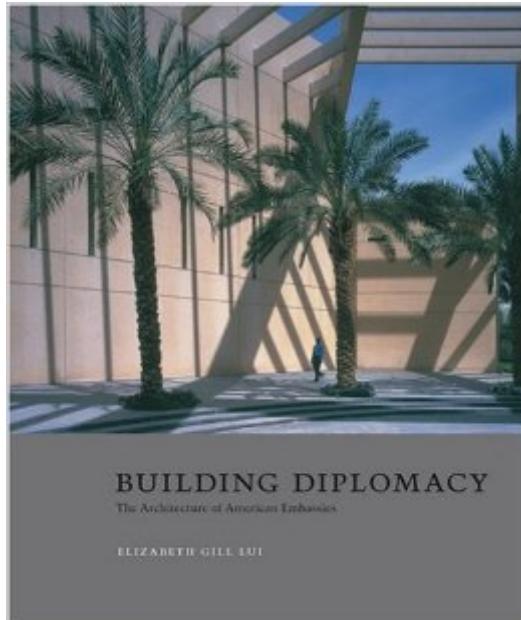


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# Building Diplomacy: The Architecture Of American Embassies



## Synopsis

Embassy architecture and design ranges from the humble to the stately, from the practical to the grand. *Building Diplomacy* is the first comprehensive photographic portrait of the official face of American diplomacy around the world. Elizabeth Gill Lui traveled to fifty countries to photograph American embassies, chanceries, and ambassadors' residences. This record of her journey includes approximately five hundred artful and eloquent interior and exterior views shot by Lui with a large-format camera. Keya Keita, Lui's daughter and partner on the project, shot a live-action documentary of embassies and the cultural milieu of each nation Lui and Keita visited. The text includes an essay by Jane Loeffler detailing the history of the U.S. Department of State's building program. America's commitment to historic preservation of properties has been realized in Buenos Aires, London, Paris, Prague, and Tokyo. The modernist tradition is showcased in Argentina, Greece, India, Indonesia, Mexico, the Netherlands, and Uruguay. Vernacular buildings adapted to diplomatic use are widespread: Lui photographed examples of adapted reuse in Ghana, Iceland, Mongolia, Myanmar, and Palau. Buildings that reflect Europe's colonial legacy are also in evidence. After the 1983 bombing in Beirut, embassy construction began to reflect increased security concerns. Embassies built after 1998, although isolated within walled compounds, are well regarded by those who work in them. The author makes a case that embassy architecture is a critical aspect of American identity on the international landscape and can be formative in defining a new cultural diplomacy in the twenty-first century. Structured geographically, *Building Diplomacy* portrays embassies in Africa, East Asia, Europe, the Near East, the Pacific, South Asia, and the Western Hemisphere. An appendix lists the architects and designers of the featured buildings. More information about *Building Diplomacy* is also available.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is a magnificent book that reveals to the general public the story of many of our diplomatic and consular posts in spectacular photos and concise text. As a former Foreign Service Officer, I hope the book will be read widely, to give Americans a look at how our country is represented abroad through architecture, in styles ranging from former palaces to modern "fortress" embassies.

Elizabeth Gill Lui and Keya Keita have done a superb job. Since I served in our embassies in Seoul (twice), Tokyo, Rangoon and Manila, I was particularly interested to see how the ambassadors' residences and chanceries (embassy office buildings) in those posts were presented. Overall, Ms. Lui and Ms. Keita did an exceptional job on them. The historic residences in Tokyo and Seoul are beautifully portrayed in some detail, including the original legation building in Seoul (built 1883) which is on the residence grounds and which must be our oldest diplomatic building in Asia. There are fine photos of the residence in Rangoon (aka Yangon), constructed for a great British timber company and acquired by the US circa 1950. There is also a photo of the interesting, though rat-infested, chancery in downtown Rangoon which was built early in the last century for the Armenian banking firm of Balthazar Brothers. Unfortunately, part of that view is marred by the blur of a passing bus. In 1988, the street in front of the chancery was the scene of a massacre, as Burmese soldiers shot down scores, perhaps hundreds, of peaceful pro-democracy demonstrators. Buddhist monks, students and others were saved when Ambassador Burton Levin told the Marine Guards to open the front doors and give refuge to survivors. Embassy Manila did not fare so well in my view.

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