



ART in Embassies Program
United States Embassy Caracas

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Residence of the United States Ambassador to Venezuela, and to this stunning exhibition of paintings by Michael Piechocinski, which beautifully depicts landmark locations along the rivers of Washington, D.C.

The history of the Washington area is defined by its rivers. The names Potomac, Shenandoah, and Anacostia were derived from oral tradition related to Native American predecessors who used these rivers as the principal means of transportation. Georgetown and Alexandria, the precursors to the city of Washington, were founded by British settlers in the early eighteenth century as river ports. Colonial General George Washington (later first President) rushed his forces across the Potomac in 1781 on his way to the culminating battle of the Revolutionary War at Yorktown, Virginia, and retired to his home on its southern bank at Mount Vernon after the war. Union and Confederate forces fought up and down the Shenandoah in the American Civil War, and Confederate General Robert E. Lee forded his army across the Potomac at Shepherdstown on his way to the bloodiest day in American history at the Battle of Antietam on September 17, 1862. The United States Naval Academy was founded at the mouth of the Severn River in Annapolis, Maryland. The city of Washington was burned in 1814 by British forces which sailed up the Potomac during the War of 1812, and was saved in the summer of 1864 when a Union Army Corps rushed to its defense up the same river to repel a Confederate invasion force during the Civil War. As late as 1900, Washington still received much of its commerce from the surrounding waterways. In the First World War, the U.S. tested experimental aircraft on the Potomac. One simply cannot understand the history of Washington, D.C., without understanding its rivers.

Piechocinski has successfully captured the seasons and the moods of Washington's rivers through his use of color and the character of his brush strokes. These paintings depict some of the historic river sites in the area as well as contemporary scenes along their banks.

This selection also presents other significant waterways, such as the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal, which was part of a network of water highways that was dug during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, to promote commercial trade and early industrial development in the United States. Today the historic C & O Canal is protected as part of the National Park Service.

In addition to man-made sites along Washington's rivers, such as its bridges and canal locks, Piechocinski has also captured sites of great natural beauty. Many people consider the Great Falls of the Potomac in Virginia (Great Falls National Park) to be the most spectacular natural landmark in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area. Nearby Heater's Island is a Maryland Wildlife Management area, accessible only by boat and inhabited only by migratory birds and native wildlife.

Over all, in this body of work there is a coherence that shows the past and the future of my nation's capital. When I look at these paintings, I feel the serenity of flowing water and the calming effect of an unspoiled landscape. I am de-

lighted to share with you this lovely depiction of Washington, as seen from its rivers, and I hope that you also enjoy and are enlightened by this exhibition.

Ambassador William R. Brownfield

Caracas, May 2005

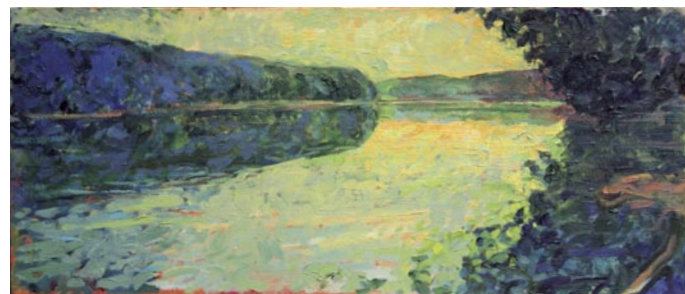
THE ART IN EMBASSIES PROGRAM

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.



Bluegreen Potomac View, Point of Rocks, 1994

Oil on canvas
14 x 30 in. (35,6 x 76,2 cm)

INTRODUCCIÓN

Bienvenidos a la Residencia del Embajador de Estados Unidos en Venezuela y a esta hermosa exhibición de cuadros de Michael Piechocinski que de una manera magistral reflejan los lugares sobresalientes a lo largo de los ríos de Washington, D.C.

La historia del área de Washington está marcada por sus ríos. Los nombres Potomac, Shenandoah y Anacostia se derivan de la tradición oral de los primeros pobladores de Estados Unidos, quienes usaban los mencionados ríos como principales medios de transporte. Georgetown y Alexandria, precursoras de la ciudad de Washington, fueron fundadas por los primeros colonos británicos a principios del siglo XVIII como puertos fluviales. El General George Washington (luego primer presidente de la nación) aceleró el paso de sus fuerzas a lo largo del Potomac en 1781 para llegar a la batalla que dio fin a la Guerra Revolucionaria en Yorktown, Virginia y, después de finalizada la guerra, se retiró a su casa en la ribera sureña del mismo río en Mount Vernon. Las fuerzas de la Unión y de la Confederación se enfrentaron a lo largo del río Shenandoah durante la Guerra de Secesión, y el General de los Confederados, Robert E. Lee, cruzó con su ejército el Potomac en Shepherdstown para dirigirse a la Batalla de Antietam, el 17 de septiembre de 1862, día que se ha registrado como el más sangriento en la historia estadounidense. La Academia Naval de los Estados Unidos fue fundada en el estuario del río Severn en Annapolis, Maryland. La ciudad de Washington fue quemada en 1814 por las fuerzas británicas que navegaron por el Potomac durante la Guerra de 1812, y fue rescatada en el verano de 1864 cuando un Cuerpo del Ejército de la Unión se apresuró en su defensa a lo largo del mismo río para repeler la invasión de la fuerza confederada durante la Guerra de Secesión. A finales de 1900, Washington todavía recibía mucho de su comercio por medio de las vías fluviales circundantes. En la Primera Guerra Mundial, Estados Unidos probó aeroplanos experimentales sobre el Potomac. Simplemente no se puede entender la historia de Washington, D.C., sin entender sus ríos.

Piechocinski ha captado exitosamente los cambios en la semblanza de los ríos de Washington como producto de las estaciones a través del uso del color y del carácter de sus pinceladas. Estas pinturas reflejan algunos de los sitios históricos del área así como escenas contemporáneas a lo largo las riberas de estos ríos.

Esta selección también presenta otras vías fluviales significativas, tales como el Canal de Chesapeake y Ohio, que fue parte de una red de vías fluviales cavada a finales del siglo dieciocho y a comienzos del siglo diecinueve para promover el comercio internacional y así propiciar las primeras etapas del desarrollo industrial en los Estados Unidos. Hoy en día el histórico Canal de Chesapeake y Ohio se encuentra protegido dentro del marco del Servicio de Parques Nacionales.

Aparte de los sitios construidos por el hombre a lo largo de los ríos de Washington, tales como los puentes y las esclusas de canal, Piechocinski también ha capturado los sitios de una gran belleza natural. Muchas personas consideran que las Grandes Cataratas del Potomac en Virginia (Parque Nacional Grandes Cataratas) son el punto de referencia natural más espectacular en el área metropolitana de Washington, D.C. Cerca de la Isla Heater se encuentra un Refugio para la Fauna y la Naturaleza en

el área de Maryland, sólo accesible en bote y habitado sólo por aves migratorias y por animales silvestres autóctonos.

En general, en este trabajo existe una coherencia que muestra el pasado y el futuro de la capital de mi nación. Cuando contemplo estas pinturas, siento la serenidad del fluir de los ríos y el bálsamo de observar un paisaje intacto. Me complace compartir con ustedes este hermoso retrato de la ciudad de Washington vista desde sus ríos. Espero que disfruten de la exhibición y que obtengan una mejor apreciación de la ciudad.

Embajador William R. Brownfield

Caracas, Mayo de 2005

PROGRAMA DE ARTE EN LAS EMBAJADAS

El Programa de Arte en las Embajadas del Departamento de Estado de los Estados Unidos es una mezcla singular de arte y diplomacia, política y cultura. Sea cual fuere el medio, estilo o tema, el arte trasciende las barreras lingüísticas y culturales, y hace posible que este Programa pueda cumplir su misión de promover el diálogo a través del idioma internacional del arte que lleva al respeto mutuo y al entendimiento entre culturas diversas.

Modestamente concebida en 1964, esta iniciativa diplomática visual se ha transformado en un Programa muy sofisticado que realiza exhibiciones, administrando y exponiendo más de 3500 obras de arte originales prestadas por ciudadanos estadounidenses. Las obras de arte son expuestas en los salones públicos de unas 180 residencias de las Embajadas y Misiones Diplomáticas de los Estados Unidos de América en todo el mundo. Estas exposiciones del Programa de Arte en las Embajadas, con sus diversos temas y contenidos, silenciosa pero persuasivamente representan a uno de los más importantes principios de nuestra democracia, el cual es la libertad de expresión. Estas obras son una gran fuente de orgullo para los embajadores de los Estados Unidos de América y les ayuda en sus múltiples funciones relacionadas con las comunidades educativas, culturales, empresariales y diplomáticas del país anfitrión.

Las obras de arte expuestas por el Programa de Arte en las Embajadas abarcan una variedad de medios y estilos, desde retratos coloniales del siglo XVIII hasta esculturas en vidrio contemporáneas. Dichas obras se obtienen en concepto de préstamo gracias a la generosidad de diversas fuentes que incluyen museos, galerías, artistas, instituciones, empresas y coleccionistas privados estadounidenses. Al contemplar las exposiciones, los miles de invitados que visitan las residencias de las Embajadas de los Estados Unidos cada año tienen la oportunidad de conocer más acerca de nuestra nación – su historia, costumbres, valores y aspiraciones – al experimentar de primera mano las líneas de comunicación internacional que todos conocemos como arte.

El Programa de Arte en las Embajadas se enorgullece de poder liderar este esfuerzo global por presentar los logros artísticos alcanzados por el pueblo de los Estados Unidos de América. Les invitamos a visitar la página web del Programa Arte en las Embajadas, <http://aiep.state.gov>, la cual presenta versiones online de las exposiciones en todo el mundo y contiene enlaces con los artistas, museos, galerías, instituciones, corporaciones y coleccionistas privados estadounidenses.

MICHAEL PIECHOCINSKI (born 1948)

The landscape has always been a special area of interest for me. I am concerned with the subject primarily as a vehicle to revel in color and pattern. The subject of the landscape is a challenge, with its fleeting presentation of information dictated by the constantly shifting direction of light. I am interested in the illusion of space and a recollection of a particular place, but only as a secondary aspect. The character of the layered surface, the invented color fields, and subsequent edge of abstraction are always of paramount importance to me in my paintings.

I can remember the first time that I found my way through an overgrown trail and stood at one of the majestic bends of the Potomac River. I was overwhelmed by a sense of space and continuity of time in this newly discovered vista. This was an environment that was in sharp contrast to the heavily industrialized and polluted Flint River that I knew in my youth. Every turn, every tree, and each hour of the day presented an endless variety of visual ideas.

The Potomac can also invoke a sense of history ranging from the earliest indigenous peoples, the European invasion, the American Revolution, the Civil War, and the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. These historic contexts, though impressive, are small in comparison to the physical presence of the Potomac and the power of untouched nature. Even in the shadow of the Nation's Capitol, it is possible to experience the calm and serenity of the enduring pulse of this great river. It is in these places that I find myself lost in thought and feel the constant urge to return and paint.

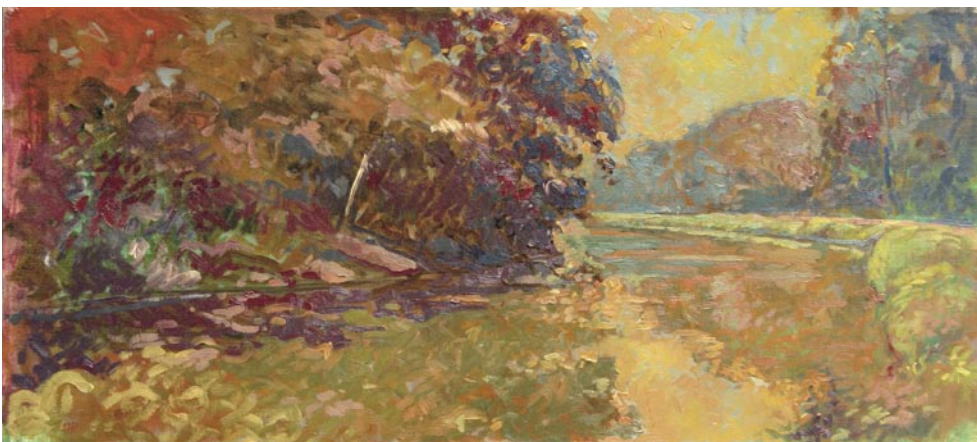
Born in 1948 in Daytona Beach, Florida, Michael Piechocinski received his Bachelor of Science and Master of Arts degrees from Northern Michigan University in Marquette. He is a painter and teacher of fine art at the Visual Art Center in the Maryland suburbs of Washington, D.C. In 2005 he was awarded the Arts Educator Award by the National Foundation for the Advancement of Art. Piechocinski is a recipient of a National Endowment for the Humanities grant, the Maryland Governor's Biennial Art Educator Award, the Robert Rauschenberg Power of Art Award, and the Welch Foundation Award. He attributes much of his early incentive to be an artist to his experiences under the sponsorship of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation at the Flint Institute of Art, Michigan. He has had numerous exhibitions of his work in the Washington, D.C., area, and is known for his colorfield landscapes, Byzantine iconography, collage works, and wet plate photography.



Potomac at Whites Ferry, 1991
Oil on canvas
36 x 50 in. (91,4 x 127 cm)



Great Falls on the Potomac, Maryland View, 1999
Oil on canvas
18 x 24 in. (45,7 x 61 cm)



**C&O Canal
Between Mileposts 21& 22,
1995**
Oil on canvas
14 x 30 in. (35,6 x 76,2 cm)



31st Street Bridge, C&O Canal, Georgetown, 1998
Oil on canvas
18 x 24 in. (45,7 x 61 cm)



Heater Island at Point of Rocks, 1997
Oil on canvas
18 x 24 in. (45,7 x 61 cm)



Mouth of the Monocacy, 2004
Oil on canvas
48 x 60 in. (121,9 x 152,4 cm)



Severn River near Annapolis, 2000
Oil on canvas
18 x 24 in. (45,7 x 61 cm)



Patuxent River at Lower Marlboro, 2004
Oil on canvas
24 x 36 in. (61 x 91,4 cm)



Severn River at Asquithview Lane, 2000
Oil on canvas
18 x 24 in. (45,7 x 61 cm)



The Mall, Washington, D.C., 1998
Oil on canvas
20 x 24 in. (50,8 x 61 cm)



Key Bridge from Roosevelt Island, 1999
Oil on canvas
18 x 24 in. (45,7 x 61 cm)



Roosevelt Island, 2004
Oil on canvas
48 x 60 in. (121,9 x 152,4 cm)



View of the Lincoln Memorial, 1999
Oil on canvas
18 x 24 in. (45,7 x 61 cm)



Memorial Bridge, Morning View, 1998
Oil on canvas
18 x 24 in. (45,7 x 61 cm)

All images courtesy of the artist, Montgomery Village, Maryland



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