



U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations



in the
NEWS

Date: May 04, 2009

Title: Korean-American artists decorate home

Source: By Yoav Cerralbo / The Korean Herald

City and Country: ART in Embassies

When a new U.S. ambassador moves into the historically important Habib House, they bring with them art that gives their residence a touch of home. For Ambassador Kathleen Stephens, the touch of home meant decorating the residence with art that shows the important people-to-people connection both countries share.

"I thought about a number of approaches," she said. "But there were two things that led me in this



direction."

The first was the house itself, which reflects an effort to bridge two countries.

Aesthetically, the house is purely a Korean design. Yet, it was brought together by Korean and American engineers to create a home for modern living while keeping a little bit of the Korean spirit.

"The other aspect that was on my mind, of the many changes of the U.S.-Korean relationship since I came to Korea in 1975, none is more profound and more important in my mind than the extraordinary degree to which people-to-people ties in all fields have grown between the two countries."

The Art in Embassies program was established by the U.S. State Department in 1964 to display American art in some 180 American diplomatic residences worldwide.

The original works of art are obtained through the generosity of lending sources like museums, galleries, artists and corporate and private collections.

The theme of each exhibition and the specific pieces chosen are the result of a collaboration between the ambassador and the art office in Washington.

This special exhibition is the only U.S. Embassy collection celebrating Korean-American artists and their works.

Modern Korean immigration to the United States dates from 1903 when 102 Koreans went to Hawaii to seek new lives.



U.S. Ambassador Kathleen Stephens describes Nikki S. Lee's art hanging in the Habib House.

Today, there are more than 1.5 million Korean-Americans in the United States "and their participation in all sectors of American and Korean society today is remarkable," she said.

Her favorite part of the house, the music room, has two strikingly important pieces of art: Paik Nam-june's "Smashed Violin" and the "Moon Jar" from Kang Ik-joong.

In another room of the house, famed artist Nikki S. Lee has two photographs displayed prominently.

Two photos that capture the imagination are pictures of pagodas elegantly displayed in the living room.

When looking into the huge dining room, one cannot miss Chinese-American artist Meiling Hom's "Clouds" hanging from the ceiling. Still, the softly accentuated clouds do not take away from the other art in the room such as Jae Hahn's "Unfoldings" and "Green Half Moon."

Hom is the only artist featured in the exhibition who is not Korean but has a Korean connection. She received a Fulbright Scholarship from Korea.

"It is fitting that the Habib House, which combines the elegant yet humble architectural characteristics of a traditional Korean dwelling with the comfort of a modern American home, is the venue for an exhibition featuring artists whose lives and works bridge Asia and America," Stephens said.