

WSJ.
MAGAZINE

AMERICANS

For more than 15 years, philanthropist Jo Carole Lauder has been quietly enlisting America's most important artists to spread their work across the globe—in the name of cultural diplomacy



BY SARA RUFFIN COSTELLO PORTRAITS BY ALEX MAJOLI AND DARIA BIRANG

ABROAD

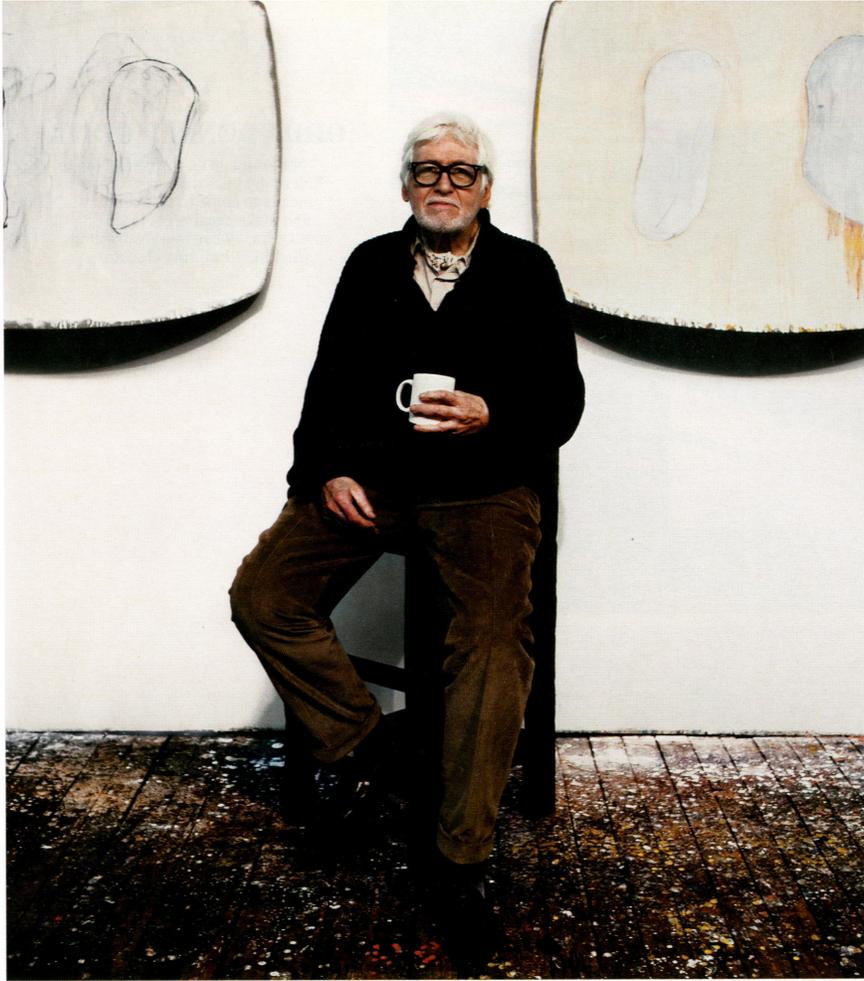


ELLSWORTH KELLY

"I wanted to give something to China, as well as the U.S.," Kelly says of his installation "Beijing Panels," which hangs outside the U.S. Embassy in China. "It's good for our embassies to have great American art. We're all patriotic, and that's why we do this."



PHOTOGRAPHS: COSTELLO; STYLING: SARA RUFFIN; HAIR: JESSICA WILSON; MAKEUP: JESSICA WILSON; GROOMING: JESSICA WILSON; ART: RON GORCHOV; ART: CHUCK CLOSE; ART: SOL LEWITT; ART: RICHARD DIEBENS



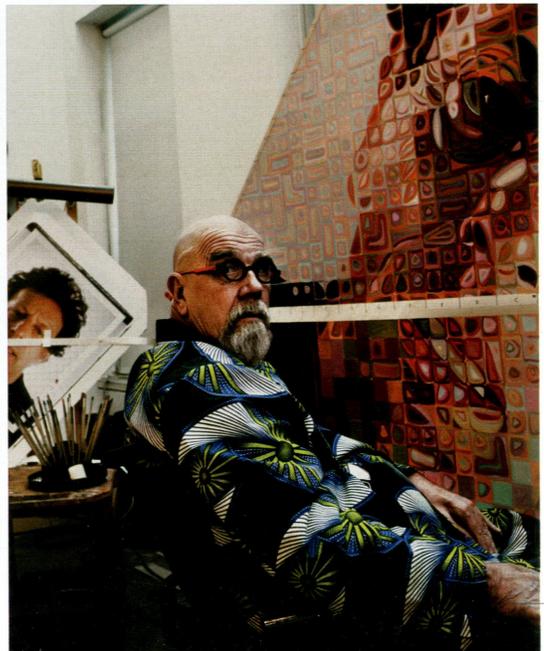
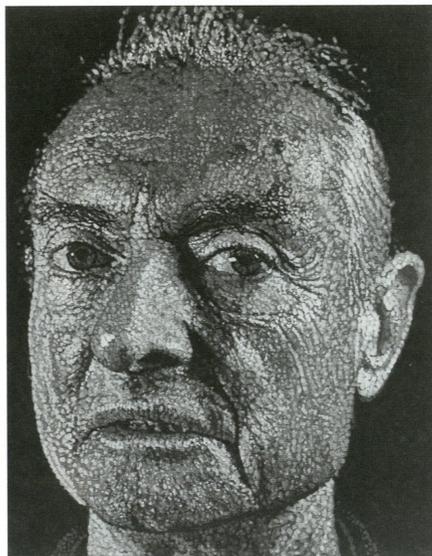
RON GORCHOV

"The only comparison would be a duet in music," Gorchov says of the juxtaposition of his "Totem," a 19-foot-tall, hand-painted sculpture in the USUN building, with Sol LeWitt's painting on the dome of the rotunda above.



CHUCK CLOSE

"The embassies are full of paintings of dead white men," says Close, whose portrait of the late Roy Lichtenstein was created for the foundation's print collection. "I thought at least one of them ought to be an artist."





ODILI DONALD ODITA

"Growing up as a Nigerian in America, I have a sense of what it means to come to this country and make dreams come true," says Odita, whose mural surrounds the USUN-building elevators.



PAPE: COLLECTOR AT THE U.S. MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS, NEW YORK; ODILI DONALD ODITA: LIGHT AND VISION; JOHN: 899.788.X.300.508; RICHES: ACRYLIC LATEX WALL PAINT; GIFT OF THE ARTIST TO THE FOUNDATION FOR ART AND PRESERVATION IN EMBASSIES WITH ADDITIONAL FUNDING PROVIDED BY HOUSE OF AMERICA, PHOTO BY: TONY FLORES

PHOTOGRAPH BY PHILIP HARRIS FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL MAGAZINE. STYLING BY SARA RUFFIN. HAIR BY JESSICA WATSON FOR L'ORÉAL PARIS. MAKEUP BY JESSICA WATSON FOR L'ORÉAL PARIS. PROP STYLING BY JESSICA WATSON FOR L'ORÉAL PARIS. PRESENTATION IN EMBASSY WITH AUDITION, FURNISHING PROVIDED BY SHEILA JOHNSON FOR BERRY & HERBERT VARGAS SA.



CARRIE MAE WEEMS

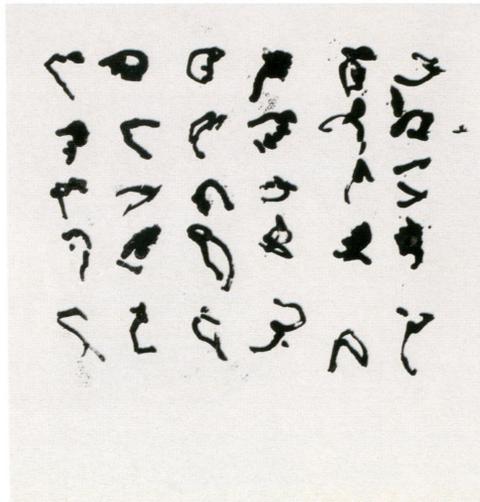
"They're like my little morsels, like little Lifesavers. I always want to consume them!" says Weems of her 42-panel work in the USUN lobby. "It delights me to look at that piece. I'm so honored that it's there."





BRICE MARDEN

"I tend not to think that the government is a very good client, so I tend to avoid it—but it's an important client," says Marden, whose "First Etched Letter" was made in a limited edition of 50 prints. "It's a chance to place some of your work where people are going to see it. You make the work hoping that it can have an effect."



Whether people understand it or not, the art's mere presence works subliminally. In that way, the program waves a less obvious cultural flag for America.



