

MULTICULTURALISM IN AMERICAN ARTS

Information Resource Center | Public Affairs Section | U.S. Embassy Jakarta

Mustafa Davis: Filmmaker/Photographer/Creative Director



Mustafa Davis

Mustafa Davis was born and raised in the Bay Area in Northern California. After attending college where he studied English and Photojournalism, he traversed overseas in search of ecstatic truth in art and independent stories to tell. Armed with his camera and a notepad he set out to find those obscure stories that he felt needed a voice. After nearly seven years of travel through Europe, Africa, and the Middle East, he ended up in Yemen where he met acclaimed German documentary filmmaker Stefan Tolz who was shooting his film “Adobe Towns – Shibam, Manhattan of the Desert.” Stefan took a liking to him and trained him in the art of documentary filmmaking.

There, he studied with renowned German cinematographer Sorin Dragoi (Winner of 2004 German Cinematography Award) and further developed his deep love for

the camera. In 2003, he returned to the USA and continued his studies in the art of filmmaking at the New York Film Academy (Universal Studios – Hollywood, CA) and graduated at the top of his class with his thesis film “The Champ.”

He co-founded the media production company Guidance Media and also created his own production company Grazroots Films. He relocated to Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates and established the Media Division of the Tabah Foundation. He also established the production company Tabah Films (which focuses on feature films and documentaries) as well as Tabah TV (a television production company). There he held the executive positions of Media Division Director, Film Producer/Director and Media Advisor at the Tabah Foundation.

He left the Tabah Foundation in 2008 and relocated to Hollywood, California and founded the award winning production company (Cinemotion Media). Cinemotion Media produces feature documentary films (including the award winning films Common Ground, Deen Tight and The Warm Heart of Africa) as well as music videos, commercials, educa-

tional films, corporate videos, and short films. Cinemotion Media provides film and photography services as well as official media consulting to several companies and non-profit organizations globally.

His work has been showcased internationally on MTV, PBS, iTV, Rotana, Al Risala, Abu Dhabi TV, Dubai TV, Channel 1 Yemen TV, IQRA, TV Sudan, MBC, Al Aqariyya, KBC, Dream, and at international film festivals, screenings and exhibitions. Cinemotion Media incorporates the expertise and consultation of acclaimed award winning and four time Oscar nominated producer Robert Richter (Woman Rebel, The Last Atomic Bomb, In Our Hands), award winning editor Ruth Schell (A Life Apart, A Letter Without Words, The Last Ghost of War) and many other professional filmmakers and photographers worldwide. He also founded Mustafa Davis Inc which is the production company that produces the majority of his fine art photography. Cinemotion Media and Mustafa Davis Inc, have offices in the San Francisco Bay Area, California and Santa Monica, CA.

Read more about Mustafa Davis at: <http://www.mustafadavis.com/>

U.S. Embassy Jakarta Mission Statement

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America Opens to Outside Ideas and Innovations, Professor Says

By Michael Jay Friedman
America.gov staff writer

Washington -- American culture is influenced strongly by the rest of the world, Mexico and Asia especially, said Tyler Cowen, professor of economics at George Mason University in Virginia.

Cowen offered the comment during a wide-ranging February 15 webchat sponsored by the Department of State's Bureau of International Information Programs. Among the topics discussed were the ability of governments to "protect" culture, how the United States funds the arts, and the proposed UNESCO Convention on the Promotion and Protection of Cultural Diversity.

Addressing a question about government attempts to "protect" culture, Cowen warned that most such efforts are driven by political objec-

tives rather than "principles of true diversity."

Asked about funding of the arts in the United States, Cowen outlined a system that relies heavily on indirect government support, through favorable tax treatment for private donations. This system, he explained, means that the U.S. government is not obliged to choose between "bad" and "good" art.

Queried on how outside artistic traditions have influenced American culture, Cowen replied that the United States "is one of the most open nations for immigrants, new food ideas, new music, and many other innovations." In particular, he pointed to developments in fashion and the cinema -- where contributions from India increasingly are influential.

Cowen also suggested that cultural exchange is not one way. American blues and jazz

music, for instance, are based on West African forms. Today, such Nigerian musicians as Fela Kuti fuse contemporary African sounds with an American jazz already grounded in African music.

Cowen was critical of the proposed Cultural Diversity Convention, calling it a "highly flawed" document.

"It will not support real world cultural diversity. ... Commerce and creativity are allies, not enemies," he concluded.

Source: <http://goo.gl/hss5w>
Full text transcript is at: <http://goo.gl/lo1q9>

Related sources:

Art of the Edge

An e-book showcases the work of 17 contemporary American artists. These artists exemplify such bedrock American values as innovation, diversity, freedom, individualism, and com-

petitive excellence. Read more at: <http://goo.gl/DGdor>

U.S. Cities Reflect Cultural Diversity, Artistic Ingenuity

Many major cities in the United States have been influential in shaping the nation's cultural life, and an ethnically diverse population has contributed immeasurably to U.S. achievements in literature, the performing arts, architecture and cuisine. Read more at: <http://goo.gl/28cdk>

U.S. Dancers Forge East-West Connection

Since its inception in 1971, the ODC (Oberlin Dance Collective) company has been hailed for its imaginative choreography and bold aesthetic vision. The dance company found inspirations and friendship while teaching and performing in Indonesia, Burma, and Thailand. Read more at: <http://goo.gl/wh0N6>

You Asked: What is American Culture?

By David Kipen

This essay is excerpted from the Living Book You Asked.

The easy joke would be, "Sum up American culture in 500 words? Isn't that too many?"

The hard fact is that American culture may not exist anymore. Thanks to the Internet — the very medium that now enables you to read, on another continent, an essay I'm writing in North America in response to a question probably asked on another continent entirely —

all the old sentry boxes guarding our national cultures are seriously understaffed. Look at the three art forms that most of my countrymen think of as somehow intrinsically American originals: musical comedy, jazz, and the detective novel.

The hottest ticket on Broadway at the moment, and the smart bet to win a shelf full of Tony Awards, may just be *Fela!*, a musical about the late Nigerian multi-instrumentalist Fela Kuti. Fela's influence on jazz, too, only grows and helps

demonstrate how the breakdown of formerly "national" cultures parallels a similar cross-pollination between once discrete genres. Like the sentinels guarding the ramparts of erstwhile "American" culture, the customs officer working the borders between jazz, pop, and musical theater has long since given up and gone home. Wherever that is.

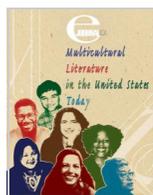
In detective fiction, the dissolution of American culture appears even more pronounced. The most eagerly anticipated

novel of the summer, detective or otherwise, may just be the late Stieg Larsson's *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest*, the third in a series of Swedish mysteries. *The Girl Who Played With Fire*, a Swedish film based on Larsson's second book about the aloof hacker vixen Lisbeth Salander, will grace stateside screens this fall. Larsson's first installment in the series, *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo*, had followed

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MORE RESOURCES

E-Publications



eJournal USA: Multicultural Literature in the United States Today/by U.S. Department of State, February 2009

The United States is enriched culturally by immigrants from many nations. This edition of *eJournal USA* focuses on distinguished American writers from various ethnic backgrounds who add immeasurably to mutual understanding and appreciation through tales of their native lands and their experiences as Americans. Full version is at: <http://goo.gl/NkfMx>

eJournal USA: American Popular Music/by U.S. Department of State, August 2008.

American popular music is a kaleidoscopic mélange of styles and dreams. Its vibrancy reflects the mating of cultural diversity to artistic and creative freedom. Read more at: <http://goo.gl/Lx1HO>

Multimedia

Photo gallery-American Arts: Landscape of Diversity.

The remarkable flourishing of the arts in present-day America largely was due to the influx of talent from around the world and the rapid inclusion into the artistic mainstream of women and people

of African, Asian, Hispanic and other ethnicities. Today, the landscape of American arts is as diverse and unique as the landscape of American society. Check the pictures at: <http://goo.gl/GtNDN>



Photo gallery -Grass Roots: African Origins of an American Art.

Grass Roots: African Origins of an American Art, was an exhibition at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African Art, tells the story of the coiled sweetgrass baskets made by the Gullah/Geechee people of the southeastern United States — descendants of slaves brought from Africa 300 years ago. Check pictures of several sweetgrass baskets displayed during the exhibition at: <http://goo.gl/wH8GM>

Photo gallery-Latin American Influence on Display in New York

In fall 2010, El Museo del Barrio and the New-York Historical Society teamed up to put on the exhibition *Nueva York (1613-1945)*, an attempt to document four centuries of cross-cultural influence and cooperation between Latin America and New York. See the pictures of some items at: <http://goo.gl/JRIXo>

Photo gallery-Native Vision: Art from and Inspired by Native Americans

When the State Department's

"Art in Embassies" curators select artwork to install in U.S. diplomatic post, they often include works from or inspired by American Indians. Many of these works says the artists, reflect their ancestors' resilience and pride. See the pictures at: <http://goo.gl/NWyBsJRIXo>

Podcast-African-American's Activist Promotion of Muslim Culture

Okolo Rashid, an African American Muslim promotes and educates Americana on Muslim Culture through International Museum of Muslim Cultures at Jackson, Mississippi.

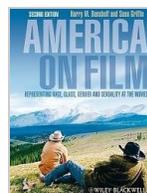
Listen to the podcast and got the transcript at: <http://goo.gl/bhoHg>

Video-DanceMotionUSA: Evidence.

Movement, music, and spoken word are seamlessly combined by this Brooklyn-based group to explore the traditions and contemporary expressions of the African American Diaspora. Accessible at: <http://goo.gl/CbCSq>

Books

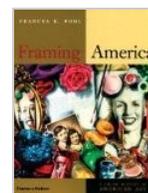
(available in IRC collection)



America on Film: Representing Race, Class, Gender and Sexuality at the Movies/by Harry

M. Benshoff and Sean Griffin. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

This book introduces issues on diversity as represented within the American cinema....It chronicles the cinematic history of various cultural groups, examines forces and institutions of bias and stimulates discussion about the relationship between film and American national culture (summary is taken from the back cover of the book).



Framing America: A Social History of American Art/by Francis K. Pohl. New York:

Thames & Hudson, 2008.

Eschewing the conventional genesis story of American art, one that locates its origins in the portrait work of anonymous colonial itinerants, Pohl reaches further into history than previous surveys. In order to locate a more authentic foundation for American art, she investigates the cultural production resulting from interactions between Native Americans and several exploratory European groups. Also unprecedented is Pohl's exploration of crafts, utilitarian objects, and curiosities to further illuminate the development of society in America (Summary was written by Library Journal, posted in Amazon.com).

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jakarta.usembassy.gov/infoproduct.html](http://jakarta.usembassy.gov/infoproduct.html)

Information queries may be submitted to us by phone, fax, mail, and e-mail. You are also welcome to visit us by appointment for personal research assistance.

This information package is compiled by the IRC for the U.S. Cultural Envoy Program conducted by Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy Jakarta from September 22-30, 2011

Disclaimer: Books, articles, reports and websites described in this info package present a diversity of views in order to keep our users to keep abreast of current issues in the United States in particular and worldwide in general. These items represented the views and opinions of the authors and do not necessary reflect official U.S. Government policy.

You Asked: What is American Culture?

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the trailblazing novels of his fellow Swede Henning Mankell Salander looks to be a genuine heroine for our time, born of the Internet, and ultimately.

Before we all join hands and start singing *It's a Small World* (to borrow a tune from one of America's most globalized corporations — from which an invoice is probably in my inbox already), it's fair to point out that an American movie studio has already bought for the British director-producer Ridley Scott the rights to remake all of Larsson's books in English. Apparently subtitles are still a higher hurdle than any border check-point, and the money to be made from a multi novel series is, as J.K. Rowling could tell you, magic.

But, plainly, American culture no longer belongs to America, and in truth it never did. Musical comedy owes its provenance to opera, of course, which harks back to Monteverdi's Italy and Lully's France at least. Jazz came out of New Orleans by way of the Caribbean and, before that, Africa. And the trail of

detective fiction winds back quite a ways — through the quintessentially British Sherlock Holmes, to Poe's oddly French Inspector Dupin, to Dickens's Inspector Bucket from *Bleak House*, all the way to Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex* — before it ever goes cold.

The roots of American culture branch even more convolutedly than the four freeways that carve up Boyle Heights, the Los Angeles neighborhood where my Yiddish-speaking ancestors lie buried, where Spanish is as common as English, and where I write these words.

David Kipen recently wrote a new translation of Cervantes' The Dialogue of the Dogs (Melville House) and is author of The Schreiber Theory: A Radical Rewrite of American Film History (Melville House). He is director of literature for the National Endowment for the Arts, for which he manages The Big Read (www.nea.gov/bigreadblog/) program. His greatest accomplishment is winning the Ann Arbor Bookfest Spelling Bee.

Source: <http://goo.gl/GQzby>



Did You Know?

The costumes, masks and puppets in the theatrical version of Disney's *The Lion King*, designed by Julie Taymor, were inspired by Indonesian arts. Julie Taymor, director and designer, was a former student of Indonesian masked dance-drama and shadow puppetry.

Check more pictures at: [http://
goo.gl/B8I9v](http://goo.gl/B8I9v)

Read the article titled "Indonesian Culture Strongly Influenced American Director" at: [http://goo.gl/
Yqb5j](http://goo.gl/Yqb5j)