

US Ambassador to Spain Allows Visitors to See His Blue Chip Art Collection—And it Is Amazing



Theaster Gates. Time with Tar and Horizontality, 2013.

Wood, roofing paper, rubber, metal and tar. 48 x 73 x 4 1/2in. (121.9 x 185.4 x 11.4cm)

Courtesy of the artist, Chicago, IL

US Ambassador to Spain James Costos and his partner Michael S. Smith, an interior designer, have opened up their Madrid residence for a public viewing of their world class art collection, according to [El Pais](#).

Costos and Smith moved to the residence in 2013, and were one of the first same-sex couples to occupy the space. "The roles of a traditional diplomat and wife are very much changed," Smith told the [Huffington Post](#) earlier this year. "The next person that comes [in as ambassador] will not necessarily be bound by conventions."

The Art in Embassies program began in 1961 by then first lady Jacqueline Kennedy. Costos' and Smith's collection includes 80 works from the program by American, Latin American and Spanish artists including Philip Guston, Theaster Gates, Pat Steir, Catherine Opie, Philip Taaffe, [Willem de Kooning](#), [Robert Motherwell](#), Antoni Tapies, and Cristina Iglesias.

"We wanted art that highlights America and the connection between Spain and the US, and we also targeted pieces by artists who we knew would come and discuss their work," Smith told [Architectural Digest](#).

Noting a work by Gates in the dining room, Costos told [El Pais](#) that the artist "used tar in his work in remembrance of his father who was a roofer," and of Opie notes that themes regarding LGBTQ rights are prevalent in her work. He also cite pieces by two artists—[Josef Albers](#) and Esteban Vicente—who fled Europe to start new lives in the US.

Members of the public can view the collection by sending an email request directly to the embassy or via its social media accounts.

For full article by Eileen Kinsella see: <https://news.artnet.com/people/us-ambassador-art-collection-madrid-338288>