The Diplomacy of Art

In my line of work, we often talk about the art of diplomacy as we try to make people's lives a little better around the world. But, in fact, art is also a tool of diplomacy. It reaches beyond governments, past the conference rooms and presidential palaces, to help us connect with more people in more places. It is a universal language in our search for common ground, an expression of our shared humanity.

That's why Art in Embassies is so important. The Museum of Modern Art first envisioned this global visual-arts program in 1953, and President John F. Kennedy formalized it at the U.S. Department of State in 1963. Working with over 20,000 participants globally, including artists, museums, collectors, and galleries, this landmark public-private partnership shares the work of more than 4,000 American and international artists annually in more than 200 U.S. Embassies and Consulates around the world. These can be exhibitions, permanent collections, site-specific commissions, or two-way artist exchanges. Many remarkable artists have been involved with Art in Embassies, and this year we were proud to award the first biennial U.S. Department of State Medal of Arts to Cai Guo-Qiang, Jeff Koons, Shahzia Sikander, Kiki Smith, and Carrie Mae Weems.

Just think about what an exhibition of American and local artists means to someone across the world yearning to express herself or himself. Artists push boundaries and show what the human spirit is capable of, forming bonds of understanding with people they may never know. For over 50 years, Art in Embassies has showcased the best of this talent. I am grateful, as it promotes creativity, ignites collaboration, and builds on American diplomacy. —HILLARY CLINTON

Artists whose work has be displayed in U.S. Embassies a Consulates around the wor from left: Cai Guo-Qian Kiki Smith, Shahzia Sikande Marina Abramović, Carrie Ma Weems, Nick Cave, Pedro Reye Fred Tomaselli, Jeff Koon Jenny Holzer, Julie Mehret Jim Drain, and Seton Smit photographed on the balcon of the U.S. State Departmen in Washington, D.C

PHOTOGRAPH BY TODD EBERLE