

United States Embassy Kuwait



ART in Embassies Program

Cover:
Copper Boat
Raine Bedsole

2004, mixed media on wood, 24 x 80 in. (61 x 203,2 cm)

Welcome

We are delighted to be the temporary hosts for eleven examples of work by five contemporary American artists. We are grateful to the artists for their generosity in loaning their work, and to the United States Department of State ART in Embassies Program for organizing this exhibition of dramatic and innovative American art.

Jean and I have not always been drawn to contemporary abstract art, but it predominates in the exhibition, with one artist's work being most in evidence. Linda Touby's six large paintings, created by using oil and wax on linen, are dramatic statements of color and texture. Touby uses thick layers of paint to create form, and adds wax and dry pigment to complete the layering effects. Four of the five works are from her 2004 *Trojan* series.

While Touby lives and works in New York, the other artists range further from America's art capital. New Orleans artist Raine Bedsole's abstract *Copper Boat*, 2004 provides an evocative link to the *booms*, or *dhow*s, of Kuwait. Peter Opheim, who lives in New Mexico, lent us his work entitled *Spring & Summer Water*, another large abstract painting that shimmers with vibrant hues and projects a multidimensional vision.

Massachusetts artist Josh Simpson adds a completely different dimension to the exhibition, with his glass sculpture entitled *Mega Megaplanet*. This imagined world contained in a beautifully crafted object reminds us how art crosses national frontiers to connect the imaginations of artists and viewers everywhere. Finally, Carolyn Johnson of Washington, D.C., offers two photographic prints entitled *Illuminations I* and *Illumi-*



nations II. Johnson's work transforms her photographs of architectural structures into striking meditations on light and color, thus linking the concrete and the abstract.

This small selection of contemporary art represents only a sampling of the work of thousands of American artists working in a vast variety of styles and media. We hope that our friends in Kuwait will enjoy the work of these five artists as much as we do.

Richard LeBaron

Jean F. LeBaron

Richard and Jean LeBaron
Kuwait City
December 2004

The Residence of the United States Ambassador to Kuwait

Designed by the international architectural firm, RTKL Associates, Inc. in 1996, the U.S. Ambassador's Residence in Bayan, Kuwait, symbolically meshes Eastern and Western cultures. Combining traditional elements from both American and Kuwaiti architecture, it features a long pedestrian walkway, derived from the *souk*, or Middle Eastern market-street, a private interior courtyard, like a typical Kuwaiti house, and the American element of a large terrace for entertaining. Generous use of wood for the ceiling and trim reflects the architecture of the traditional Kuwaiti *diwaniya*. Landscaping and elements such as the *mashrabiya* (wooden screens) allow privacy for the living quarters, while permitting fresh air to enter during periods of moderate temperatures. At the south side of the house is a fountain and gardens that reflect the geometric symmetry of the house and grounds, while also providing an oasis of green space and the welcome sound of running water.



Photographer: E Guill Lui, © Special Edition: U.S. Department of State

The ART in Embassies Program

The ART in Embassies Program is a unique blend of art, diplomacy, politics, and culture. Regardless of the medium, style, or subject matter, art transcends barriers of language and provides the means for ART to achieve its mission: to promote dialogue through the international language of art that leads to mutual respect and understanding between diverse cultures.

Modestly conceived in 1964, this visual diplomacy initiative has evolved into a sophisticated program that curates exhibitions, managing and exhibiting more than 3,500 original works of loaned art by United States citizens. The work is displayed in the public rooms of some 180 U.S. embassy residences and diplomatic missions worldwide. These exhibitions, with their diverse themes and content, silently yet persuasively represent one of the most important principles of our democracy: freedom of expression. The art is a great source of pride to U.S. ambassadors, assisting them in multi-functional outreach to the host country's educational, cultural, business, and diplomatic communities.

Works of art exhibited through the program encompass a variety of media and styles, ranging from eighteenth century colonial portraiture to contemporary glass sculpture. They are obtained through the generosity of lending sources that include U.S. museums, galleries, artists, institutions, corporations, and private collectors. In viewing the exhibitions, the thousands of guests who visit U.S. embassy residences each year have the opportunity to learn about our nation – its history, customs, values, and aspirations – by experiencing firsthand the international lines of communication known to us all as art.

The ART in Embassies Program is proud to lead this global effort to present the artistic accomplishments of the people of the United States. We invite you to visit the ART web site, <http://aiep.state.gov>, which features on-line versions of all exhibitions worldwide, and hyperlinks with artists and lenders.

Raine Bedsole

(born 1960)

Raine Bedsole writes that her painted and sculpted boats represent life's journey, solitary, like a canoe gliding quietly across the water. For her "they refer to childhood feelings of oneness with nature, looking up at the stars and feeling weightless, bodiless, formless... times when we are in the flow with life."

Bedsole was born in 1960 in Mobile, Alabama. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 1983 from Auburn University, Alabama, and her Master of Fine Arts degree in 1989 from the San Francisco Art Institute, California.

In 2004 Bedsole's work was selected for a Collector's Club print for the Contemporary Art Center in New Orleans, Louisiana. In 2003 she became an Artist-in-Residence at The Mesa, in Springdale, Utah, and in 2001 she received the bronze medal at Grafica, the International Biennale in Florence, Italy.

Copper Boat

2004, mixed media on wood, 24 x 80 in. (61 x 203,2 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, New Orleans, Louisiana



Carolyn Johnson

Carolyn Johnson has worked as a photographer in Washington, D.C., over the last twelve years.

She has studied photography both in the United States and abroad, including at the Corcoran School of Art and the Smithsonian Institution, both in Washington, D.C.; at Glen Echo Park in Maryland; and independently with Washington photographer Charles Rumph. Johnson received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Spanish from the Uni-

versity of Oklahoma, Norman, with studies at the University of Madrid, Spain, and received her Master of Science degree in computer systems and management information systems from American University, Washington, D.C. Her early work in black and white included theatre photography, some of which was published in *The Washington Post*. Over the last several years, Johnson began to work in color. Along with that change, she developed a strong interest in architectural images, and these have dominated her recently exhibited work.

Illuminations I

Undated, Ilfochrome classic print, 20 x 16 in. (50,8 x 40,6 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Washington, D.C.



Illuminations II

Undated, Ilfochrome classic print, 20 x 16 in. (50,8 x 40,6 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Washington, D.C.



Peter Opheim

(born 1961)

Peter Opheim was born in Landstuhl, Germany, in 1961. He claims that "any Old World influence would be a stretch," due to the fact that his family, employed by the U.S. Air Force, relocated to Minnesota a month after he was born. Opheim grew up in the Midwest, and received his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1983 at Saint Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota, having also attended Cheingmai University in Cheingmai, Thailand, in 1981. Eventually he settled in the United States in New Mexico, north of Taos, where he lives today with his wife and two children.

For Opheim, the act of painting is an alchemic process, a transformation of materials into works of art. "Anything can become a painting. Whatever that thing is, the result should be unique. It should be inherent in

the process that if I desired to make another piece like it, I could not." His work is heavily layered and thick with paint. Amidst the tension of colors and non-objective marks, a graceful serenity is held in the balance. Working with palette knives, brushes, and twenty colors of paint, Opheim works the surface of his paintings layer by layer, building up and scraping away. The final surface not only shimmers with vibrant hues but projects a multidimensional vision.

Opheim has been featured in over fifty group and individual exhibitions since 1994, and has been the subject of a number of print articles. In 1995 he became the recipient of the Pollock/Krasner Foundation Grant, and in 1996 received the Artist's Award from the Friends of Contemporary Art of the Museum of New Mexico, Santa Fe.

Spring & Summer Water

Undated, oil on canvas, 50 x 60 in. (127 x 152,4 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Lisa Kurts Gallery, Memphis, Tennessee



Josh Simpson

(born 1949)

"I began to make planets in 1976 when I agreed to have all the eighth graders in the county visit my studio for glassblowing demonstrations. From these first simple efforts, the planets have evolved to suggest plant and animal life forms, signs of civilization, and geological formations.

I think of glass as an alchemic blend of sand and metallic oxides combined with extraordinary, blinding heat. When it's hot, glass is alive, moving gracefully and inexorably in response to gravity and centrifugal force. It possesses an inner light and transcendent radiant heat that make it simultaneously one of the most frustrating – and one of the most rewarding – materials to work with."

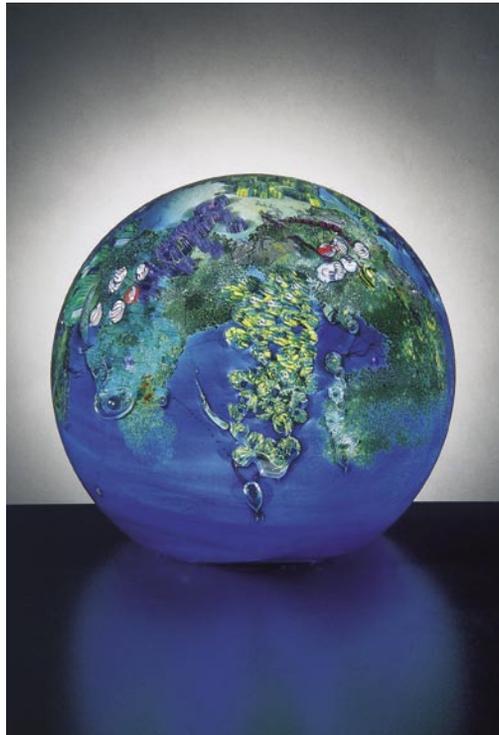
Josh Simpson received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Hamilton College, Clinton, New York, in 1973. His introduction to glassblowing came in Vermont, where, with two other artists, he built a small glass studio. A few years after graduation, Simpson was able to buy a farm in Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts, which he has turned into his studio and home.

Simpson's glasswork can be found in many collections, including those of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C. In 1991 the Moritex Corporation opened the Josh Simpson Sphere Museum to house its collection of Simpson glass. The museum is located on the outskirts of Tokyo in Yokohama, Japan.

Mega Megaplanet

Undated, glass, 10 x 10 x 10 in. (25,4 x 25,4 x 25,4 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts; Photo credit Tommy Olof Elder



Linda Touby

(born 1946)

"These paintings are essentially expressions of nature through the self and the self through nature. They are successful when the transmission of instinct and information is direct and intense enough to explode boundaries between nature, self, and the collective unconscious.

My interest lies in the wholeness, the completeness of that unity. But wholeness implies the embracing of disparity: voluptuousness and reserve, sound and silence, endurance and fragility, motion and stasis, rigor and laughter.

Using shape and color to order pictorial space, I am creating an accord which is necessarily both aesthetic and spiritual. Red, for example, while serving as a formal anchor in the work, has an autobiographical presence as well. Over time, it also works to suggest a vibrant 'otherness,' a transitory wisdom which we glimpse when we are open.

I yield to the limitations of being human in the process of articulating an order that is larger than one I now know. My work is both about the desire for transcendence and the beauty of the little event of being."

These paintings are from a series in which Touby considers "all her work as a self portrait, reflecting the specific societal and

cultural concerns of her generation." In this case, she feels that "destructive world forces and humankind's frailty are reflected here."

Born in Florida, Linda Touby moved to New York as a teenager, where she began her study of art at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, then, as an adult, she studied at the Art Students League and later, at the National Academy of Art.

Susan Inness, "Freedom, Harmony, and Painting"
in *Linda Touby – New Paintings II*, Bill Hodges Gallery,
New York, NY, 2000; p. 7.

Ra XLIV

2000, oil and wax on linen 64 x 80 in. (162,6 x 203,2 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, New York, New York



Trojans LX

2004, oil and wax on linen, 24 x 24 in. (61 x 61 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, New York, New York



Trojans LVII

2004, oil and wax on linen, 36 x 36 in. (91,4 x 91,4 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, New York, New York



Trojans LIII

2004, oil and wax on linen, 42 x 42 in. (106,7 x 106,7 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, New York, New York



Trojans LII

2004, oil and wax on linen, 44 x 44 in. (111,8 x 111,8 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, New York, New York



Trojans LVIII

2004, oil and wax on linen, 24 x 24 in. (61 x 61 cm)
Courtesy of the artist, New York, New York



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