

Art in Embassies London

VOICEOVER: Venerable. Imposing. Noble. The distinguished trappings of American diplomacy. Or are they? At their official residence in London, Robert Tuttle, US Ambassador to the United Kingdom and his wife Maria, bring some of America's most outstanding artists to public attention overseas. The goal? To create better understanding of the US through its art.

TUTTLE: The response has been fabulous and I think that's what cultural and public diplomacy is all about.

VOICEOVER: Works of modern American artists, like William de Kooning and Ellsworth Kelley, are as surprising to find on these sedate walls as they are attention-grabbers for the 7,000 visitors to the residence each year.

TUTTLE: And we came up with the idea that the theme of this collection would be modern American classics. I think people like the fact that we've shown really this terrific American art and they're interested that we were sort of willing to take a chance and do something a little different, a little unexpected for a house like this.

MARIA TUTTLE: I think that sort of public diplomacy of the art speaking to the visitor is a very powerful thing.

VOICEOVER: How does the Art in Embassies program work? Is it just a case of the pair of you drawing up a wish list and saying, can we have this one?

MARIA: We actually did make a wish list!

TUTTLE: We made a wish list and we sort of begin to think about the kind of pieces that we would like and since we had some knowledge of where those pieces might be, we asked the Art in Embassy program to ask those institutions or in the case of the Broad Foundation if they would consider lending those pieces. And then we had a couple of pictures of our own that we brought.

VOICEOVER: US ambassadors' wish lists or requests for assistance in choosing works is facilitated by the Art in Embassies program in the State Department. It arranges the loans of art for display abroad from American artists, museums, personal lenders, corporate collections and galleries.

AIE REP: Yes we have about \$100 million worth of art on loan from the American art community. We meet with ambassadors after they've been appointed, come up with a theme—like in London, the Tuttlés, the theme is just the best of American art in the mid-20th century. They're already collectors and it's wonderful to work with them. Challenging, sometimes, because they know what they want and we have to make sure that it's available.

TUTTLE: It's an iconic work by Lichtenstein, early Lichtenstein, and we're very excited to have it because it came from the Edy and Eli Broad Foundation in Los Angeles, so it's a Los Angeles picture. It's a great great picture and people just love it.

VOICEOVER: The Tuttle brought work from their own collection, including this de Kooning, to complement the colors of the 18th century wallpaper.

TUTTLE: He showed us this de Kooning and we just fell in love with it. And we bought it. And I love this picture, I love sitting here in this room. I often do work in here.

REPORTER: And of course the green is almost matching the Chinese wallpaper there. The salmon pink is similar to the fireplace.

TUTTLE: Elliot, that was completely unintended, but if you like it, that's okay, that's what modern art is all about. It's a wonderful picture and we have some of these artists in our own collection.

REPORTER: When it comes to buying art, what motivates you? You like what you see, obviously, if it's within your means—

TUTTLE: If it's within our means (laughs)

MARIA: (laughs) If we can afford it!

TUTTLE: If we can afford it, that's something we can try to go out to buy or collect.

MARIA: And frankly, through this Art in Embassies program, every ambassador—and certainly we're included in that—can have pieces that we wouldn't be able to have on our own. So that's part of the privilege, I think.

REPORTER: This is the (unintelligible) room, I think, of course ...

(laughter)

MARIA: It is.

REPORTER: What's the story behind this one, I mean this one and why here.

TUTTLE: Well, it's an early Hopper and of course I think he is really he is really one of the great 20th century American painters.

MARIA: What's interesting, he's so well known for his American painting situated in suburban settings in America and this was painted obviously in France and it's called *The Wine Bistro*. Even though we have two people together, there's an atmosphere of somewhat of a lonely quality to it. This is our most popular painting.

TUTTLE: In 2009, there'll be a new ambassador here in London and that individual will could well choose young contemporary artists. What's interesting is that there will be a turnover and people will have a chance to see new and different types of art.

REPORTER: But whatever art replaces these great works, the mission of creating better understanding of the US through its creative experience stays in America's bigger diplomatic picture.