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## The Art in Embassies Program Brings South African and U.S. Artists Together

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(<https://za.usembassy.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2015/09/Arts-in-the-embassies-delegation-500px.jpg>)  
Delegation of American and South African Artists

On June 5, 2014, U.S. Ambassador Patrick Gaspard welcomed a delegation of American and South African artists to Cape Town to engage with local communities through the medium of art.

The trip was sponsored by the State Department’s Art in Embassies program in order to bring the arts alive for local residents and to provide an example of how artistic expression can create international dialogue and transform lives.

The members of the delegation included American curator and art scholar Dr. Deborah Willis, American artists Sanford Biggers and Robert Pruitt, South African artists Mary Sibande and Nic holas Hlobo, and the Director of the Art in Embassies Program Ellen Susman. The group started their day by visiting the township art galleries (TAG) of Langa established by the Maboneng Township Arts Experience and Art Townships International.

They then partnered with local students and home owners to create stenciled murals on the walls of the homes. Maboneng means “place of light” and the Langa TAG project aims to bring hope and light into places historically deprived of both by transforming township homes into galleries, empowering residents to become curators and entrepreneurs, and engendering art appreciation in the community. Dr. Willis also gave a talk to local photographers about the importance of documenting their surroundings. The group then traveled to Cape Town’s AVA Gallery that evening for a panel discussion about their work and the issues of identity, race and history in contemporary art. The gallery event was sponsored by SASOL.

Art in Embassies - Cape Town





The State Department’s Art in Embassies program was established in 1963 under the auspices of President John F. Kennedy as a form of cultural diplomacy in order to expose international audiences to American art. The program produces temporary exhibitions of original American artwork in the residences of U.S. Ambassadors. After selecting his collection of art, Ambassador Patrick Gaspard partnered with Art in Embassies Director Ellen Susman to take the initiative one step further by bringing the U.S. artists to South Africa to share their creativity with a wider audience.

As Ambassador Gaspard told the group assembled, the Art in Embassies program is “a form of cultural diplomacy. It gives us an opportunity as Americans to put our culture on display, our arts on display, and we are doing it in conversation with local communities.”

The U.S. Mission in South Africa was proud to partner with Art in Embassies, Cape Town’s AVA Gallery, and Siphwe Ngwenya and Theo Ndindwa of Maboneng Township Arts Experience and Art Townships International on this project. Maboneng Township Arts Experience is a national public arts initiative that has been designated as a 2014 Cape Town World Design Capital Project.

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By [U.S. Mission South Africa](https://za.usembassy.gov/author/missionza/) (https://za.usembassy.gov/author/missionza/) | 5 June, 2014 | Categories : [Art & Culture](https://za.usembassy.gov/category/art-and-culture/) (https://za.usembassy.gov/category/art-and-culture/), [Cape Town](https://za.usembassy.gov/category/capetown/) (https://za.usembassy.gov/category/capetown/), [News](https://za.usembassy.gov/category/news/) (https://za.usembassy.gov/category/news/)

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