before transferring the composition to canvas using a projector. The process itself is slow and meticulous—a deliberate method that reflects her respect for the precision and labor embedded in the original works. “I want to protect the original object and re-vision it in a completely different way,” she says.

Born in San Jose, California, and based in Santa Fe, New Mexico, Craig received a bachelor’s degree from Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire. Her work has been exhibited in the United States and internationally and can be found in such public collections as the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Wichita Art Museum, Kansas; and the Speed Art Museum, Louisville, Kentucky.

LISA CORINNE DAVIS (BORN 1958)

"I am trying...to breathe life into the grid," says Brooklyn-based artist Lisa Corinne Davis. A cornerstone of modern art, the grid has served as a powerful analytic tool through which artists explore color, logic, and form. In her practice, Davis subverts the grid's rigid structure—rendering its edges malleable and elastic. She introduces undulating planes, overlapping neon lines, and irregular patterns to construct fluid yet meticulously rendered, map-like compositions. Through what she terms "inventive geography," Davis invites viewers to question their assumptions about space, form, and visual systems.

While nonrepresentational, Davis's work is deeply rooted in biography and lived experience. "My desire to explore and understand my Black self lives in a visceral, tactile, metaphysical, and psychological place," she explains. "These sensibilities are abstract ones, and I felt I could better express them through abstraction... which by its very nature is not fixed."

Born in Baltimore, Davis received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the Pratt Institute and a Master of Fine Arts degree from Hunter College, both New York. Her work is included in many private and public collections, including the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; the Philadelphia Museum of Art; and the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. She is the recipient of numerous awards, including a Guggenheim Fellowship, a National Endowment for the Arts Visual Artist Fellowship, and a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant. A committed educator, she previously taught at the Yale University School of Art, New Haven, Connecticut, and is currently a professor of art at Hunter College.

WALTON FORD (BORN 1960)

Bordering the Atlantic Ocean, the Skeleton Coast is a stark stretch of desert where the rusted frames of shipwrecks lie motionless on the windswept sands of the Namib. Despite the region's arid conditions, a small population of lions survives here, drawing sustenance from marine life such as Cape fur seals, beached whales, and flamingos. They are the only wild lions on earth known to hunt this way. The coastal waters are influenced by the cold, northward-flowing Benguela Current, and various whale species—humpbacks, southern rights, and minke—use this current to migrate toward the Namibian coast, where they give birth to their young.

This rare phenomenon of adaptation and endurance is the subject of *Namib*, Walton Ford's monumental painting commissioned for the Embassy. Ford is best known for large-scale watercolors that explore humanity's mythologizing of, and interaction with, the natural world—a longstanding interest rooted in his upbringing in Larchmont, New York, where he was raised in a family of amateur naturalists. Incorporating elements of scientific illustration, field studies, and natural history painting, he upends these conventions through satire and cultural critique. In *Namib*, as throughout his practice, Ford brings a surreal scene to life through meticulously rendered detail—from the lion's densely textured fur and exposed teeth to the tiny barnacles dotting the whale's glistening skin. In the distant background, a shipwreck appears among the dunes, offering a quiet counterpoint to the vitality and force of the animal world.

Ford is keenly aware of the inherent limitations of depicting a place he does not inhabit, particularly one shaped by histories and environments as vast as Namibia's. He has spoken about approaching the subject with humility, recognizing that any image he makes can only be partial in representation and shaped by distance. Consequently, Ford crafts an improbable, dreamlike scene—one that hovers between narrative and allegory, fact and projection. He explains that the painting is a sort of dream from an outsider about their expectations and ultimate misapprehension of going into a place like Namibia and trying to make sense of it.

Ford earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence, Rhode Island. In 2006, a major mid-career survey of his work was held at the Brooklyn Museum, New York. His paintings are included in numerous public and private collections, including the Detroit Institute of Arts; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; and the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.

JACOB HASHIMOTO (BORN 1973)

For nearly three decades, Jacob Hashimoto has used the kite as a visual and conceptual foundation, transforming it into a modular unit of form and meaning. Through large-scale installations and densely layered wall hangings, he creates compositions suspended in space that draw from abstract landscape painting, Asian craft traditions, and virtual world-building. For Hashimoto, the kite is a deeply personal motif—rooted in memories of making them with his Japanese American father—and a global symbol that transcends time and place. “That kite making is one of the most pan-cultural practices makes it a beautiful, democratic thing,” he says. “In many ways, it’s a global property—we all own the relationship between us and the sky.” While his practice is grounded in precise craftsmanship and deep knowledge of art history, Hashimoto’s creative philosophy is broadly egalitarian. He conceives of his immersive, multifaceted works as accessible “open networks” that “reflect and validate” the viewer’s experience through engagement, movement, and light.

Commissioned as a site-specific installation for the U.S. Embassy in Windhoek, *The Asymmetrical Mathematics of Memory* comprises more than 1,200 hand-constructed kites suspended from the atrium ceiling in a sweeping, cloud-like formation. Throughout the day, hundreds of white discs absorb and filter natural light, glowing brightly in the morning and casting dappled patterns across the floor in the afternoon. Within and beneath these clusters, Hashimoto intersperses a constellation of vividly colored kites printed with custom designs inspired by his extensive visual research into Namibia’s traditions and environment—including native grasses and plants, textile motifs, and architectural landmarks. Translated through his process of digital manipulation and graphic abstraction, these references coalesce into a hybrid visual language. “[The work] is generous in its foundational element... It’s aspirational,” Hashimoto notes. “This is about potential, where can we go from here. And it leads us in a direction that’s not backwards looking.”

Born in Greeley, Colorado, Hashimoto grew up in Walla Walla, Washington. He is a graduate of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and has presented solo exhibitions and installations at the Crow Museum of Asian Art, Dallas; the Boise Art Museum, Idaho; and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. His work is in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; and the Tacoma Art Museum, Washington, among others. He lives and works in Ossining, New York.

NICKY MARAIS (BORN 1962)

Through her abstract paintings and works on paper, Namibian artist, educator, and activist Nicky Marais explores “the drama of what happens in the spaces between things, the portals, and the liminality of the in-between.” To visualize these ephemeral sites of convergence, she has developed a personal vocabulary of forms and color, applied in an intuitive process of repetition, distortion, and layering. Although highly distilled, her “significant shapes” are based on points of transition, such as turnstiles, tunnels, and doorways. In *All Good Dreamers*, semitransparent, oblong forms float weightlessly in a loose arrangement against a vertically aligned group of opaque, brightly colored wedges, resulting in a juxtaposition of the tangible and ethereal that mirrors Marais’s metaphysical concerns.

Marais has exhibited extensively in Namibia and abroad. In 2023, she moved her studio to the small desert town of Oranjemund in southern Namibia after retiring from her position as the head of the Department of Visual Arts at the College of the Arts, Windhoek.

MARIA MBERESHU (BORN 1984)

"Everything I create has been inspired by my surroundings or has been a story that I have wanted to tell where words have failed me... dreams and imagination drive my creativity, imagination makes me feel hopeful."

Maria Mbereshu's brightly colored, abstract textiles and paintings reflect elements of her heritage, particularly concepts of domesticity, memory, and community. Originally from Shambyu in the Kavango East region of northern Namibia, she was first inspired to create while running through the village's flat landscape of fields and crops. Now based in Windhoek, Mbereshu translates cultural symbols and lived experiences from her upbringing into vibrant compositions shaped by repeating motifs.

Her works often feature recurring details arranged in dynamic patterns, such as the humble wooden spoon—an essential tool in the traditional Kavango kitchen, used to prepare staple dishes like pap (maize meal) or mahangu (pearl millet). She also incorporates dot and circle forms that evoke intergenerational gathering around the bonfire, where stories and traditional knowledge are passed down.

Mbereshu earned a Higher Diploma from the University of Namibia, where she studied visual culture, fashion, and textiles. Her work has been exhibited widely in Namibia and internationally.

TULI MEKONDJO (BORN 1982)

Best known for her intricate embroidered paintings, Windhoek-based artist Tuli Mekondjo employs deeply symbolic motifs and materials to honor Namibian histories and cultural practices while exploring concepts of identity, memory, and trauma. Her labor-intensive process involves applying resin, blow torching, hand sewing, and sprinkling mahangu—a millet grain primarily consumed in northern Namibia. Its literal presence in Mekondjo's work highlights the local staple's power to nourish and the strength of the women who harvest it.

A vital aspect of her practice is the recuperation of historical photographs sourced from books, postcards, and archives, particularly those documenting the initiation rituals, bodily adornments, and hairstyles of the Ovambo women. In *Tu yeni oku twadja, komlonga/ Let us tread back to the lake, from where we came from*, Mekondjo enlarges and transfers a historical image onto a textile support, thereby rendering a mirrored figure that reaches through time to restore the autonomy of her colonial era subjects who "demand to be seen."

Born in exile and raised for eight years in Angolan and Zambian refugee camps during the Namibian War of Independence, Mekondjo views her practice as a way to "mend lost connection to her ancestors." A self-taught artist, her works have been collected and exhibited across Africa, Europe, and the United States.

JO ROGGE (BORN 1963)

Jo Rogge's paintings, prints, and drawings reflect on displacement, family lineage, and belonging. These works frequently reference ships, rafts, and bodies of water, harkening back to Rogge's childhood growing up near the Indian Ocean coast. Of *Detour I* and *Detour II*'s fluid, amorphous forms, the artist writes, "Living in South Africa with no fixed ancestral heritage, and cognizant of the use of colonial maps to divide and conquer in the interests of enforcing empirical power and exploitation, my deconstructed maps are, as were the first maps, a challenge of the imagination, and a disordering of the senses in navigating identity, place, and belonging."

Rogge lives and works between Namibia and South Africa. The artist founded the NJE Collective, which facilitates informal mentorship, opportunities, and resources for emerging and established artists from the southern Africa region. Rogge has exhibited widely in Namibia and internationally.

ERIC ROINESTAD (BORN 1965)

Synthesizing divergent aesthetics and historical references, Eric Roinestad creates ceramic vessels that balance modern symmetry with classical form. His influences range from the landscape of California, Art Déco design, the abstracted sculptures of Constantin Brâncuși, and the artist's own Scandinavian heritage. Through sleek outlines, bold geometry, and matte, monochrome surfaces, Roinestad crafts handmade stoneware intended to bring "unexpected beauty and harmony to an environment."

As part of his commission for the U.S. Embassy Windhoek, Roinestad conducted research on indigenous Namibian ornamentation practices, particularly those of the Himba—a semi-nomadic pastoralist tribe in the northwest region of the country known for preserving more traditional customs. Himba jewelry and head-dresses are made from materials such as leather, beads, and metal, and are often coated with a mixture of butterfat and red ochre pigment, known as otjize.

Rather than duplicating these distinctive modes of adornment, Roinestad simplifies and distills their predominant forms into carefully handcrafted ceramic ornaments. Circular elements evoke the rounded contours of Himba necklaces, while a double-pronged lid resembles the horn-like structure of their traditional leather headdresses. In this way, Roinestad seeks to honor the Himba people without appropriating their customs, aiming instead—as he says—to "celebrate the rich history of Namibian culture."

Born and raised on California's Central Coast, Roinestad earned a bachelor's degree in applied art and design from California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo before moving to Los Angeles, where he currently lives and works. Prior to pursuing a career as a ceramic artist, Roinestad worked for twenty years as a graphic designer—an experience that continues to inform his passion for bold silhouettes. His work is exhibited at design fairs throughout the United States and has been featured in such publications as the New York Times T Magazine, Architectural Digest, and W Magazine.

BRIE RUAIS (BORN 1982)

"I think about clay as a material that holds a record. Clay is capturing not only my existence but also my relationship to this time."

Brie Ruais's expressive ceramics document her encounters with clay while inviting reflection on the traces we leave behind on the earth. Often working with an amount of clay equal to her own body weight, Ruais pushes, pulls, and stretches the material across the floor in a single, full-bodied gesture. This intuitive, physically demanding process leaves behind scrapes, gouges, and fingerprints that embed her presence and energy into each form—making the body as a site of "strength, power, and agency." While her large-scale works typically encompass the full reach of her limbs, the *Star Made by Punching the Sky* series focuses on a single, concentrated motion. Imagined by Ruais as bursts of raw energy or punctures in the night sky, each sculpture radiates outward from a void made by the artist's hand, while the silver gunmetal glaze suggests the sheen of starlight.

Born in California, Ruais earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from New York University and a Master of Fine Arts degree from Columbia University, New York. Her first institutional solo exhibition opened in 2021 at the Moody Center for the Arts, Houston. Her work is part of the collections of the Dallas Museum of Art; Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia; the Pizzuti Collection, Columbus, Ohio; and the Burger Collection, Hong Kong. She lives and works in Cerrillos, New Mexico.

FILLIPUS SHEEHAMA (BORN 1974)

Mixed-media artist Fillipus Sheehama constructs artworks from recycled and found materials imbued with intrinsic social and cultural meaning, particularly amongst Namibia's marginalized groups. "I focus on found objects because they carry the true memories of the people who used them and are forever connected to those people," he says. "Through these objects, we can experience and feel their context with all our senses."

In works such as his tapestry-like hangings, Sheehama arranges brightly colored, flattened metal bottle caps into dynamic linear patterns. He collects these items from local shebeens: informal, sometimes unlicensed taverns, in the Windhoek township of Katutura, where he lives. Sheehama's large-scale works highlight the complex role shebeens play in Namibia society, not only as venues for community gathering and economic exchange but also as spaces marked by alcohol dependency and waste.

For *Ancient Beads iii*, Sheehama gathered discarded shells of the makalani nut—a hard-shelled fruit of a native Namibian palm—near his family home in northern Namibia. Often referred to as "vegetable ivory" for their dense, off-white center, they are carved and sold as keychains or ornaments and can also be distilled to make ombike, a local spirit. Comprising hundreds of strung makalani nuts, the work's cascading forms evoke the traditional beaded necklaces and prominent dress collars donned by Oshiwambo women, specifically during celebrations like birthdays and weddings.

Sheehama graduated from the University of Namibia and has taught visual art at the John Muafangejo Arts Centre and the College of the Arts, Windhoek. His work is in numerous private and public collections in Namibia and abroad.

ISMAEL SHIVUTE (BORN 1988)

"My art reflects a unique Namibian identity, as well as my own identity as a young artist struggling to survive in the world."

Namibian mixed-media artist Ismael Shivute draws inspiration from his immediate environment, transforming recycled, found, and locally sourced materials—from tin cans and plastic bags to fruit husks from marula trees. For these three sculptures, Shivute sourced grey-green soapstone from quarries located on the outskirts of Windhoek. In addition to its local availability, he selected soapstone for its physical balance of resistance and pliability—qualities that complement his intuitive, meditative approach to carving. Working exclusively with hand tools, Shivute preserves the stone's natural contours, accentuating its surface with rippled textures. The most notable intervention in these abstract works is his use of circles—quiet emblems of community and connection—which bore particular significance during the COVID-19 pandemic, when he began the soapstone sculpture series.

Born in the small village of Ombome in northern Namibia, Shivute began crafting with local materials at a young age, making toys from wire and clay. He studied sculpture at the College of the Arts in Windhoek and first exhibited one of his mixed-media sculptures at the National Art Gallery of Namibia, which was later acquired for the museum's permanent collection. Since then, he has exhibited his work throughout Namibia and internationally.

CHELSEA RYOKO WONG (BORN 1986)

Inspired by nature, imagination, personal memory, and the neighborhoods of San Francisco, painter and muralist Chelsea Ryoko Wong blends saturated colors, vibrant patterning, and flattened, stylized forms to celebrate the joyful promise of human connection. Working in an intuitive, free-flowing process without preliminary sketches, Wong imbues her multi-figural works with a buoyant sense of optimism. Acknowledging that depictions of happiness in art are often dismissed as trivial, she asserts that her lively scenes of multigenerational communities—gathered to eat, dance, or simply relax—convey a critical message of resilience. "I think there's a deepness in showing perseverance... And painting people of all different backgrounds enjoying life gives me a sense of joy," she says. "If people can see themselves in my work and walk away feeling a little bit happier, I feel I've succeeded."

In *To Catch a Dream*, Wong pays homage to the beauty of California: among blooming poppies, a large crowd watches an orca chase a school of salmon as the moon rises against a technicolor sunset. A utopian coastal fantasy comes to life as she combines disparate natural phenomena and land formations into a single, idyllic landscape.

Born in Seattle to a Japanese American mother and a father from Hong Kong, Wong grew up in a household with three sisters of mixed African American and Japanese ancestry. She earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in printmaking from California College of the Arts in San Francisco. Her work can be found in the collections of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco; the Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento; and the Bolinas Museum, all in California.

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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 and scope 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."



