



United States Embassy **Mbabane**

ART in Embassies Exhibition

Cover:

BETYE SAAR

**L.A. Sky with Spinning  
Hearts**, 1989

Edition 23/32

Offset color lithograph with  
collage and thread stitching on  
shaped paper

24 x 30 in. (61 x 76,2 cm)

Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld  
Gallery, New York, New York;

printed by Allan Edmonds,  
Brandywine Press,

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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## Introduction

Connie and I would like to welcome you to this exhibition of American art at the residence of the U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Swaziland. The works we have chosen illuminate the dramatic beauty of California, while representing the broad ethnic diversity and variety of opinions that have made our home state one of the most dynamic in our country. We have included two exceptions to the California criterion. Mari Lynn Gardner, who is also a West-Coaster, produces such extraordinary work that we feel our exhibition would be incomplete without one of her pieces. We have also included a work by the acclaimed artist Jacob Lawrence, whose body of work addresses significant moments in African-American history and advocates forcefully for social justice.



Despite ongoing world conflicts, art transcends issues while anchoring us in our humanity. Whether provocative or main stream, it inspires and stimulates, connecting viewers along an avenue of communication between cultures that exist both within and outside of our particular societies. Through our shared witnessing of the artist's creation, we find commonality of experience, vision, and the ultimate enhancement of our capacity to understand one another.

Our exhibition covers a wide spectrum of subject matter from the simple glory of the land, as depicted by Michael Drury and Mary Ann Ryan, to Betty Saar's lifelong rejection of the inherent negativity in racial stereotyping and the caste system of color with all its nuances. Several of our featured artists speak specifically to cultural and societal questions that have particular resonance in Swaziland: the continuing pursuit of justice, human dignity, and equality for all citizens – regardless of gender – increasing violence, and territorial rights issues. Mari Lynn Gardner's profound conceptual statement broaches a current events topic that, sadly, connects America and southern Africa in their respective struggles with violent crime. Susan Taber Avila's stitched tapestry poem depicts the beauty and expanse of the land while questioning proprietary rights to our diminishing planetary resources.

We hope that you enjoy these, and the works of all of the artists, to whom we extend our profound thanks for sharing their artistic vision with the international community. We are also grateful to the ART in Embassies Program for the opportunity to share this exhibition with you.

Two handwritten signatures in black ink. The first signature is 'Maurice S. Parker' and the second is 'Connie Parker'. Both are written in a cursive, flowing style.

MAURICE AND CONNIE PARKER  
Mbabane  
February 2008

## The ART in Embassies Program

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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>, which features on-line versions of all exhibitions worldwide.

*“The Land* was inspired by the topographic landscape of Las Vegas, Nevada and the surrounding desert wilderness. It questions: *who owns the land?* *The Land* specifically targets Las Vegas, Nevada as a glittering gold ornament consuming vast resources. The piece contains two layers – a web of netting, embedded with words, floats over a base of pieced fabrics shaped by gold embroidery stitches. The text mimics the style of an ancient manuscript; however, instead of Greek the language is Pig Latin, a fake ancient language created by moving the first letter of each word to the end and adding ‘ay’ (in this case, ‘ae’). Translated, the prose reads:

*want of land  
the world is unjust  
all know a better way  
true belief  
for envy attack first  
trade gold oil land  
want of land  
take the land  
who owns the land*

The issue of land and resources transcends borders, yet often the arguments over territory surpass the beauty of the actual terrain.

*The Land* is designed as a beautiful landscape with a veiled statement for contemplation.”

**The Land, 2003**

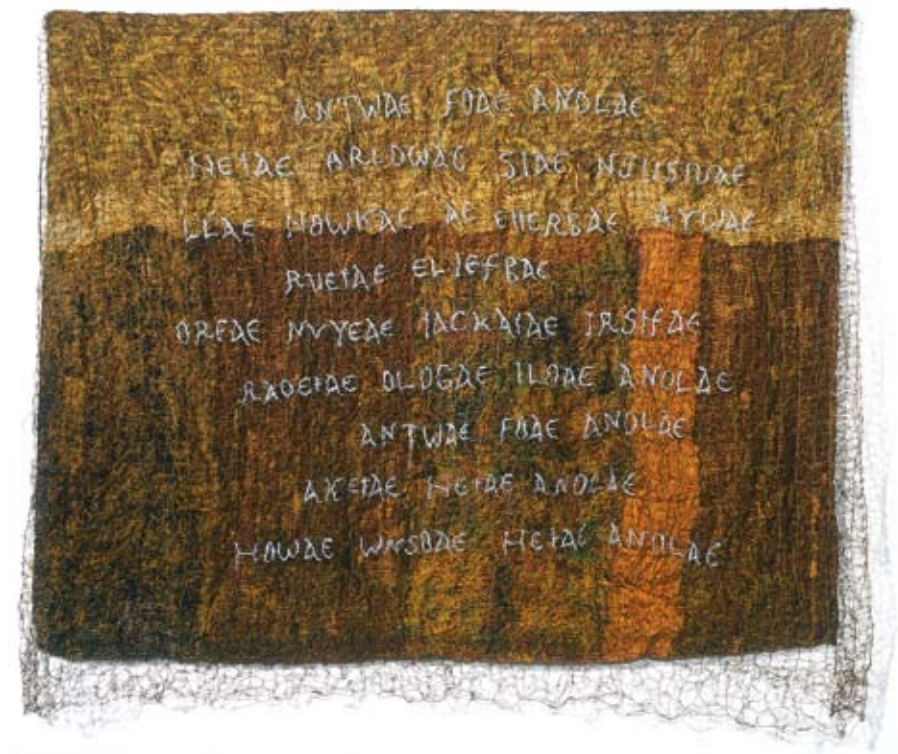
Thread, hand-dyed silk remnants, machine stitching  
54 x 63 x 1 ½ in.  
(137,2 x 160 x 3,8 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist, Emeryville, California; Photo by Lee Fatherree

## Susan Taber Avila

**born 1960**

Susan Taber Avila was born in El Paso, Texas. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in design from the University of California, Los Angeles in 1982; a Postgraduate Diploma in textile art from the University of London, Goldsmiths’ College, England in 1986; and a Master of Fine Arts degree in textile arts and costume design from the University of California, Davis in 1996. She is currently an Associate Professor in the design program at the University of California, Davis.

<http://www.suta.com/>



## Vera Costa

born 1964

“I always find inspiration in the human existence – the body and the mind – and the concepts of opposites – internal/external and life/death. These basic organic forms are positioned outside of a body, seeming to float in the space or they are presented as if seen through a microscope lens. The circle/ovals represent beginning and end, infinite and eternal and the transient cycle of life.

I employ a wide range of medium from sculpture and painting to installation, photography, and craft to construct my work. In this ‘White’ series I sculpted organic shapes and placed them on canvas or board to create hybrid wall objects rendered in a white palette.”

<http://www.veracosta.net>



### **White IV, 2005**

Acrylic, plaster, Styrofoam, and thread on canvas on board  
39 x 50 in. (99,1 x 127 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist,  
San Francisco, California

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## Vera Costa

### **White I**, 2005

Acrylic, plaster, Styrofoam, and  
thread on canvas

36 x 12 in. (91,4 x 30,5 cm)

Courtesy of the artist,  
San Francisco, California



### **White III**, 2005

Acrylic, plaster, Styrofoam, and  
thread on canvas

24 x 18 in. (61 x 45,7 cm)

Courtesy of the artist,  
San Francisco, California



## Michael Drury

Michael Drury is a native Santa Barbaran. He received his primary and secondary education in the local school system, earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in studio art from the College of Creative Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and a Master of Fine Arts degree in painting from the same institution.

Drury's commitment to plein-air painting began when he met California landscape painter Ray Strong in 1970, and virtually all of his work is generated out-of-doors. He has painted extensively in the high deserts of the Great Basin, the wild coast of California, his home grounds of western Santa Barbara County, and the west coast of Ireland. He is a lifelong surfer and a founding member of the Oak Group, an association of environmentally active landscape painters in Santa Barbara.

<http://www.michaeldrury.com>



**Winter Evening in Gaviota**, undated

Oil on canvas

28 x 36 in. (71,1 x 91,4 cm)

Courtesy of the artist,  
Santa Barbara, California



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## Michael Drury



**Morning Light on Black Mountain**, undated  
Oil on panel  
20 x 25 in. (50,8 x 63,5 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist,  
Santa Barbara, California

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## Mari Lynn Gardner

Mari Gardner, a Maryland Institute College of Art graduate, is a photographer, sculptor, community-based artist, and educator. She has worked for many years with disadvantaged youth in Southeast Baltimore, those both native to the city and refugees from Western Africa. In early 2006, Gardner spent four months in Recife, Brazil, working with Pé no Chão (Feet in the Dirt), where she facilitated a film workshop. The participants, aged thirteen to twenty-one, created a documentary entitled *Favela Rhythms*, dissecting the harsh realities of poverty. It explores the youths' dreams and aspirations while scrutinizing the negative stereotypes in which they are immersed everyday.

Gardner's personal artworks are reflections of the communities in which she works. The sculptures, installations and photographs become a commentary in which she poses questions concerning social issues derived from her experiences. Her work has been published in books, magazines and online journals such as: *CameraArts*, the *Community Arts Network* and *ART/VISION/VOICE: Cultural Conversations in Community*, and she has been a guest on Maryland's Public Television, *Artworks This Week*.

Most recently, Gardner worked as a resident artist at the American Visionary Art Museum in Baltimore, coordinating the production of the Mosaic Wall Project (a large-scale mosaic covering two exterior walls of the Museum) with youth in the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services. Upon the completion of the project in June 2007, she returned to Brazil to make a film with young people living in the slums of Rio de Janeiro.

<http://www.marigardner.com>

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## Mari Lynn Gardner

“According to the *FBI Uniform Crime Report* there were 5801 violent crimes committed [in the city of Baltimore] in the first half of the year 2003.”

(Detail)  
**Bullet Proof, Blanket of a City,**  
© 2003  
5801 bullet casings, steel braded wire, bead spacers  
58 x 69 x 2 in.  
(147,3 x 175,3 x 5,1 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist, Baltimore,  
Maryland



## Jacob Lawrence

1917–2000

Born in Atlantic City, New Jersey, Lawrence is best known for his narrative series of tempera paintings based on his own life and those of his peers. His vivid canvases typically have bold planes of color and symbolic elements of the African-American heritage of struggles, aspirations, and accomplishments. His paintings are a unique blend of sensibilities – part narrative mural painting, part social realism, and part modernist abstraction.

In 1946 Lawrence began teaching at Black Mountain College in North Carolina at the invitation of Josef Albers. He also taught in New York City at the Art Students League, the New School for Social Research, and the Pratt Institute, and in Maine at the Skowhegan School. In 1971 he became a professor of art at the University of Washington in Seattle, where he retired in 1986 as professor emeritus. Throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, Lawrence continued to paint subjects that referred to racial and social issues of African-Americans and devoted himself to commissions, especially for murals and limited edition prints, to benefit non-profit organizations, including New York's Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, for which *Supermarket Flora* was created.

In 1999 the year before Lawrence's death, he and his wife, painter Gwendolyn Knight, established a foundation to create an art center in Harlem (New York City) named for Lawrence.



**Supermarket Flora**, 1997  
Silkscreen on paper  
30 x 22 ¾ in. (76,2 x 57,8 cm)  
Gift of the Foundation for Art and  
Preservation in Embassies to  
the ART in Embassies Program,  
Washington, D.C.

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## Manuel Neri

**born 1930**

Born in Sanger, California, Manuel Neri began exploring new forms and materials in sculpture and painting in the early 1950s while studying in San Francisco. It was during this period that such prominent Bay Area artists as David Park, Elmer Bischoff, and Richard Diebenkorn began to take a renewed interest in the human figure. Their efforts to combine the human form with abstract expressionist practice had a lasting influence on Neri.

Initially, Neri began sculpting in “junk” – burlap, wire, cardboard – and, soon thereafter, in simple plaster. His lone female figures, often in frankly erotic or naturalistic poses, were lauded immediately not only for their vitality and rawness but also for being simultaneously contemporary and timeless. From the onset, Neri painted the “skin” of his figures with patches of bright color – a conscious bow, he has said, to the painted sculpture of Marino Marini and to the ceramics of Pablo Picasso, as well as to the visceral expressionism of Willem de Kooning. Neri also creates figures and abstractions on canvas and on paper. Over the past twenty years, he has sculpted in Carrara marble, even as he continues working in bronze.

Neri’s work is included in more than thirty American public collections, including those of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York City; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, California; The Corcoran Gallery of Art and the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; the Denver Art Museum, Colorado; and the San Jose Museum of Art, California. He maintains studios in northern California and Carrara, Italy.

From: <http://www.hackettfreedman.com>

## Manuel Neri



**Axe Rust Series No. 1,**

c. 1980

Charcoal & dry pigment on paper  
50 1/8 x 40 3/4 in.

(127,3 x 103,5 cm)

Gift of the Foundation for Art and  
Preservation in Embassies to  
the ART in Embassies Program,  
Washington, D.C.

Photo by Serge Petillon

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## Victoria Rivers

Victoria Rivers was born in Louisville, Kentucky. She holds degrees in studio arts, art history, and higher education studies. She has been a professor in the design program in the Department of Environmental Design at the University of California, Davis, since 1980. She is the author of a book entitled *The Shining Cloth: Dress and Adornment that Glitters*, published by Thames and Hudson (London and New York, 1999 and softback edition released April, 2003). This work explores the visual culture, social, and ritual contexts of glimmering textiles from around the world.

“My art combines time-honored textile techniques including traditional resist and dye processes combined with new materials like laser holographic films and powders resulting from recent technologies. By building surfaces utilizing low-tech methods that reflect the mark of the hand and fusing them with synthetic and highly reflective materials, I find beauty in the contrast of rawness and refinement.”

**Parhelion**, undated  
Dyes, pigments, gold leaf, heat fused collage, surface additives  
21 ½ x 21 ½ in. (54,6 x 54,6 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist,  
Sacramento, California



## Victoria Rivers



**Aurum II**, undated  
Recycled Indian sari borders,  
pigments, heat fused collage,  
gold leaf, surface additives  
24 x 24 in. (61 x 61 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist,  
Sacramento, California



(Detail)  
**Dazzleflage**, undated  
Dyes, pigments, heat fused  
collage, surface additives  
22 x 19 in. (55,9 x 48,3 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist,  
Sacramento, California



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## Victoria Rivers

“Textile scraps were used as ritual markers, wish granting devices, or prophylactically to confuse malevolent spirits. By incorporating historic textile fragments with my dyed, painted surfaces, not only do I call upon the accidental beauty of these fragments, but I attempt to pay restitution to their faded but poignant histories by making them whole again. By recycling and restoring ‘fallen’ textiles to a level of respect and transforming them into objects of art, my work juxtaposes past and present. The metaphor is further highlighted by understanding the geo-political dynamics that brought about the emergence of these once valued textiles from family treasure rooms and into the global marketplaces.”

<http://victoriazrivers.ucdavis.edu/>

**Aurum I**, undated  
Recycled Indian sari borders,  
pigments, heat fused collage,  
gold leaf, surface additives  
26 x 26 in. (66 x 66 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist,  
Sacramento, California



## Mary Ann Ryan-Sadler

born 1950

“Born in Japan: my first work *Doso*, ‘please’ with a little bow; Air Force brat and California girl, welcomed by the open grassy fields of the San Joaquin Valley, Castle Air Force Base and Highway 99; a five year old reaching for the golden ring from a Carousel horse. Was it really Disneyland’s inaugural year? Certainly that world had always existed, but why wasn’t I able to grab the ring? Exile in South Dakota; Black Hills gold and Strategic Air Command; it was a good place to start looking inward, observed by stern prairie teachers and the quiet features of Native faces, with slower smiles than I could understand.

But my father was not only a pilot, he was a writer. Early success led to great expectations. My mother studied art and handed us her artistic ideals. Together they read a magazine article and set their sights on the artists’s life in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico for as long as it would last. Dark struggles and ubiquitous light accompanied by guitar; we grew accustomed to bougainvillea and thick white walls etched with broken glass; little girls in white lace dresses walking the cobblestones in procession; a deep beauty of people and place only to be guessed at. If San Miguel was the end of childhood, it was the beginning of the world.

Saddened and relieved we returned to California; the hot roads of the Valley; the gleam of San Francisco; U.C. Berkeley and the teaming streets and cafes of Telegraph Ave.; the Art Deco buildings, labyrinthian studios and Phantom Art Galleries of Sacramento, CA.; all have led me now to the intensely artistic coastal enclave of Monterey, California.”



“Through the years of painting and drawing, much of it mixed-media working with watercolor, pastel, oil and acrylic, I have come to accept myself as a natural expressionist. I say natural to give myself permission to move in an unthinking way, a kind of automatic writing rather than attempting to impose an idea of recognizable style. I will always appreciate the strenuous awareness of not categorizing oneself that I gained early on under the auspices of the serious individuals from my school days at Cal Berkeley: Elmer Bischoff, Earl Loran, David Simpson, Sylvia Lark and many other veterans of the creative process who shocked me into letting go.”

**New Zealand Proteus,**  
**UC Santa Cruz Botanical**  
**Gardens, undated**  
Pastel on paper  
18 x 24 in. (45,7 x 61 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist,  
Monterey, California

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## Mary Ann Ryan-Sadler

“Though subject and context and ultimately the Humanity of the thing are significant to meaning, it is the intensity and interactive relationship of the formal elements that drive my art. Surface, movement, texture, elegance and intensity of line, direction, pure color. These are the primary elements that give me confidence and freedom in the creative process.”

**Monterey Bay, California #4,**  
undated  
Oil on canvas  
24 x 30 in. (61 x 76,2 cm)  
Courtesy of the artist,  
Monterey, California



## Betye Saar

born 1926

Betye Saar, born in Los Angeles, graduated from the University of California, and continued graduate studies at California State University at Long Beach; the University of Southern California, Los Angeles; and California State University at Northridge.

Saar is known for her multimedia collages, box assemblages, altars and installations consisting of found materials. She states, "I am intrigued with combining the remnant of memories, fragments of relics and ordinary objects, with the components of technology. It's a way of delving into the past and reaching into the future simultaneously." In her work, Saar voices her political, racial, religious and gender concerns in an effort to "reach across the barriers of art and life, to bridge cultural diversities and forge new understandings."



### **L.A. Sky with Spinning Hearts, 1989**

Edition 23/32

Offset color lithograph with  
collage and thread stitching on  
shaped paper

24 x 30 in. (61 x 76,2 cm)

Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld  
Gallery, New York, New York;  
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Brandywine Press,  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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## Betye Saar

Saar has received numerous awards of distinction including two National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships (1974, 1984), a J. Paul Getty Fund for the Visual Arts Fellowship (1990), and a Flintridge Foundation Visual Artists Award (1998). In 1994, Saar, along with artist John Otterbridge, represented the United States at the 22nd Biennial of Sao Paulo in Brazil. In 2005, the University of Michigan Museum of Art organized the traveling exhibition *Betye Saar: Extending the Frozen Moment* which examined her incorporation of photographic fragments in her work. A role model for generations of African-American women, Saar has raised three daughters, two of whom (Alison and Lezley) are accomplished artists. Saar continues to work and live in Los Angeles.

<http://www.michaelrosenfeldart.com>

**Blow Top Blues:**  
**The Fire Next Time**, 1998  
Edition 24/45  
Color lithograph with collage on paper  
27 x 22 ½ in. (68,6 x 57,2 cm)  
Courtesy of Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, New York, New York; printed by Solo Impressions, New York, New York; published by Benton Fitzgerald and Company



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