

American Artist Jeff Koons Loans U.S. Embassy Beijing "Good Luck"

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A sculpture on loan to U.S. Embassy Beijing by American artist Jeff Koons appears on Google's home page as a background image available for users to download. He's one of 30 artists whose work comprises "Landscapes of the Mind," a permanent collection installed in the new embassy complex in 2008.

Like so many of their predecessors, the American artists in the embassy's collection are inspired by China's philosophy, calligraphy, ceramics, ornamentation, architecture, religion and culture.

“Art to me is a humanitarian act and I believe that there is a responsibility that art should somehow be able to affect mankind, to make the world a better place,” says Koons.

Jeff Koons' monumental sculpture *Tulips*, from his "Celebrations" series, symbolizes good luck in Chinese. Botanical history tells that tulips originated in a corridor stretching along the 40 degree latitude between Northern China and Southern Europe. Blown up to fantastical proportion and weighing over seven tons, the stainless steel flowers, seemingly in need of water, rise out of the embassy's lotus pond.

Koons and Dale Chihuly, another of Google's featured artists, participate in the State Department Art in Embassies program. Together, they have loaned work for nearly 50 U.S. embassies in Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.