

*ART in Embassies Exhibition*

UNITED STATES EMBASSY  
KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA



COVER

RITA LUDDEN *Fourteen Bowls*, 2004  
Colored pencil on paper, 22 x 28 in. (55,9 x 71,1 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist, Falls Church, Virginia

## INTRODUCTION



My wife, Jan, and my children living at the Ambassador's Residence in Kuala Lumpur, Elizabeth and John, join me in expressing gratitude to the ART in Embassies Program curator for our exhibition, Sarah Tanguy, to others in the ART in Embassies Program in Washington, and to the generous artists and lenders who make this program possible.

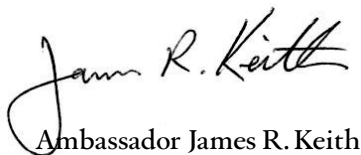
We are pleased that we were able to obtain a number of pieces from the Very Special Arts (VSA) program in the United States, which showcases the work of artists with special needs. Each of our artists' work is unique, of course, but as you learn more about the artists and their works, you will find that they are all very much alike in their effort to bridge, to transcend, or to merge across boundaries or disciplines. They all represent the dynamic tension between change and recurrence that is so much a part of the lives of our two nations' more and more transient and interdependent citizens.

There are artists in this exhibition who were born abroad and immigrated to the United States, where they now live and work. There are artists who use modern media to convey traditional patterns and concepts, and artists who use abstract principles of line, form, and negative space to create works of detailed realism. As VSA artist Surel Mitchell put it, "we are all evolving in some way, always involved with change and in a constant state of flux."

## INTRODUCTION

The artist Andra Patterson's collages are by their nature integrated and complex pieces, but rather than works of synthesis they seem to strip away, to reveal the core, as time erodes the surface and something timeless emerges. Ruth Gowell describes an interaction of one type in the shifting perceptions of colors across the warp of her weaving. Another kind of perception, that of the firm foundation that home and hearth provide by way of a sense of "rootedness," even in the modern era of globalization, is evident in Rosemary Balister's work. That is in contrast to the fleeting, luminescent quality of Cecelia Burnett's painting, *Field of Blossoms*, which calls to mind the shifting explosions of light so evident in the tropical landscapes of Malaysia. Reem Hussein, an American born Muslim artist, conveys through her work a sense of the infinite that is somehow reassuring, and that is a message that speaks to every audience.

Lisa Neher traveled the world as a part of a U.S. diplomat's family; her *Lucy and Hana* communicates a moment that reveals something vital about what it is to be human. An epiphany may arise from so routine an occurrence as a mother's touch, or a child's glance, and these are epiphanies that transcend culture, time, or space. And to return to a space where many visitors to our Residence will begin, Gene Pembroke's *Holy Water* conveys a recurring theme in his work, namely a reverence for that which is sacred. The perception of absolute quality and value in our lives goes by many different names in many different religious and secular traditions, but when we see it in our art we respond in a universal way. Capturing such a moment of perception is the justified work of a lifetime. We are proud to help ART in Embassies share such moments, conveying some aspect of truth from one human being to another, throughout this exhibition.



Ambassador James R. Keith

*Kuala Lumpur*  
*May 2008*

## THE ART IN EMBASSIES PROGRAM

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

Modestly conceived in 1964, ART has evolved into a sophisticated program that curates exhibitions, managing and exhibiting more than 3,500 original works of loaned art by U.S. 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, 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 multi-media installations. They are obtained through the generosity of lending sources that include U.S. museums, galleries, artists, institutions, corporations, and private collections. 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 international 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>.

## ROSEMARY BALISTER (born 1934)

“I usually paint landscapes that have meaning to me and my family – places where we have lived. The collages represent life experiences and seem to happen. The Lacock one symbolizes a visit to England after a hot Virginia summer. I am a cave explorer and some of my work is inspired by cave formations, including *Gypsum Flowers*. Other pieces are influenced by time spent helping reconstruct prehistoric pottery. I also write poetry and try to incorporate the poems into collages to educate about keratoconus – a disease from which I suffer. I feel Very Special Arts is a very worthwhile organization as it helps inform the public about medical problems and at the same time provides an outlet for those challenged in this way. I always come home from their exhibitions deeply moved. I love the scenery of this country, and art often helps promote world peace.

*West Virginia Fall* was painted one day in the late sixties in Green Bank, West Virginia. I just slapped paint on Masonite. It represents the view from our home in the “rabbit patch,” which was the housing provider for employees of the National Radio Astronomy Observatory (NRAO) and their families. Cheat Mountain appears in the distance with some fields in between. My husband, Michael Balister, was in charge of electronics at NRAO, and as were both cave explorers, Green Bank seemed the ideal place for our family to live.”

Rosemary Balister was born in London, England, and immigrated to the U.S. with her family in 1966. She studied at Mary Datchelor School, London, and received a London General School Certificate in art education and life and plant drawing as well as a Bachelor of Arts degree in German and French from Bristol University, England. In later years, she studied ceramics, sculpture, oil painting, drawing, and printmaking. Her work has been shown in Kentucky, Virginia, Washington, D.C., and West Virginia, and can be seen online on the Very Special Arts registry. She currently lives in Charlottesville, Virginia.

ROSEMARY BALISTER



West Virginia Fall, 1970  
Oil on Masonite, 18 x 26 in. (45,7 x 66 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist, Charlottesville, Virginia

## CECELIA BURNETT

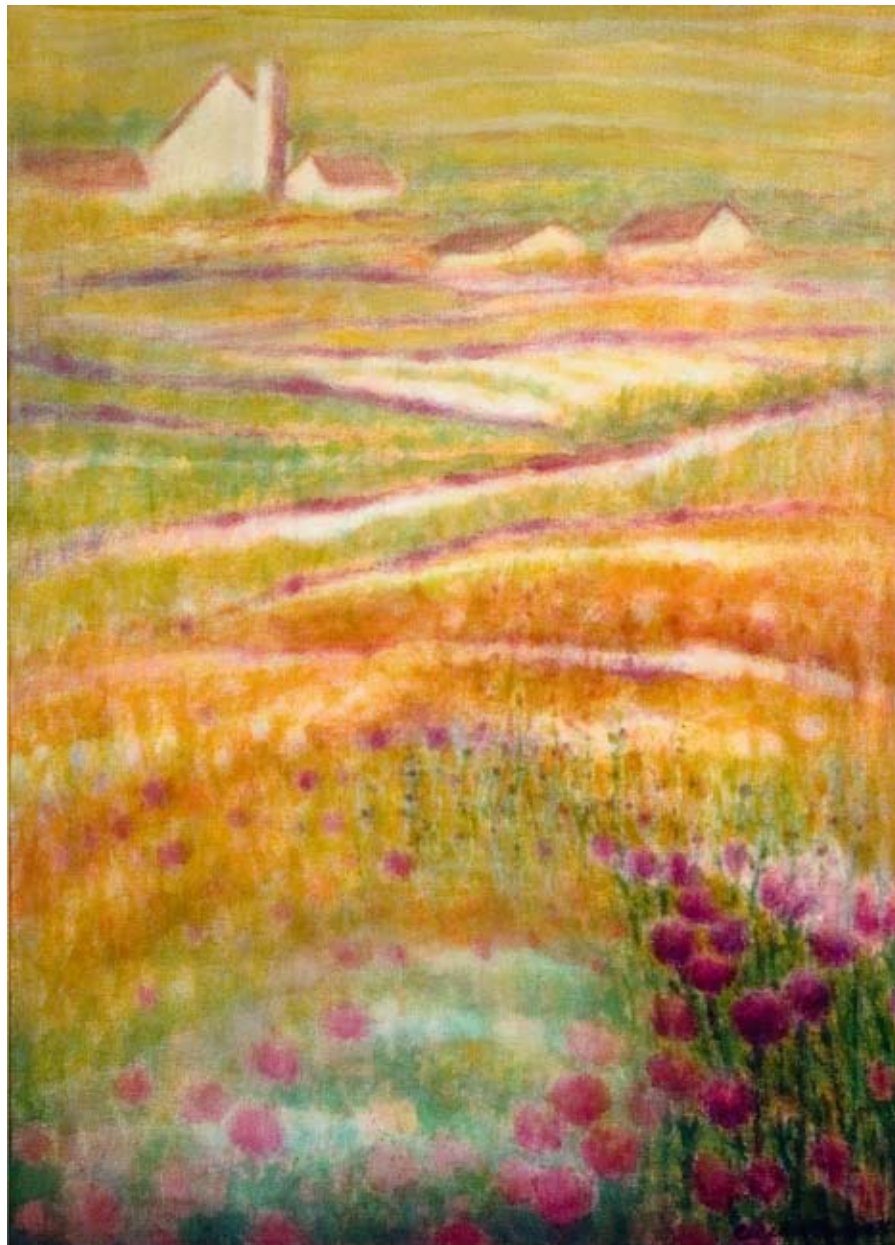
Cecelia Burnett captures a visionary mood or feeling in her large paintings, be they landscapes or interiors. Her technique is a version of acrylic staining on unprimed canvas. She builds her forms with layers of transparent colors to create a lyrical and luminescent quality – an impression, a fleeting image with an explosion of light.

Burnett has studied at the Corcoran College of Art + Design and the National Art School, both in Washington, D.C., and attended the Art League Workshops in Alexandria, Virginia, and Beacon Business College in Wilmington, Delaware. Her work has been shown in group and solo exhibitions throughout the country. Burnett's paintings hang in private and corporate collections all over the world. She is a resident artist at the Torpedo Factory Art Center in Alexandria, Virginia.

[www.torpedofactory.org/artists/burnett\\_c.htm](http://www.torpedofactory.org/artists/burnett_c.htm)



CECELIA BURNETT

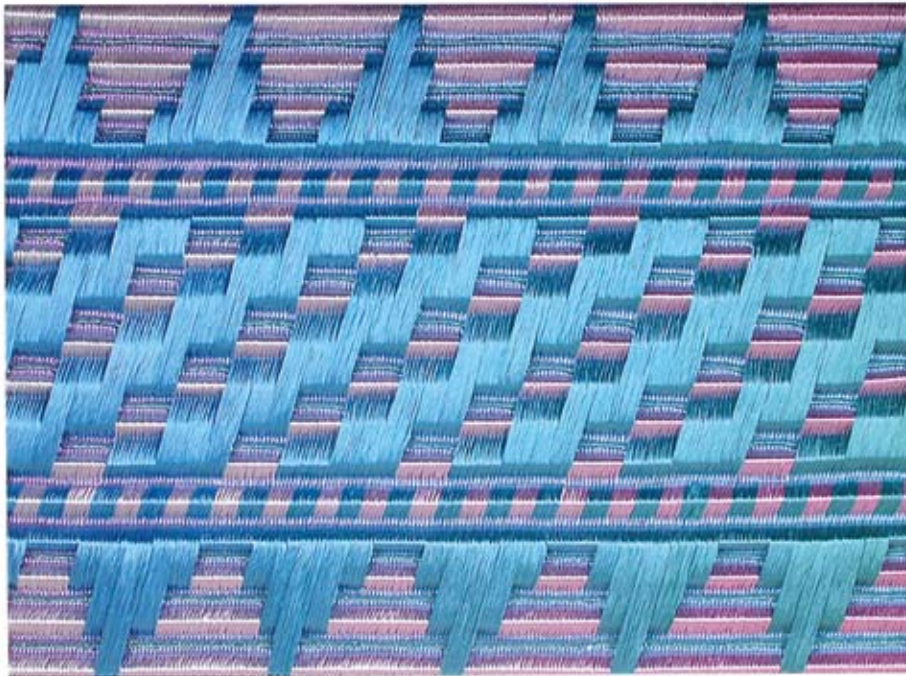


Field of Blossoms, 2006  
Acrylic on canvas, 50 x 36 in. (127 x 91,4 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist, Alexandria, Virginia

RUTH GOWELL (born 1949)

“My work is an exploration of color, reflection, texture, and pattern with color as the dominant force. My interest is in color that changes slowly across the surface of the warp. Blue evolves into lilac ... a yellow center shades out to orange at the edges. The shifting hues are then ‘layered’ to create many options of color interaction within the weaving.

My technique is warp face weave of rayon, hand-dyed in color progressions. This is a departure from the weft face weave of traditional tapestry. I use up to five layers of warp in each weaving. The unseen wefts give texture to my work. The reflective quality on the rayon warp enhances the texture the weft creates. I employ many diverse materials for textural interest, such as electrical zip core – often twisted to create a rippled surface – plastic core, acetate and iridescent Mylar.”



Series IV, #10, 2003  
Weaving, 14 ¼ x 15 ¾ in. (36,2 x 40 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist, Falls Church, Virginia

## RUTH GOWELL

Ruth Gowell has been weaving since her apprenticeship in Denmark in 1970, continuing her studies after returning to the United States. Her work is in many corporate and museum collections and can be seen at a number of craft shows each year. She is a resident artist at the Torpedo Factory Art Center in Alexandria, Virginia.

[www.ruthgowell.com](http://www.ruthgowell.com)



Series IV, #8, 2003  
Weaving, 18 ½ x 16 in. (47 x 40,6 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist, Falls Church, Virginia

## REEM HUSSEIN (born 1975)

American born Muslim artist Reem Hussein trained in interior design and the restoration of antiques and decorative arts objects, earning a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City. Her study and handling of antiques, and preserving of the visual aging qualities of metal, wood, and ceramics inspire the background renderings for her paintings. She combines the effects of modern media and materials with the traditional arts of Arabic calligraphy and Islamic geometric patterns. Regarding her painting as a spiritual act, she revives traditional motifs of Islamic art for their symbolism of the infinite nature of God through intercepting angular or organic lines and shapes that have no beginning and no end.

Hussein's interest in Islamic calligraphy was sparked at an early age while studying written Arabic in order to read the Quran in its original language; the shapes of the cursive letters fascinated her. While in college, she became more interested in her own heritage as an Egyptian Muslim and searched for a way to reconcile her beliefs with her artwork. Calligraphy provided the answer, as it glorifies God's words while avoiding the forbidden depiction of human or animal figures. Traditional calligraphy is produced with a reed pen that the calligrapher herself carves to the preferred size, and a homemade ink of soot and other ingredients. Though Hussein still practices her art using this medium, her finished works are usually in watercolor. Some Muslims complain that art in mosques is a distraction, but the subtle, calming colors of Hussein's chosen medium helps her avoid this problem.

REEM HUSSEIN



Proverbs, 2004

Watercolor on paper, 22 x 30 in. (55,9 x 76,2 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Bethpage, New York

## RITA LUDDEN (born 1925)

“Colored pencil drawing has been my medium of choice for the past twenty years. Though my work is detailed realism, it is based on abstract principles of line, form, negative space, and color balance. *Fourteen Bowls* is the result of many drawings that included rice bowls and chopsticks – a visually challenging combination to begin with, and repeating those shapes again and again in colors and contrasts.

As the colored pencil artist spends weeks and sometimes months on a single drawing, it is well worth the effort to give the viewer a new connection with everyday objects and to bring new concepts and satisfaction to the artist.”

Rita Ludden holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Syracuse University, New York, and a Master of Fine Arts degree from Florida State University. In addition to making art, she has designed sets for theater and ballet, and has taught art and art history. Her work has been featured in numerous solo and group exhibitions throughout the Eastern United States. She is a resident artist at the Torpedo Factory Art Center in Alexandria, Virginia.

RITA LUDDEN



**Fourteen Bowls, 2004**

Colored pencil on paper, 22 x 28 in. (55,9 x 71,1 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Falls Church, Virginia

## SUREL MITCHELL (born 1944)

“We are all evolving in some way, always involved with change and in a constant state of flux. It is no different with my work. While working in one style, I also work on series of one. I am always exploring thoughts and ideas and emotions. Expressing them in a visual context is a never-ending challenge.

My work deals with color, texture, depth, line, composition, movement, and emotions. Process is more important to me than a finished product. Art is an integral part of my life. Having MS/lupus never stopped my creativity. It may have changed my format and some of my images, and it may have tapped my energy or changed the hours I work but it hasn't taken that which is so much a part of me, being an artist.

I live and work in Boise, Idaho, through choice. Although it may keep me out of the mainstream art community, it also keeps me in a place of quiet and gives me the isolation in which to create my own images without the influence of ‘what’s happening in art’...When my work is exposed and a viewer responds, whether positively or negatively, it makes me happy. Sharing work takes the isolation away and makes the work universal.

While visiting McCall, Idaho, I went to Charlie’s Garden, a stunning flower garden planted by horticulturist Charles Davidson fifty years before. It had been tended by various relatives through the years and was beautiful. After returning home, I painted a series, titled *Charlie’s Garden*. They are the essence of the garden.”

Surel Mitchell studied at Pennsylvania State University and Palomar College, California, earning a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Boise State University, Idaho. The recipient of several awards and grants, she has had numerous solo and group exhibitions in California, Florida, Idaho, New York, Washington, and Washington, D.C. Her work has been featured in several publications. In addition, she has been a docent and has served on the Board of Directors at the Boise Art Museum, and was appointed to the Idaho Commission on the Arts, where she co-founded the Visual Arts Committee.



SUREL MITCHELL



Charlie's Garden I, 1994  
Watercolor on paper, 27 ½ x 19 in. (69,9 x 48,3 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist, Boise, Idaho

SUREL MITCHELL



Charlie's Garden II, 1994  
Watercolor on paper, 27 ½ x 19 in. (69,9 x 48,3 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist, Boise, Idaho

## LISA NEHER (born 1951)

“All things change. They are transformed by time, by events, by the human hand. They interact continuously in spaces too small to be seen, in the empty space between particles. And that interaction brings change.

Painting on a two-dimensional surface has a particular challenge and a great pitfall that are one and the same. The challenge is to communicate a moment, the moment caught on the canvas, without falling into the trap of turning that moment into an isolated, lifeless and therefore meaningless record.

For me, painting is life. Many things in life can be communicated using words, but there is a universe of living that cannot and will never be turned into words. Moments can be instants of revelation, of comprehension, of mystery. Even the smallest moments, the familiar and daily routines that we no longer specifically notice because we think we know them so well, can surprise and provide unexpected insight.”

Born into a U.S. Foreign Service family, Lisa Neher grew up in Turkey, Morocco, Vietnam, and Syria. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in 1973 from Coe College, Cedar Rapids, Iowa. During her sophomore year, she took a course on French civilization at the Sorbonne, Paris. Between 1997 and 1999, she attended the Corcoran College of Art + Design, Washington, D.C. Her work has been shown throughout the mid-Atlantic states.

[www.studio18b.com](http://www.studio18b.com)

LISA NEHER



**Lucy and Hana, 2007**  
Oil on canvas, 36 x 36 in. (91,4 x 91,4 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist, Falls Church, Virginia

## ANDRA PATTERSON (born 1942)

Andra Patterson started painting on ceramic surfaces in the late 1970s, exploring ways to layer color and generate subtle changes in texture. She migrated to painting on paper, canvas, and board, which allowed her to increase the complexity of her images, broaden her color palette, and add the element of collage. In her *Signs from a Wall* series, Patterson is interested in the uneven surfaces that remain when time erodes a façade, revealing underlying patterns and impressions. The emerging marks and images are intertwined, losing their specific reference to a time and event, and serving as a combined, weathered, organic record of man's imprint on that place.

Patterson received her Master of Arts degree in 1967 and a Master of Education degree in 1970. She then turned full-time to art, earning her Master of Fine Arts degree in 1982. She taught in art schools in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, where she now lives and maintains a studio. Her work is collected nationally, and she has received awards in juried and invitational shows. Patterson is a resident artist at the Torpedo Factory Art Center in Alexandria, Virginia.

ANDRA PATTERSON



Legato I, 2006

Acrylic and mixed media on paper, 17 ½ x 17 in. (44,5 x 43,2 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Chevy Chase, Maryland

ANDRA PATTERSON



Legato II, 2006

Acrylic and mixed media on paper, 17 x 18 in. (43,2 x 45,7 cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Chevy Chase, Maryland

ANDRA PATTERSON



Decisions from "Signs from a Wall" series, 2007  
Acrylic and mixed media on paper, 33 ¾ x 30 in. (85,7 x 76,2 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist, Chevy Chase, Maryland



## GENE PEMBROKE (born 1970)

Gene Pembroke was born and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, moving to California at age sixteen. Pembroke later attended Palomar College in San Marcos, California, first as an anthropology major and then as a photography major. He volunteered weekly at the Museum of Photographic Arts in San Diego and worked as a photographer for the school newspaper, *The Telescope*.

After four years, Pembroke returned to Philadelphia, and took the unusual job of principal photographer for the *Spirit of Philadelphia*, a dinner cruise ship on the Delaware River. A short trip to Thailand in 1995 reminded him of how much he longed to travel, and he decided to take off for a while. Since then he has spent four years exploring and photographing Europe, the Middle East, East Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Americas. Although he has held a variety of jobs, he is currently trying to make a living through photography, regularly exhibiting at regional art fairs and galleries, where he has won several awards.

“I continue to travel ... to learn everything about a place: its people, its history, its beer, etc., and while I’m on the road I take photographs to document these new environments. I like to share these experiences and images with others in order to better understand what I have learned, or maybe to realize what I have missed altogether. If there is any recurring theme in my photos I would say that it would probably be religion. I am drawn to temples, churches, mosques, holy festivals, and ancient sites that sometimes for mysterious reasons are considered sacred, and to natural settings so beautiful and wondrous that they too seem sanctified. I try to capture some of this mystery in my images. Maybe that’s the challenge.

I would also like to stress my involvement in every step of the process. I supervise the printing, and I mount, mat, and frame everything myself. This is crucial to creating an image that retains the power and mystery that made me capture it in the first place. I try to communicate this power through my photos. At the very least I would like my photography to inspire people to do some traveling of their own.”

[www.genepembrokephotography.com](http://www.genepembrokephotography.com)

GENE PEMBROKE



Holy Water, 2006  
Color photograph, 24 x 30 in. (61 x 76,2 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

## CONNIE SLACK (born 1939)

“My most challenging and rewarding paintings are those that hug the edge of abstraction. They reveal the invisible experience of place. The dynamics of wind, cold, exertion, danger, and surprise become part of an expanded visual that tells not only what I have experienced but also how it has affected me. The paintings inevitably become metaphors for our shared humanity.

On the illusive edge, I paint with abandon enabling the painting to slowly emerge from the brink of chaos to acquire an identity of its own. This is an act of faith where I set aside preconceptions allowing the painting’s soul to take form.

Often I paint to music, surrendering to liberating rhythms that guide my hand and prevent me from becoming overly analytical. On a subconscious level, I am constantly aware of composition, contrast, and variety in texture and color. I work with a full palette, large brushes, and move in a dance with paint and canvas.”

Connie Slack was born in Michigan and received her Bachelor of Science degree from Western Michigan University. The recipient of several awards, she has participated in solo and group exhibitions in Illinois, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Washington, D.C. Her work can be found in numerous private collections throughout the United States. She is a resident artist at the Torpedo Factory Art Center in Alexandria, Virginia.

[www.connieslackartist.com](http://www.connieslackartist.com)

CONNIE SLACK



**Water Garden, 2007**  
Acrylic on canvas, 28 x 68 in. (71,1 x 172,7 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist, Alexandria, Virginia

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

### Washington

Anne Johnson, Director, ART in Embassies Program  
Sarah Tanguy, Curator  
Rebecca Clark, Registrar  
Marcia Mayo, Senior Editor and Publications Project Coordinator  
Sally Mansfield, Editor  
Amanda Brooks, Imaging Manager

### Kuala Lumpur

Wendy R. Gralnek, Ambassador's Assistant  
Ellen C. Langston, Supervisor, General Services Office  
Loganathan s/o Subramaniam, Transportation Supervisor,  
General Services Office  
Wong Yew Hung, Carpenter, General Services Office  
Abdul Talib bin Abdul Rahman, Carpenter, General Services Office

### Vienna

Nathalie Mayer, Graphic Designer







Published by the ART in Embassies Program  
U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C.  
June 2008