

# Art in Embassies Exhibition

UNITED STATES EMBASSY WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA



Barbara Hall **Corn Mother**, 2008  
Cotton fabrics, beads, 39 x 38 in. (99.1 x 96.5 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist, Tucson, Arizona

# 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 foreign 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."

*"For fifty years, Art in Embassies has played an active diplomatic role by creating meaningful cultural exchange through the visual arts. The exhibitions, permanent collections and artist exchanges connect people from the farthest corners of an international community. Extending our reach, amplifying our voice, and demonstrating our inclusiveness are strategic imperatives for America. Art in Embassies cultivates relationships that transcend boundaries, building trust, mutual respect and understanding among peoples. It is a fulcrum of America's global leadership as we continue to work for freedom, human rights and peace around the world."*

— John Forbes Kerry, U.S. Secretary of State

# Introduction

Namibia is internationally renowned for its spectacular beauty – and with good reason. Its vast and stark mountain landscapes, its towering dunes and seemingly boundless deserts make an indelible impression on everyone who sees them. Namibia is also known for a cultural and ethnic diversity that has room for everyone from European and Ovambo farmers to the nomadic San people, described as “the world’s oldest humans.”

The American Southwest shares many of Namibia’s hallmarks. It offers its own vast expanses of stunning desert and jagged mountains, along with windswept dunes, cactus-strewn plateaus and the world’s largest canyon. Arizona, where I was born and grew up, is also home to a diverse variety of Native American peoples and cultures, from the nomadic Navajos to the pueblo-dwelling Hopis, who inhabit the oldest continually-occupied settlement in North America.

In selecting works for our Art in Embassies exhibition, my wife and I sought to feature an array of pieces that would provide a representative cross-section of Southwestern – and particularly Arizona – art. Several works offer widely varying interpretations of the region’s iconic landscape. That landscape is an integral part of conceptions of the American West in modern American culture. The same icons of the Southwestern landscape – the cactus, red sandstone buttes, and brilliant sunsets represented in American film and art – are equally central to imaginings of the American West for many who live outside the United States.

# Introduction

To the artistic expressions of the physical character of the American Southwest we have added a number of artworks that incorporate interpretations of the Southwest's rich cultural heritage. We are honored to include four photographs by the American ethnographer Edward Curtis, taken from his masterwork *The North American Indian*. As with the representations of the Southwestern landscape, Curtis captured what became Southwestern icons – Indians on horseback, redrock cliffs – into photographs that simultaneously preserve an artistic and historic record of a changing culture and to spark the respect, empathy, and imagination of the viewer. Curtis' works also inevitably highlight the moral dimension inherent in the relationship of the photographer with his subjects.

The role of myth and the representation of mythic images is central to the ancient native cultures of Arizona. In order to capture that important element of the Southwestern experience, our exhibition also includes three works in strikingly different media that draw from and build upon the imagery and iconography of American Indian cultures.

Our hope in making these widely varying but thematically linked artworks available for viewing and contemplation by Namibians is to provoke thought and discussion about the many similarities – visual, physical, cultural, mythical – between the American Southwest and Namibia.

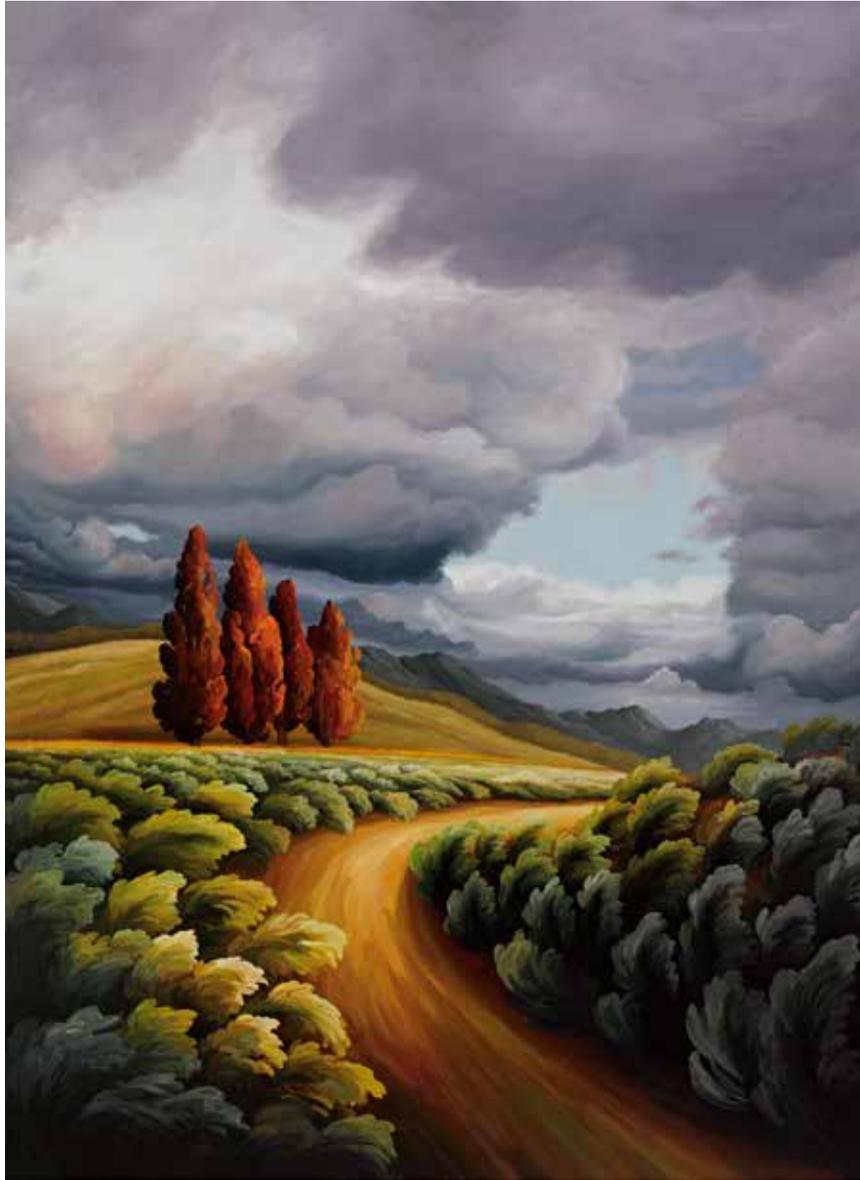
**Ambassador Thomas F. Daughton and Melinda C. Burrell**

*Windhoek, July 2015*

# Phoebe Brunner (born 1951)

“By creating an alternative view to traditional landscape painting, my re-conceived landscapes of the American West and the coast of California, simultaneously real and surreal, invite the viewer to experience our surroundings with a new perspective and to lose oneself in an environment of nature enhanced and unexpected. Through the interplay of light and space, unorthodox colors, patterns and movement, a symbolic narrative with a mystical presence arises. Primal emotions and instinctive, intuitive forces from within the human psyche are accessed through awareness of our natural world.”

**[www.phoeb Brunner.com](http://www.phoeb Brunner.com)**



Phoebe Brunner **Four Red Trees**, undated

Oil on canvas, 66 x 48 in. (167.6 x 121.9 cm). Courtesy of the artist, Santa Barbara, California

# Edward S. Curtis (1868-1952)

Requiring for its completion more than thirty years, one and a half million dollars, and the assistance of a vast array of patrons, researchers, scientists, editors, master craftsmen, interpreters, sympathetic creditors, tribal elders, and medicine men, Edward Curtis published *The North American Indian* between 1907 and 1930. Comprised of twenty volumes, with more than twenty-two hundred photogravures, the book created a photographic and ethnographic record of more than eighty of North America's native nations. In the field, Curtis instituted his own methodology, "the twenty-five cardinal points," to amass information on all areas of Indian life and lore, including vocabulary; political and social organization; religious customs; dwellings; food gathering and preparation; geography; games; music and dance; dress; weights and measures; and birth, marriage, and death customs.

Part photographic essay, part ethnographic survey, and part work of art, Curtis's North American Indian project represented an attempt to capture images of American Indians as they lived before contact with Anglo cultures. The photogravure prints in *The North American Indian* reveal peoples whose traditional ways of life were changing as the U.S. frontier began to fade.

**[www.sil.si.edu/Exhibitions/curtis/curtis-navigation.htm](http://www.sil.si.edu/Exhibitions/curtis/curtis-navigation.htm)**



Edward S. Curtis **An Oasis**

Contemporary digital photograph of a platinum print, 18 ¾ x 22 ¾ in. (47.6 x 57.8 cm)  
Courtesy of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.;  
Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division,  
Washington, D.C., Edward S. Curtis Collection



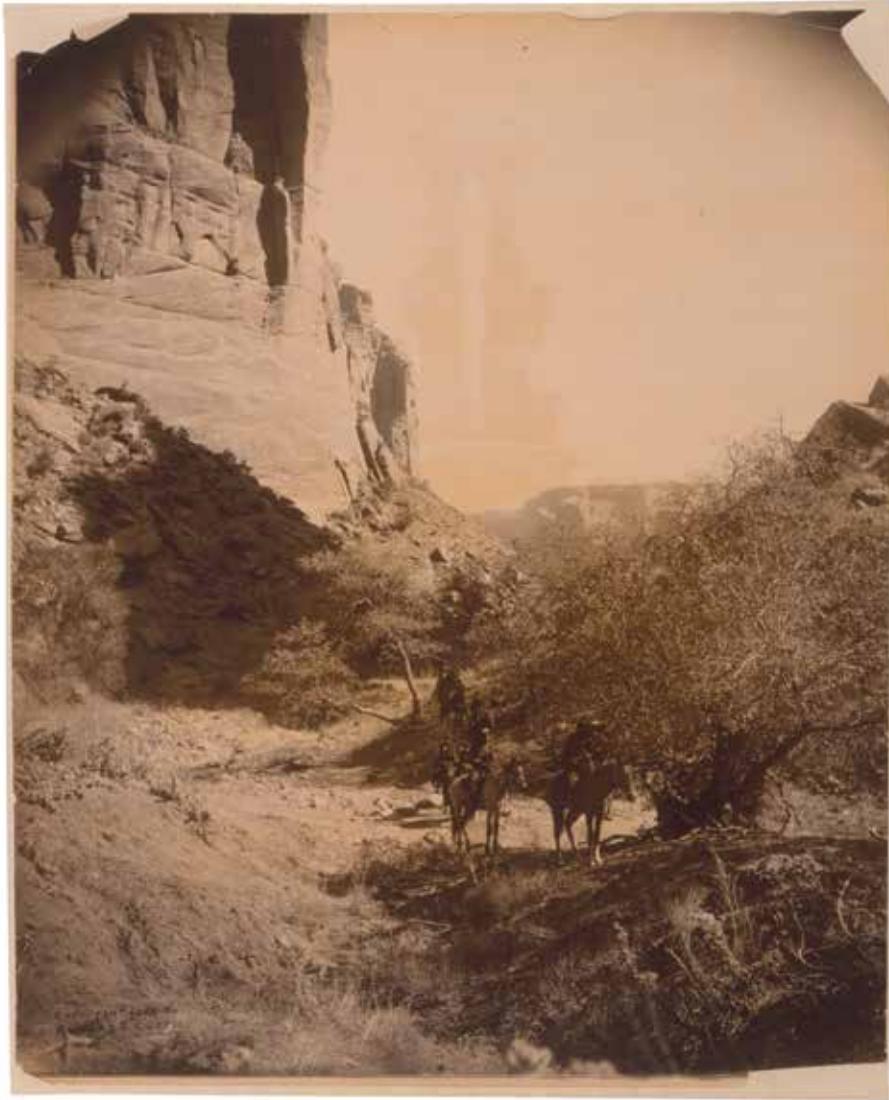
Edward S. Curtis **Before the Storm**

Contemporary digital photograph of a platinum print, 18 ¾ x 22 ¾ in. (47.6 x 57.8 cm)  
Courtesy of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.;  
Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division,  
Washington, D.C., Edward S. Curtis Collection



Edward S. Curtis **The Outlook**

Contemporary digital photograph of a platinum print, 22  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 18  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. (57.8 x 47.6 cm)  
Courtesy of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.; Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division,  
Washington, D.C., Edward S. Curtis Collection



Edward S. Curtis **In the Canyon's Depth – Navajo**

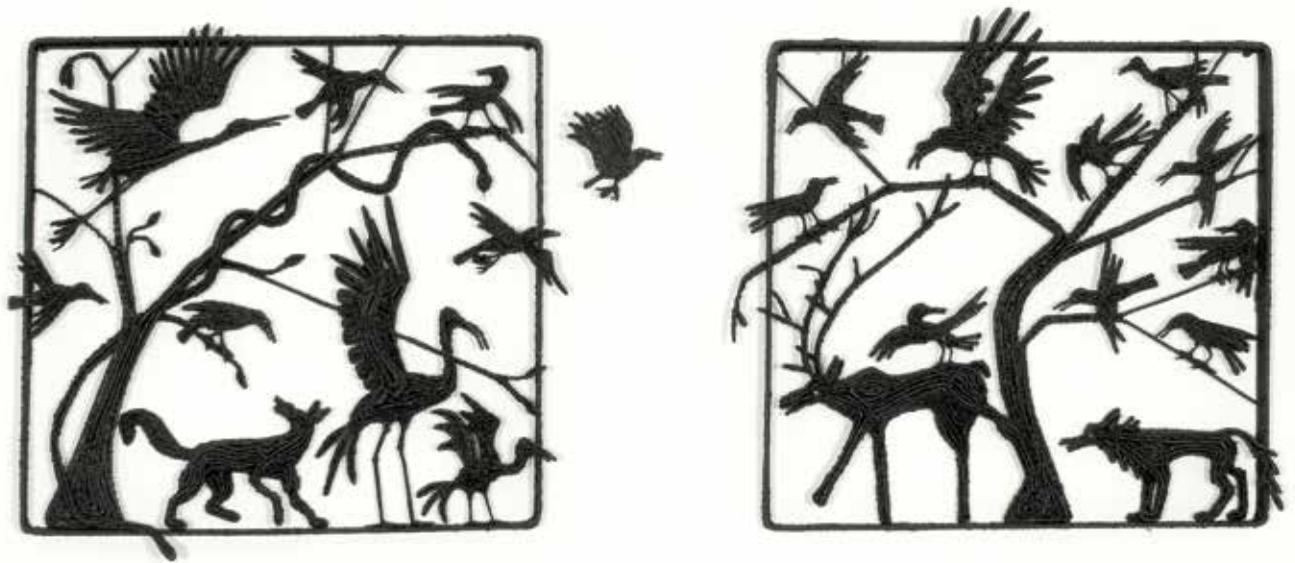
Contemporary digital photograph of a platinum print, 22  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 18  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. (57.8 x 47.6 cm)  
Courtesy of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.; Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division,  
Washington, D.C., Edward S. Curtis Collection

# Carol Eckert (born 1945)

“Each piece begins with symbols and stories – creation stories, legends of great floods, tales of quests and journeys, parables of good and evil. I am intrigued that cultures from so many different times and places share related traditions. The universal nature of animal symbolism also appeals to me: snakes as symbols of evil, storks or cranes as signs of good fortune. Mythology and art have been intertwined for as long as there have been humans on earth, and my work often makes references to art history.

Coiling is a technique so ancient that no one is exactly sure when it first began. Though it is traditionally used to make vessels, I construct a myriad of coiled forms, including staffs, shrines and books. My pieces are often complex, but the technique is simple, requiring only a threaded needle.”

**[www.caroleckert.com](http://www.caroleckert.com)**



Carol Eckert **Night Crows Diptych**, 2011

Wire, linen, 33 x 13 in. (83.8 x 33 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist, Tempe, Arizona

# Jeff Ferst (born 1955)

Jeff Ferst paints contemporary landscape paintings of vibrant colors and heavy impasto paint, as well as “geometrical landscapes,” essentially abstract canvases combining blocks of vivid color and curvilinear forms, out of which emerge elements of nature, buildings and the human form. Ferst’s paintings are energetic and celebratory, tactile and visual, grounded in reality and musical in feeling.

**<http://jefferst.com/bio>**



Jeff Ferst **View From the Foothills**, undated

Oil on canvas, 48 x 48 in. (121.9 x 121.9 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Tucson, Arizona

# Barbara Hall

*"Corn Mother* is an iconic image of some of our Southwest Indian people that I combined with some elements of the Virgin of Guadalupe from our Mexican culture. I am a fabric artist and quilt maker. In working with fabric, I connect to the generations of women whose creative expression found a home in sewing scraps of fabric together. The patterns, shapes, and colors offered them a window of beauty in a time of isolation, honored generational ties, and gave them solace in their time of grief. Often these quilts told family stories and held the dreams of grandmothers, mothers, and daughters."

**[http://fasa-art.com/our\\_gallery/barbara\\_hall](http://fasa-art.com/our_gallery/barbara_hall)**



Barbara Hall **Corn Mother**, 2008

Cotton fabrics, beads, 39 x 38 in. (99.1 x 96.5 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Tucson, Arizona

# David Jonason

“I believe images of the Southwest are as iconic as the Statue of Liberty. The gaping canyons, the cacti, the cliff dwellings and red buttes – these spectacular locations are so familiar to us. They’re intrinsic to how we see and think of ourselves as Americans.”

David Jonason fills his palette with the intense natural colors of the [American Southwest] region, distilled to their very essence: fiery reds, deep crystalline blues, emerald greens, earth tones so rich you can almost feel the rocks and soil beneath your feet. He portrays the Southwestern landscape with a realist's eye, rendering it with a clarity that makes his paintings remarkably real, uncannily present.

**<http://davidjonason.com>**



David Jonason **Welcome to New Mexico**, 2014

Oil on canvas, 24 x 36 in. (61 x 91.4 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist, Mendocino, California

# Mario Martinez (born 1953)

"In *The Desert, The Yaquis, and NYC*, I revisit my ongoing primary theme, abstract natural forms. I see the image as a structure of organic energy. The image also contains straight architectural lines referencing the urban 'cityscape' (San Francisco and New York City). The print was drawn mostly on lithostone, a process I had not used in decades. That process lends itself to a drawing-like quality, which is what attracted me to lithography as a young artist in college.

In short, I feel *The Desert, The Yaquis, and NYC* is a true reflection of what has impacted my life in the past to the present: the Sonoran Desert (the primordial home of my people); Yaqui cultural and spiritual traditions (such as our animal dances and ancient 'Mythology,' both based on nature); western modernism; and my contemporary life, which began in a small Yaqui village (called 'Penjamo' in Scottsdale, Arizona) and continues in a great urban environment called New York City."

— Mario Martinez, Fall 2007



Mario Martinez **The Desert, the Yaquis, and NYC**, 2007

Seven color lithograph printed on soft white Somerset satin paper, 39 x 31 ½ in. (99.1 x 80 cm)  
Courtesy of Art in Embassies, Washington, D.C.

# Acknowledgments

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## **Windhoek**

### *Executive Office*

Terri Mays, Office Manager (Embassy Windhoek's project coordinator)

### *General Services Office*

Adele Beukes, Customs/Shipping/Travel/Property Clerk  
Raymond Griqua, Housing Assistant

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## **Vienna**

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