Kalliopi Minioudaki

FROM HIS STORY TO HISTORY: ROBERT INDIANA'S PATRIOTIC ART OF SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

I propose to be an American painter, not an internationalist speaking some glib visual Esperanto; possibly I intend to be a Yankee. (Cuba or no Cuba.)

—Robert Indiana

Alienation and commitment might well describe both my work and life.

—Robert Indiana

As the "cool" outlook of artists in the late fifties and early sixties seemed in accord with the philosophies of passive resistance in the Civil Rights movement, and even the strategies of the Cold War . . . the temperature began to rise with the Black Muslim movement, the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Malcolm X . . . Artists don't have to illustrate current events to respond to their pressures.

—Allan Kaprow

In 1965 Robert Indiana began one of the most powerful conceptual indictments of racism produced by a white American artist by the mid-nineteen-sixties. A series of four paintings, *The Confederacy* (figs. 52–55) consists of damning cartographic portrayals of renowned Southern strongholds of racism—Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, and Mississippi—captioned by a categorical annotation of his own invention: "JUST AS IN THE ANATOMY OF MAN EVERY NATION / MUST HAVE ITS HIND PART." As one of the most unequivocally political of Indiana's early works, the *Confederacy* series has justly left an indelible imprint on the artist's reception: its "moral cries"[1] have contributed to his differentiation from the rest of the artists who were being labeled Pop and continue to underpin the understanding of Indiana as a political artist of unending "commitment,"[2] confirmed by his latest pictorial call to world peace and despair for its absence in his *Peace Paintings* of 2003 (figs. 59 & 60).[3] Although systematically dictating an autobiographic interpretation of his work since the early nineteen-sixties, Indiana has invited such an understanding. In 1963 he memorably distinguished his Pop as a "re-enlistment in the world," yet a world circumscribed by Cold War sociopolitical parameters: the fear of the Bomb and the allure of the American Dream.[4] Ever since, he has repeatedly claimed that "social criticism" informs his work, complementing rather than displacing his aesthetic focus on form and color.[5] Even his automythology—unraveled through interviews and

57
John Ardoin
Robert Indiana with *The American Dream, I* at the David Anderson Gallery, New York, 1961


YIELD
SISTER
YIELD
MOTHER
YIELD
FATHER
YIELD
BROTHER

statements and congealed in his published "Autochronology"—variously politicizes the intersection of his story with American history. As a carefully crafted story of a Depression-era boy's determined rise from rags to riches and artistic greatness, it allegorizes the American Dream that Indiana so passionately celebrated and "cynically"[6] exposed.

Whether seen as the culmination of the politicization of his art or as an unprecedented eruption of radical dissent fostered by the protest climate of the mid-nineteen-sixties, which obliged artists to "take a stand,"[7] the *Confederacy* series is exceptional neither for its political content nor its explicitness. Conversely, it is the explicitness of its critique of even a part of the American nation that makes it appear as an anomaly in Indiana's oeuvre. For among the many seemingly incongruous mixtures he achieved with his art—such as the marrying of high and low, sacred and profane, word and image, and above all "hard-edge formalism"[8] with "old-fashioned . . . message"[9] and vernacular American reality—Indiana also grafted art and politics, opening up a space for social engagement through art that obviated the generational and particularly American polarization of artistic autonomy and political commitment. Yet it is as an American, as he has repeatedly and poetically claimed, that Indiana "charted the course,"[10] carefully threading a patriotic art of social engagement.

Though this essay focuses on its most radical—both implicit and explicit—manifestations during the nineteen-sixties, it is worth starting with a rather conventional prelude that foregrounds the patriotic premises of his political work. In 1953, while studying at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture on a summer fellowship, Indiana commemorated the Korean War in a prize-winning fresco. Though probably executed in his early figurative style—like its religious pendant depicting Pilate washing his hands, glimpsed in a photograph—little is known about this, essentially first, history painting by Indiana, since it was destroyed by fire. Moreover, his take on that "proxy war" between the United States and the Soviet Union is obscured by the artist's conflicting references to

58
THE BLACK YIELD BROTHER 3, 1963
Oil on canvas, 85 x 85 in. (216 x 216 cm), diamond

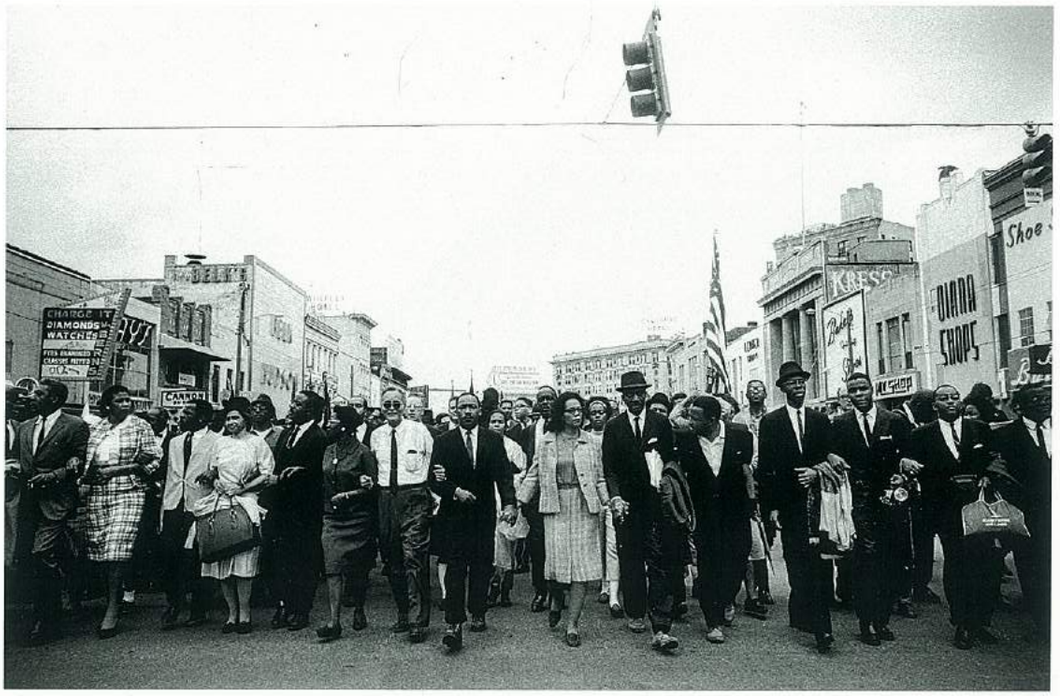
Private collection

59
FOUR DIAMOND PEACE (BLUE), 2003
Oil on canvas, 4 panels, 67 1/2 x 67 1/2 in. (171.5 x 171.5 cm), diamond assembled

Private collection

60
PEACE PLUNGES IN DESPAIR,
2003
Oil on canvas, 67 1/2 x 67 1/2 in.
(171.5 x 171.5 cm), diamond

Private collection



61
Steve Schapiro
Martin Luther King Jr. leads Selma to Montgomery March, Alabama, 1965

his motives. In 1963 Indiana recalled that the fresco was "in memoriam . . . to the men who were losing their lives in the Korean War,"[11] but in his "Autochronology," first published in 1968, he changed his story and referred to it as "protesting the Korean War." Both statements are equally unreliable sources of the agenda of then Robert Clark's depiction of the Korean War as either a patriotic memorial or anti-war protest. Yet Indiana's retrospective revision of his intention, whether imposed by the anti-Vietnam War sentiment of the times or not, tellingly reflects his shifted attitude toward historic subject matter as fraught within the "promise and paradox"[12] of sixties America's impulse for social reform and military policing of world democracy, while also foregrounding the pressure state-sponsored wars put on his pacifism and patriotism.[13]

Conditioning his liberal art politics, while being itself subject to changing sociopolitical circumstances, Indiana's patriotism is genuinely democratic and humanitarian in the idealist spirit of America's founding fathers. As such, it permitted him to protest the deviations from American ideals under different regimes, both Republican and Democrat. Circumscribed, however, by a pious belief in the religious dimension of American life and political sphere—what Robert Bellah has identified as America's "civil religion"—patriotism also prevented him from challenging American political administrations, contrary to Suzanne Hudson's argument,[14] precisely due to their quasi-divine

legitimacy in serving the country's "revolutionary significance" in the world from its inception to the nineteen-sixties and beyond.[15] Despite such limitations inherent in the nature of American patriotism in particular, a great part of Indiana's work in the nineteen-sixties can be seen as radically political because of its sheer will for social engagement. Constituting a neglected chapter of American art's hesitant repoliticization in the nineteen-sixties,[16] its radicality lies in the inherently oxymoronic conjunction of varying degrees of protest with patriotism (especially since the ideological charge of patriotism and national identity during the Cold War era rendered un-American any kind of dissident political thinking) and in its contribution to the erosion of postwar taboos against political art. However, the timely political explicitness of dissident mid-sixties art statements such as the *Confederacy* series is rivaled by the latent radicality of Indiana's recourse to history in the work that precedes it; for if the former was enabled by what Allan Kaprow described as the warming up of the sixties sensibility, the latter grew independently against the lingering effects of the darkest days of Eisenhower-era America, its misled patriotism and separation of art and politics.

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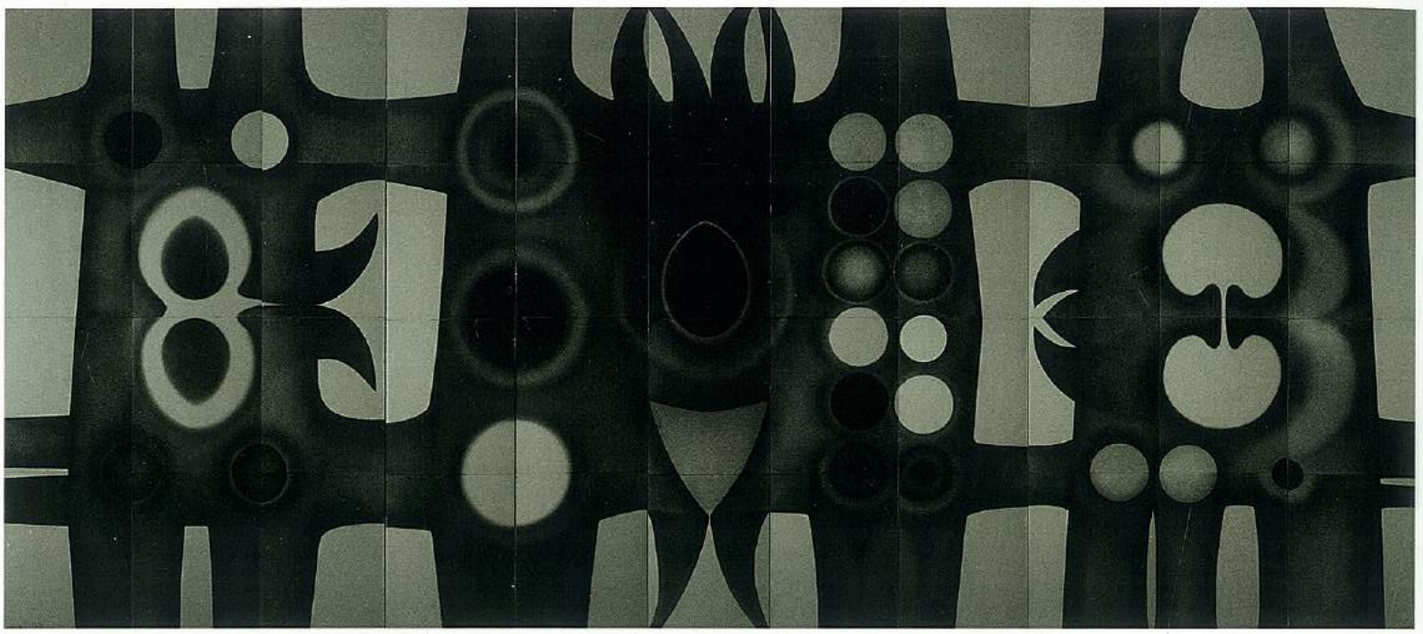
Indiana's mode of addressing contemporary history had indeed radically, though tacitly, changed before the substantial "warming" of the nineteen-sixties, somewhat pioneering it. Upon reinventing himself as a vanguard artist in late-fifties New York, he resumed chronicling current events of sociopolitical significance with his iconoclastic constructions. While commemoration continued to underpin his selective documentation of contemporary history, it now functioned with an ambiguity that did not derive solely from its unhinging from representation but from the ambiguous significance of the events it memorialized. The events, however, were commemorated in his journals, his entries for each day often headlined with a world event in a reportorial manner reminiscent of his experience in journalism[17]—"Eisenhower at Checkers," August 30, 1959; "Russian Rocket Lands on Moon," September 13, 1959; "Kruschev Arrives Washington: Noon," September 15, 1959;

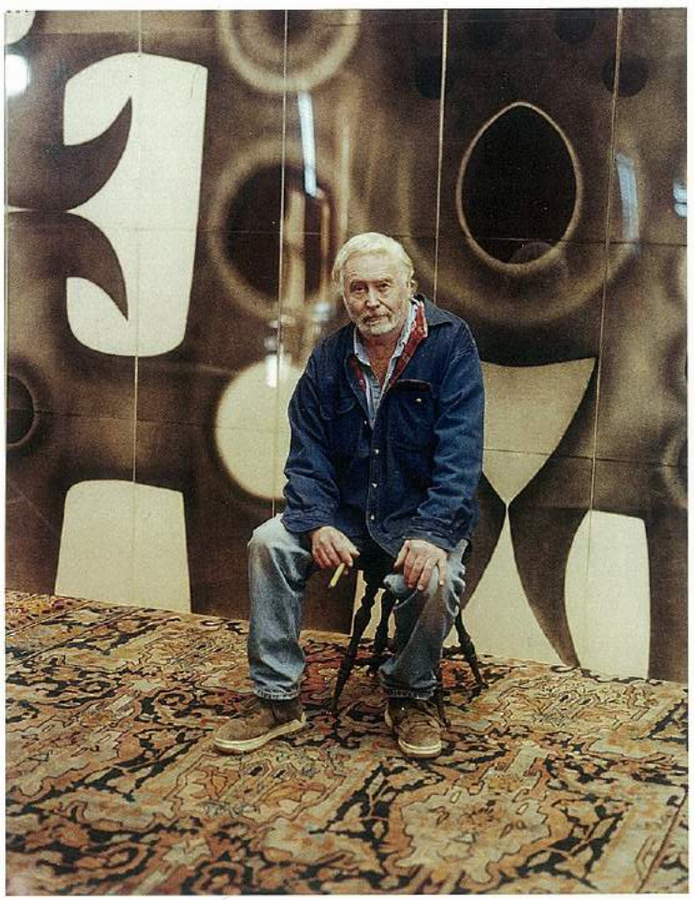


[1958] Takes a temporary job at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine during the regnancy of Dean Pike, and, upon transcribing a manuscript of a book on the Cross, becomes caught up with the subject and does *his* Crucifixion . . . Taking a year to complete, this work incorporates the organic forms of the ginkgo and avocado and initiates his preoccupation with the circle.

—Robert Indiana, "Autochronology"

62
STAVROSIS, 1958
Printer's ink, dry brush on paper mounted on wood, 99 1/4 x 229 1/4 in. (252 x 582.2 cm)

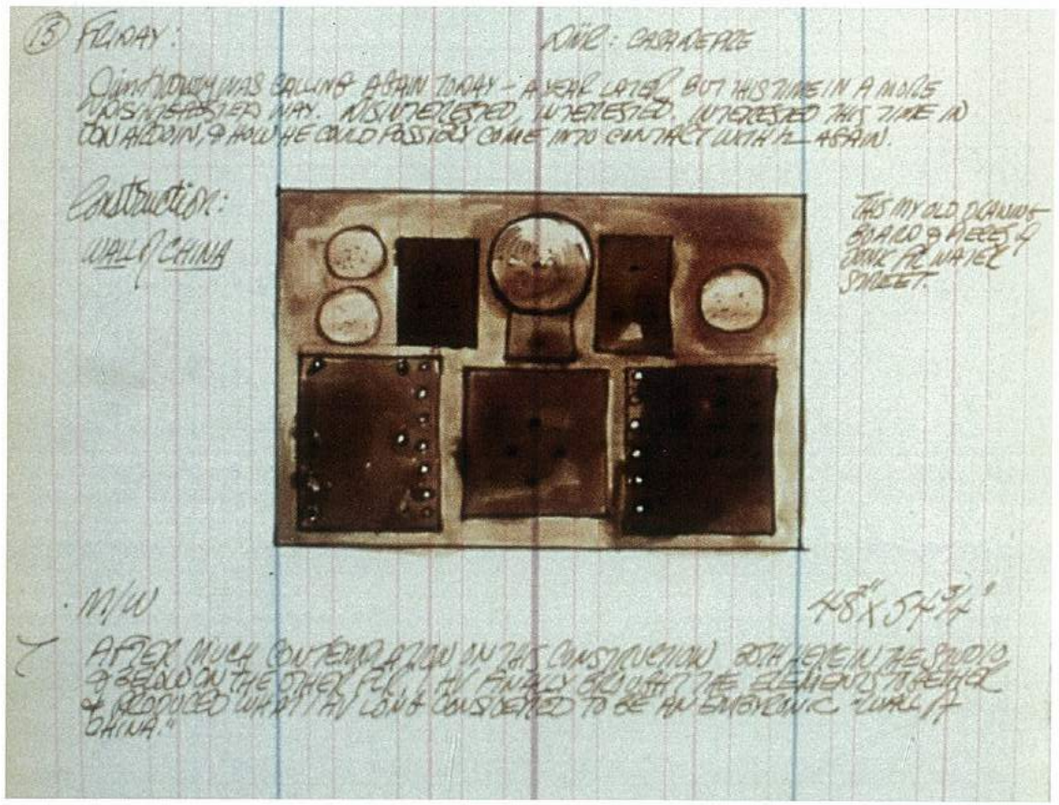
Collection of the artist



63
Diana and Dennis Griggs
Indiana in front of *Stavrosis*, Vinalhaven, Maine, 2001

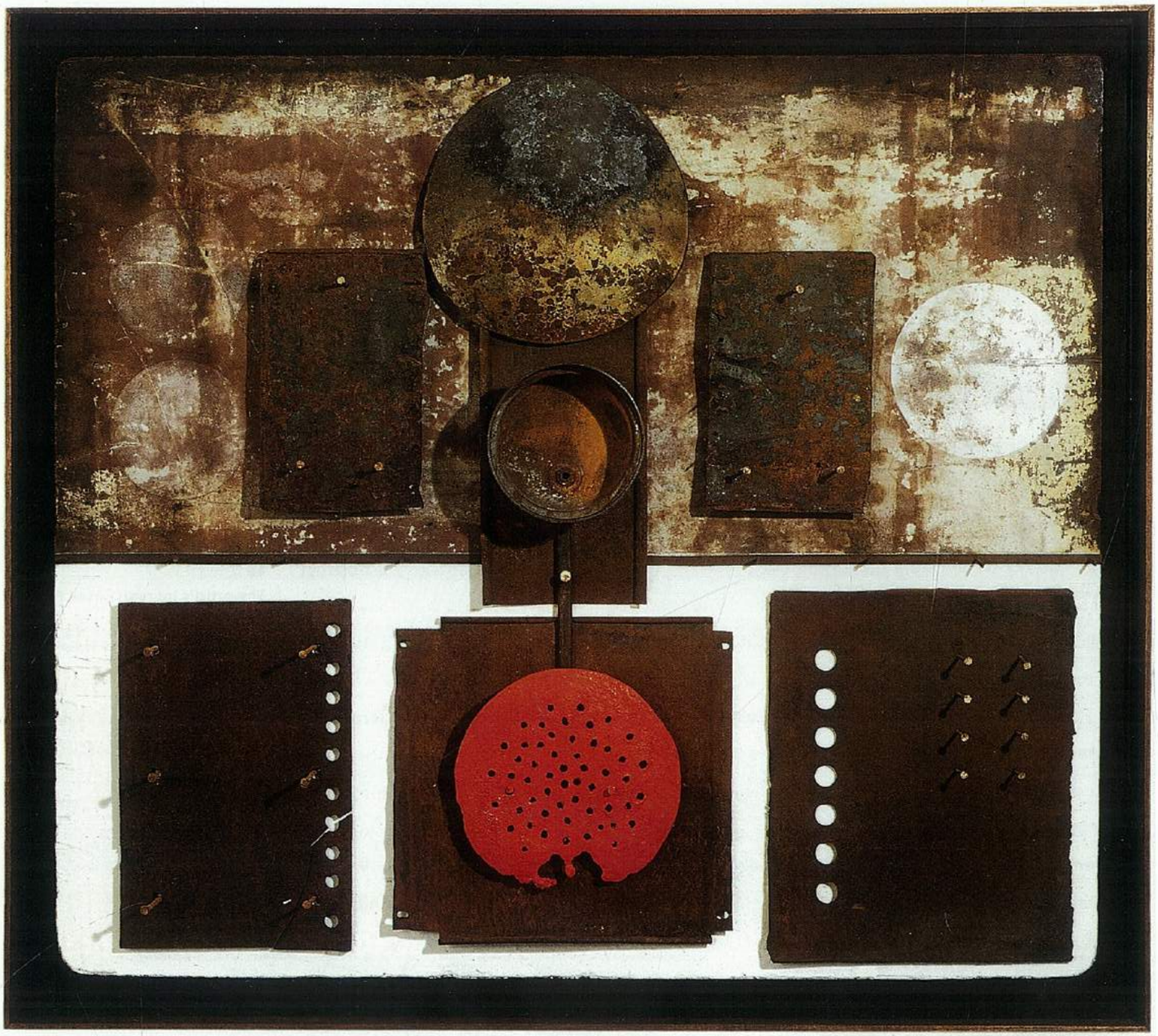
"French Atomic Bomb Explodes over Sahara," February 13, 1960; "Russians Orbit the Earth for 24 Hours," August 6, 1961, etc.—adumbrating the Cold War ideological subtext that makes his commemorative designations subversively ambiguous for an American, not to mention a committed American patriot.

Consisting primarily of Herms—Indiana's signature assemblages of rescued beams of historic Manhattan architecture from the vicinities of Coenties Slip—and their shorter, stele-like variations, this sculpture group also includes a wall relief, a less idiosyncratic experiment in "junk sculpture."[18] "After much contemplation," as he wrote in his journal next to a sketch of the construction on January 15, 1960, Indiana "finally brought the elements together," producing what he had "long considered to be an embryonic 'Wall of China'" (figs. 64 & 65). Rusty pieces of metal found in a Water Street loft and nailed on his "old draining board" form a pyramidal composition of symmetrically arranged rectangles and circles; the latter, widely explored in repetitive formations in his contemporary paintings, also echoes the found rows of the holes in the metal plates and the circular traces of objects once placed on the board. Despite the anthropomorphic arrangement of the central elements of the composition, which recalls his large-scale ink painting on paper *Stavrosis* (depicting Christ's crucifixion in abstract terms) of 1958 (fig. xx), the double entendre of its title as a "wall



64
Detail of the artist's journal, dated Friday, January 15, 1960 (drawing refers to the sculpture *Wall of China*)

Collection of the artist



65
WALL OF CHINA, 1960-1961
Gesso, oil, and iron on wood panel, 48 x 54 3/4 x 8 in.
(121.9 x 139 x 20.3 cm)

Private collection

of china" returns some of the utilitarian function of the construction's constituents as an abstract Daniel Spoerri. Yet the red overpainting of the perforated disk unsettles the rusty harmony of this constellation of shapes, metonymically bringing China into the foreground with its red menace. Given the second Taiwan Strait Crisis, which was triggered by the attack on the Quemoy Islands by the People's Liberation Army in 1958, the revival of the threat of nuclear war that underpinned the potential involvement of the superpowers in its defense, and the ongoing importance of the "Matsu and Quemoy question" for the American fight against communism, *Wall of China* looms like an ironic postscript to Indiana's Korean War memorial in the form of an odd monument to a major enemy of Cold War America.

More unsettling and confounding, however, is the construction *French Atomic Bomb* of 1960 (fig. 67), which in 1965 Indiana explained with a tad of humorous irony as a "small protest against a pretentious small atomic bomb."[19] With the centrality of the bomb in fifties American ideology, foreign policy, and technological advancement as well as its ever-present specter in everyday life afflicted by shelter discourse, school drills, science fiction, and state paranoia, the very use of the word in the title is as shocking as the work's commemoration of a weapon of mass destruction and the rise of another player in the Cold War arms race.[20] In 1960 the United States still observed with disbelief France's nuclear tests in the Sahara, but as the relations of the two countries were especially strained under Charles de Gaulle's demand for France's independent operation in the NATO alliance, Americans could not be unaffected by France's first successful detonation of a plutonium bomb on February 13, whether "pretentious" or not. A journal entry of the same day, which also makes note of the event, carefully reveals the process of the construction's making. Having already gessoed its upper part, Indiana sawed a line demarcating the natural and handmade surface of the piece, affixed a rusty disk with brick nails on the top, and added a red stripe of color underneath it. And if I interpret the passage correctly, it must have been titled *French Atomic Bomb* only

66
The artist's journal, dated Friday, April 27, 1962 (drawing refers to the Herm *Cuba*)

Collection of the artist

FRIDAY "THE OLD MAID" - WHARTON 91° 27. IV 117
GRAND STREET.
"THE UNINVITED" CC

Page of Circular. Page of Circular. Page of Circular. Page of Circular. Page of Circular. Page of Circular. Page of Circular. Page of Circular. Page of Circular. Page of Circular. Page of Circular. Page of Circular. Page of Circular. Page of Circular. Page of Circular. Page of Circular. Page of Circular.

WARMEST DAY of 3 YR SINCE 1915! ACTUALLY HOT IN ~ LOFT.

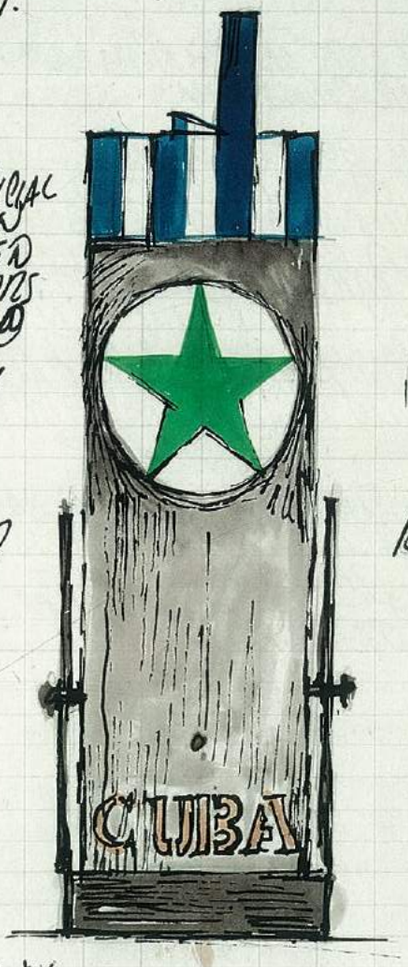
"CUBA"

BECAME RADICAL TODAY WHEN I ADDED RED 7 ~ WH LITES I HAD PUT @ ~ BOTTOM YESTERDAY

CALL SENORS 7 HV HIM CHECK HR UNABRIDGED DICT. 2 WAYS FOR ~ COLONS A CUBA'S FLAG.

(AND HER COAT & RED 7 ~ LITES OF "MARINE WORKS.)

Rear: ADD RED 7 WH AROUND STAR.



WOOD, IRON, PESSO & OIL. 44 1/2" X 12 3/4" (SHAFT)

VISIT FR SCHNEBLUN 7 PM; HE WANTS ME 7 BEAR ~ BRUNT & ~ INVESTIGATION. & INTERESTED IN MY NEW DEVELOPMENTS.

LTR FR OLIVER: HE WILL BE IN NEW YORK TOMORROW.

WALK 7 FULTON FOR 7/16 "BOYS & RUN INTO BERNIE.

MEET D IN CHINATOWN & HV ~ KIND WU'S - BEEF & PEPPERS - A MISTAKE. ~ WATER CHESTNUT SOUP WS NOT. WALK BACK.

FRED MITCHELL CALLED; WANTED 7 GO FOR A WALK.

"THE OLD MAID" - DAVIS, HOPKINS & LOUISE FAZENDA IN HER LAST.

after he found out about the testing in the Sahara, something that might explain the limited iconographic allusions to its subject, while indicating the dual role of the stele as chronicler of a historical landmark as well as a physical landmark chronicling Indiana's production. One can, of course, stretch the interpretation by reading into it iconographic signifiers of nuclear bomb atmospheric testing, such as the upward arrow or the rusty disk that Indiana remembers having brought from Fire Island—a fact that sounds like a near macabre pun evoking atomic explosion in light of his lifelong fascination with coincidences. But, unlike the sinister bomb machines that politicized artists of various contexts, from Colin Self to Nancy Spero, have concocted, including the multimedia emulations of their disastrous effects, *French Atomic Bomb* is an abstract masterpiece of minimalist imagination and natural expressionism: the gorgeous patterns painted by time on the surface of the weathered slab are intentionally contrasted with the minimalist surface of its gessoed upper part. And it is the fragility of this baseless monument, whose own stability seems threatened by the weight of the metal disk at its top, and the aged texture of its parts that give it its impact as an unassuming anti-monument to humanity's extinction. As such a tombstone-like artifact from the future, *French Atomic Bomb* passes as both a celebration of technological achievements and an intimation of its irreversible, fatal consequences, allowing Indiana to critique the Cold War as an alarmed American.

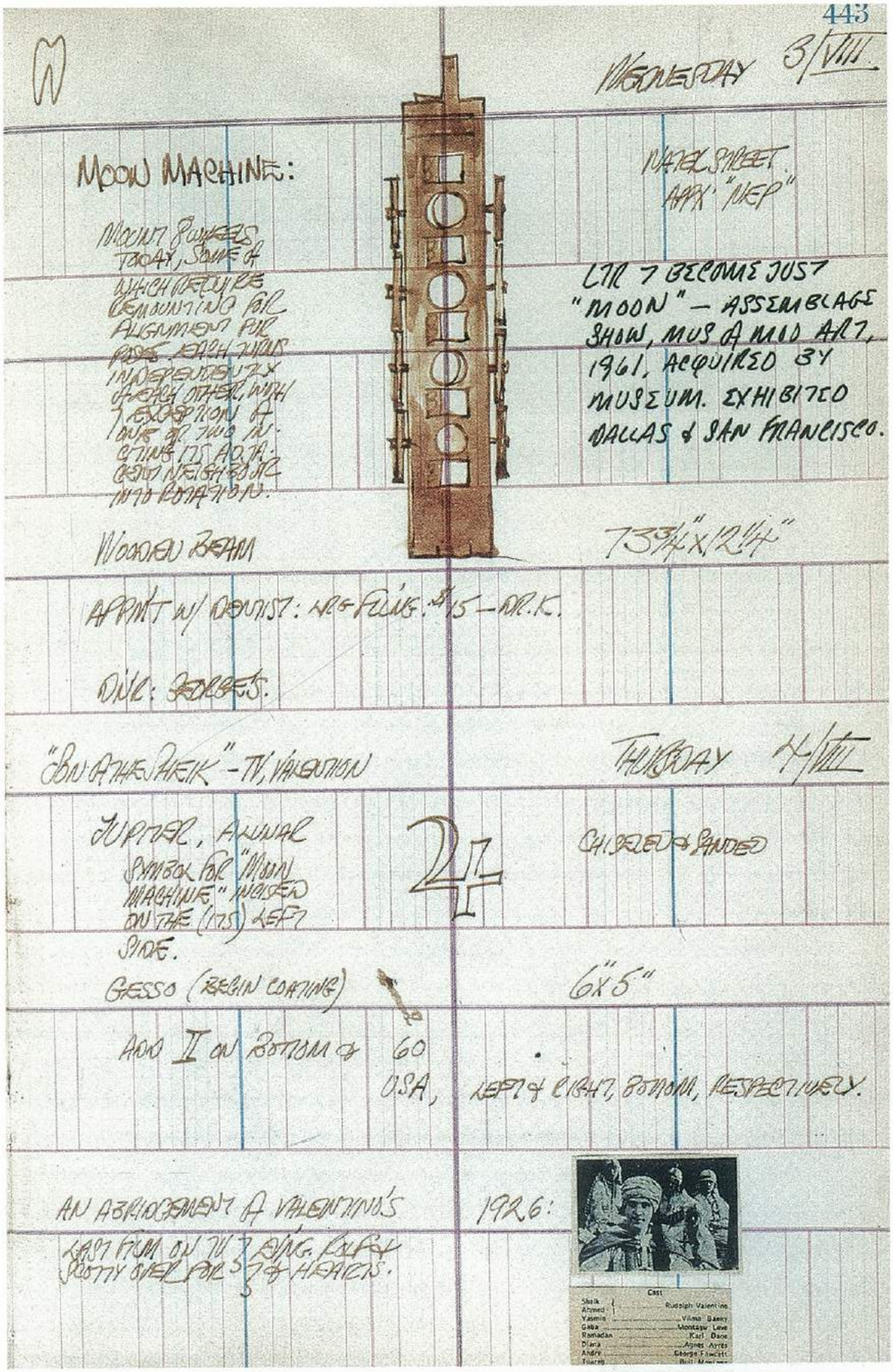
67
FRENCH ATOMIC BOMB, 1959–1960
Polychromed wood beam and metal, 38 5/8 x 11 5/8 x 40 1/8 in. (98 x 29.5 x 12.3 cm)

The Museum of Modern Art, New York
Gift of Arne Eckstrom

Similar ambiguities are summoned by the Herms *Cuba* (fig. 66) and *U-2* (fig. 68), especially when considered together against the context of the Soviet threat under which they operate. Begun in 1960 but still being reworked in 1962, as evidenced by Indiana's journals, *Cuba* greatly contrasts with *French Atomic Bomb* in its elaborateness, colorfulness, phallic prowess, and pronounced presence, marked by its base, phallic knob, stenciled title, and the symbolic evocation of its subject through the colors and star of the Cuban flag.[21] Yet it shares the political ambiguity of *French Atomic Bomb*. While the Cuban revolution had been a harbinger of hope for many liberal artists, Indiana's monument

68
U-2, 1960
Gesso, iron, and oil on wood,
height 46 in.
(116.8 cm)

Private collection



69
The artist's journal, dated August 3, 1960 (drawing refers to the sculpture *Moon*)

Collection of the artist

to Cuba is deliberately caught within Cuba's antithetical significance as an oasis of socialism—the last hope for humanity and America, according to the controversial publication of C. Wright Mills, which Indiana seems to be toying with in the epigraph of this essay—and as a Soviet ally, the closest outpost of America's chief enemy in securing world democracy—responsible for America's defeat in the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961, "a debacle" as Indiana put down in his journal. But his commemoration of the U-2, the U.S. spy plane shot down by the Soviets on May 1, 1960, with embarrassing repercussions following the Eisenhower administration's media coverage and handling of the incident, lets Indiana's irony leak through the essential silence of his commemorative designations, whether seen as a monument to a downed spy plane or a celebration of a failed spy, Francis Gary Powers.

While the dark side of technological advancement in the nineteen-fifties clearly dominated Indiana's turn toward contemporary history, he also had an eye for its bright side, coupling his concern about the arms race with vague evocations of the early satellite exploration of the cosmos through references to orbiting and the moon by means of title, iconography, or affixed wheels. Contemporary works such as the wall construction *Sun and Moon* and the Herms *Orb* and *Moon* (fig. 32), all made in 1960, do not chronicle specific achievements of the space race, and certainly not (to date) American ones. Given that the Soviets maintained the lead in space exploration well after propelling the United States into pseudo-scientific rivalry with their launching of *Sputnik* in 1957, such works should be considered alongside the ambiguous monuments previously discussed as documents of technological progress and military danger signified by space conquest during the Cold War.[22]

With the ambiguity of his chronicling constructions, Indiana first resolved the problem of how to "re-enlist" the world as a concerned citizen of the Cold War era and a vanguard abstract artist.[23] The ensuing challenge for a young artist who aspired to combine artistic greatness with political consciousness and Americanism must have been considerable, especially since Indiana experienced

70
James Rosenquist
PRESIDENT ELECT, 1960-1961 / 1964
Oil on masonite, 89 3/8 x 144 in. (228 x 365.8 cm)

Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris
Art © James Rosenquist / Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

the most homophobic decade of American history, when McCarthyism equated homosexuality with communism and un-Americanness.[24] With an almost camp affirmation of American ideology, in line with the consensus culture of the nineteen-fifties,[25] Indiana managed to provocatively mark the contradictions of life in Cold War America as an American: seemingly framing the enemies of the American democracy, he nonetheless captured the vicious cycle of fear and threat that bred Cold War American ideology, as well as the thrill of the technological advancement that went hand in hand with the ominous rise of the American "military industrial complex," silently protesting the cost.

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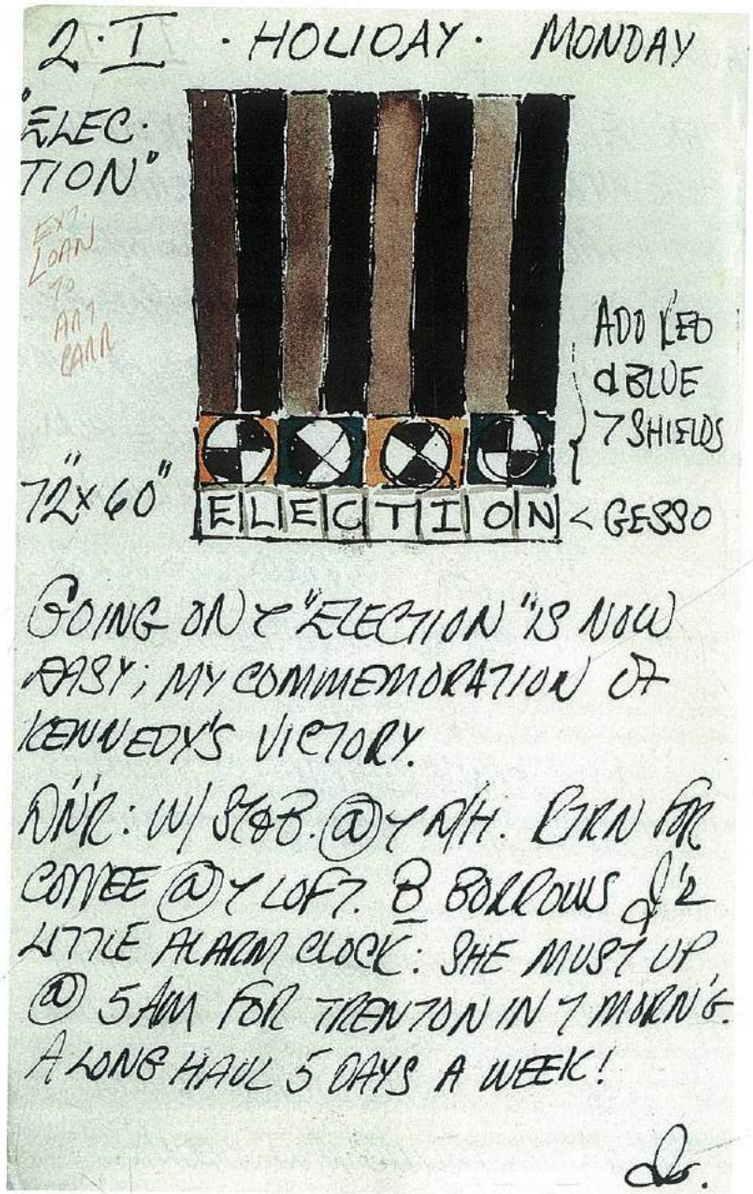
Commemoration became unambiguously celebratory only in the case of Indiana's immediate pictorial response to the presidential election victory of John F. Kennedy, initiating a lasting tradition of actively supporting the campaigns of Democratic candidates, such as Jimmy Carter and Barack Obama, with his art. Indiana's journals prove his early enthusiasm for Kennedy's candidacy along with his homoerotic admiration of the handsome man; Daniel O'Leary, for instance, pointed out two newspaper clippings, featuring Kennedy as a young boy and as a Navy officer, in Indiana's journals.[26] But the artist continued to rejoice over Kennedy's rise to power. While in Washington in 1962, he sent a postcard featuring Kennedy to Eleanor Ward and Alan Groh with the message "Glorious in Jack's town," calling the president "Jack" in a gesture of intimacy appropriate to a true fan (fig. 75). Of course Indiana was not the only artist thrilled with Kennedy's promise. James Rosenquist, friend and Coenties Slip neighbor, had also immediately responded to Kennedy's election by celebrating him, though as another manufactured product of the American myth, in *President Elect* (fig. 70). And Robert Rauschenberg, who would continue to interweave references to Kennedy throughout his work, had preempted Indiana's gesture of intimacy by actually gifting the president a collage of transfers titled *Drawing for the President of the USA with Dante* (1960) along with a moving explanatory letter.[27] Indiana also made red, white, and blue the colors of his symbolic evocation

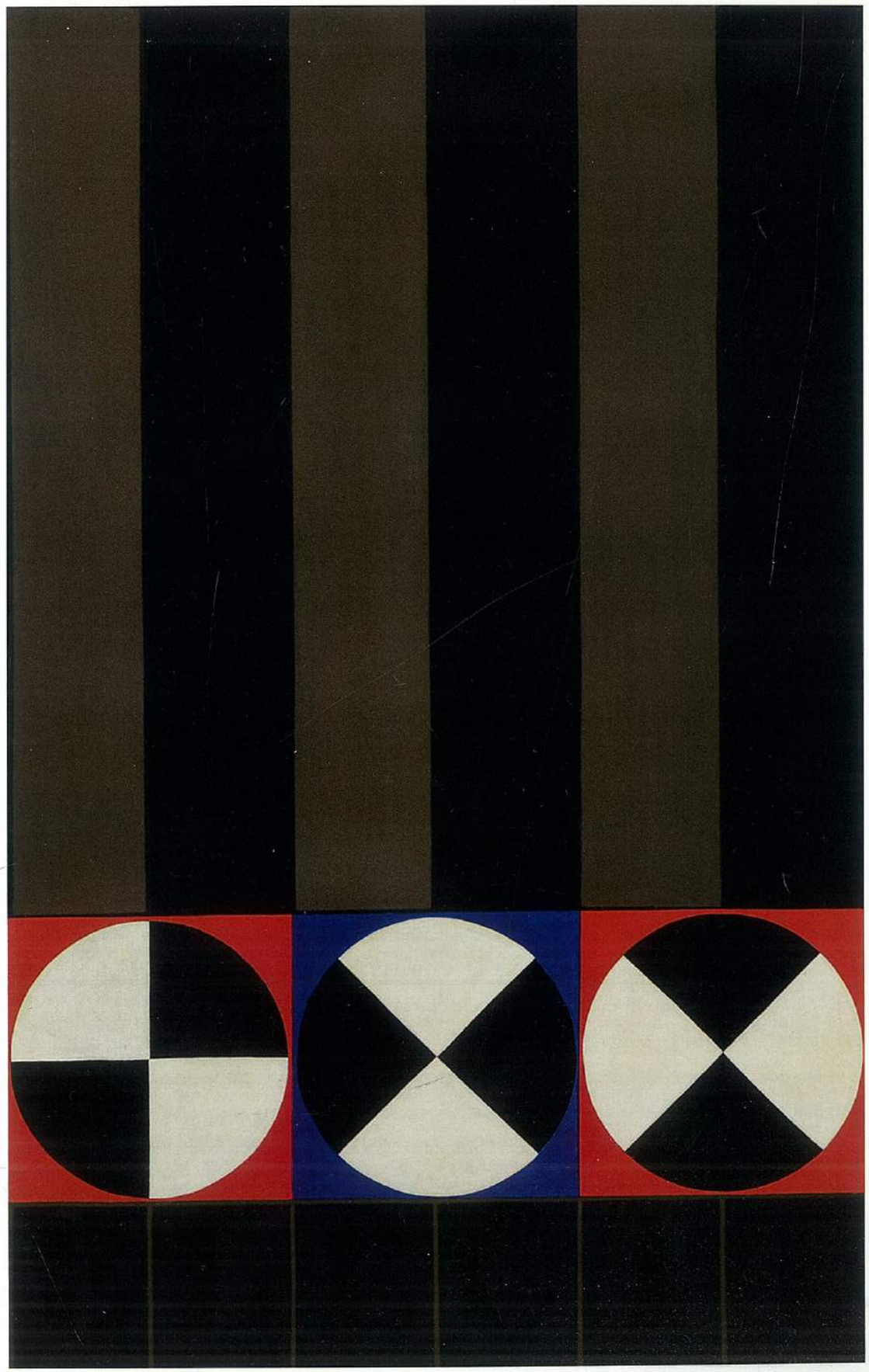


71
The artist's journal, dated Monday, January 2, 1961 (drawing refers to the painting *Electi*)

Collection of the artist

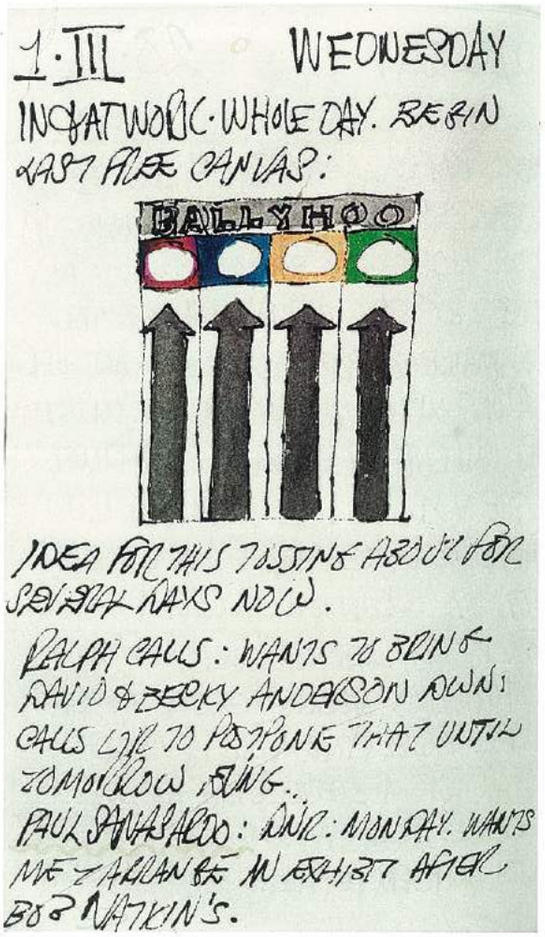
72
ELECTI, 1960–1961
Oil on canvas, 71 1/2 x 44 13/16 in. (181.6 x 113.8 cm)

Portland Museum of Art, Maine
Gift of the artist, 1997.5



of the president, yet in an abstract composition that celebrated the Democrats' victory without iconic references to the "presidential spectacle."[28] Though symbolically underpinned by the mediated face of the election with four black-and-white circles referencing the spinning computer tapes of the Electronic Processing Center—unforgettable to those who watched the election results on TV—*Election* (1960–61) was a somber formalist composition (fig. 71).[29] Its carefully aligned shapes look both backward to his obsessive exploration of orb combinations but also ahead to his vernacular patterning of shapes and letters. In a Scrabble-like formation, with each letter framed apart, the word "election" was stenciled at the bottom of the painting in black capital letters against a lighter shade of black that is evocative of Reinhardtian sobriety. Sobriety and symmetry had facilitated its transformation into an involuntary memorial of Kennedy's death; due to a ruinous accident in which the painting was torn, Indiana trimmed the right quarter of the painting and renamed it *Electi* (fig. 72), not only joining the numerous artists who responded to Kennedy's assassination, but also making *Electi* encapsulate history as did Ronsenquist's repainting of *President Elect* (1960-1961/64).[30]

The social and cultural renewal that Kennedy's election made palpable heralded the change of mood that characterizes Indiana's celebratory shift to vernacular culture—foreshadowed by the companion piece of *Election, Ballyhoo* (1961) (fig. 73).[31] Yet in the early nineteen-sixties his political consciousness remained cryptically folded within the ambiguity of his intensified exploration of American identity, culture, and history through his pictorial interpretations of the American Dream and his "literary" paintings, which also link him to the homosexual genealogy of great American intellectuals in a political gesture of another kind.[32] Had it not been for his journals, even *Election* could not have been perceived as unequivocally celebratory and optimistic as it has, complementing instead the camouflaged skepticism of its contemporary *The President* (1961) (fig. 74). A revolving legend, "A DIVORCED MAN HAS NEVER BEEN / THE PRESIDENT," intermeshes references to a variety of divorced men of personal and political significance—from Indiana's father and his



73
The artist's journal, dated Wednesday, March 1, 1961 (drawing refers to the painting *Ballyhoo*)

Collection of the artist

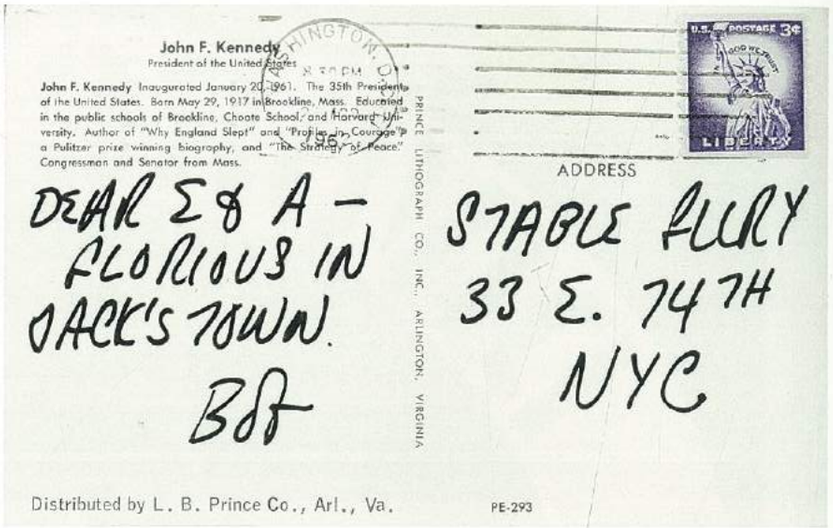
ex-boss Bishop James Pike to Adlai Stevenson—in a manner typical of Indiana's layering of meanings. Yet an exposure of the moral hypocrisies of American society, even though disguised as an ironically patriotic affirmation of its puritanical habits, was also admirably conducted in light of the failure of a Republican (the rather progressive Nelson A. Rockfeller) to run as presidential candidate in 1960, alas, due to a staple of the American way of life—his divorce.

More sophisticated critiques of the American present and past are interwoven in his ambiguous literary "re-celebrations" of American culture themes, as with his dual "homage to the American Indian"[33] in the painting *The Calumet* (1961) (fig. 151) and its pendant Herm *Chief* (fig. 150). The ongoing threat of nuclear disaster, the swelling civil rights movement, and decolonization wars[34] render the schematic gathering of Native American tribes around the mighty Gitche Manito's peace-pipe (calumet/pukwana) as Indiana's first humanitarian call to both worldwide and national peace. Mediated through romantic epic poetry, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha* (1855), whose own myths mask America's bloody colonial exploitation, the peacemaking message of *The Calumet* is, however, pessimistically undermined by a bitter note on America's past. Though equally obliquely, it is the "irremovable issue of race"[35] in America that variously enters Indiana's thematography with polysemous paintings such as *Year of Meteors* (1961) (fig. 148), *God is a Lily of*

74
A DIVORCED MAN HAS NEVER BEEN THE PRESIDENT, 1961
Oil on canvas, 68 x 48 in.
(172.7 x 121.9 cm)

Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Gift of Phillip Johnson, 1968


A DIVORCED MAN NEVER BEFAV •
US
US
US
US
US
THE PRESIDENT



75
Postcard from Robert Indiana to Eleanor Ward and Alan Groh at the Stable Gallery, 1962

Stable Gallery records, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution

the Valley (1961–62), and above all *The Rebecca* (1962) (fig. 76). Given the significance of place in Indiana's automythology, the autogeographical reference of *Year of Meteors,* commemorating the steam ship the *Great Eastern*'s departure from Manhattan through the East River that Indiana daily viewed from his studio at Coenties Slip, overshadows the fact that the poem also commemorates a crucial year of American history, including Walt Whitman's witnessing of the execution of a radical abolitionist. But the ambiguity of the attitude toward slavery of American democracy's great poet accentuates the ambiguities of Indiana's own contemplation on American history. As its nominal sequel, which echoes *Year of Meteors* due to its prominent compass rose, *The Rebecca* commemorates the eponymous (and ironically titled) "good Yankee slaver"[36] that must have also passed through Coenties Slip. With the number 8 evoking the shape of slave shackles as well as the "dark legacy" bestowed to 8 million people, Indiana thereby returns to the negative irony of his chronicling sculptures: frustrating with the ambiguities of its uncanny celebration of a vehicle of slavery, *The Rebecca* activates resistant meanings targeted at both American racism and enslaving corporatism. The latter is in line with Indiana's subsequent critical exposure of the underbelly of the American Dream, whether, for instance, in the ironic celebration of its "TAKE ALL" principle in a number of the paintings of his *American Dream* series, or in the metaphoric evocations of

America's dehumanizing commercialism and criminal imperialism in *Made in USA* (1961) and *The American Reaping Company* (1962) (fig. 77). Nevertheless, the appropriation of the lyrics of a gospel song heard on the radio in *God is a Lily of the Valley* takes Indiana as far as any Pop artist's reference to music has. Not only does its religious message testify to Indiana's repeated embrace of the sacred in his work, but it amplifies the voice of people whose equality in the United States was for a long time only a fiction of Christianity.

★

From the ambiguous prelude of social concern and masked critique of the fallacies of American democracy in Indiana's constructions and "literary" paintings to the didactic tenor and acerbic framing of a part of the nation as a source of shame in the *Confederacy* series, a deep shift occurred in the way Indiana engaged sociopolitical and cultural American history: a drastic conflation of art and politics marked by the deliberate explicitness of his criticism which made it abut to radical protest.

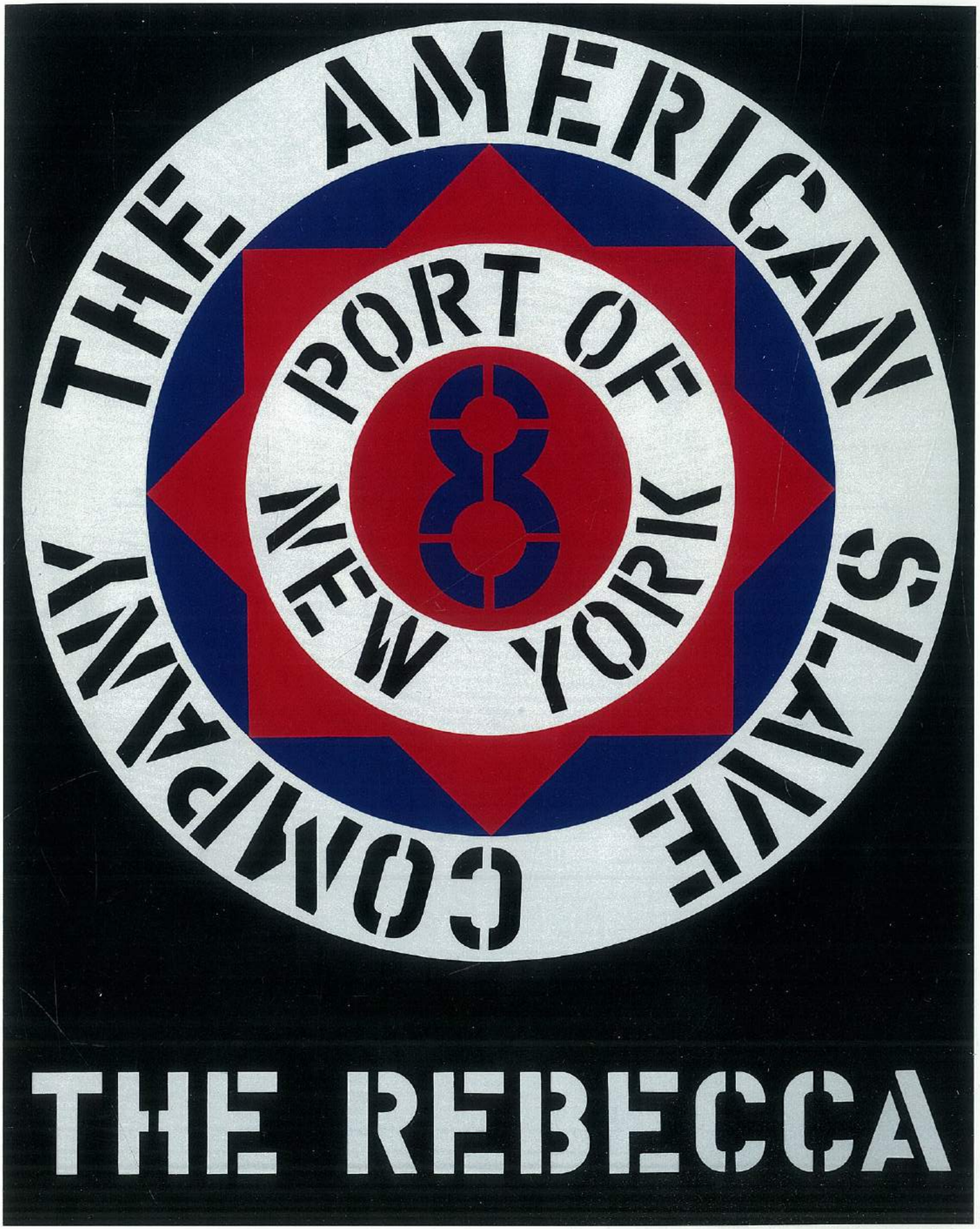
The earliest and most dramatic, though typically polysemous, example of such political explicitness is *Yield Brother* (1963) (fig. 47). Not only because its primary pacifist message is conveyed with an unprecedented iconographic clarity, but because it is amplified by Indiana's propagandistically imperative verbal address to mankind in the form of a highway injunction—YIELD—while also being indelibly linked with the Ban-the-Bomb peace movement. Unlike artists who independently intimated the imminent threat of nuclear disaster—including Warhol's repetition of the media face of its past manifestations—or Dorothy Iannone, who reinforced her call to peace through Bertrand Russell's own pacifist appeal to sanity (by pasting a clipping of one of his speeches on nuclear disarmament into one of her collages), Indiana returned to the theme of Cold War-era peace in response to the celebrated pacifist's solicitation of international artists of stature to submit works to the benefit art sale for his newly founded Peace Foundation. "Expressly"[37] painting the work for the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, Indiana consciously made its political message less enigmatic,

Some years ago . . . having little or no money in my purse . . . I came to the tip end of the island where the hard edge of the city confronts the watery part. . . . Coenties, of the dozen or so slips of Manhattan, is the oldest, largest and busiest of the lot, and the last to be filled in (circa 1880), all of which are relics of the wooden ship days of sail and mast. Its origin goes back directly to the Dutch days of Nieuw Amsterdam and a landowner named Coenach Ten Eyck. (The good Yankee slaver *REBECCA* may well have taken on provision here and the *GREAT EASTERN* that Whitman celebrated in *YEAR OF METEORS*, as I did myself recelebrate, certainly did steam and sail past the Slip). Cartographically it describes a Y– a funnel drawing in the commerce of the port in its day, sadly now paved over with asphalt and granite brick, through which poke the fifteen ginkgoes . . .

—Robert Indiana

76
THE REBECCA, 1962
Oil on canvas, 60 x 48 in.
(152.4 x 121.9 cm)

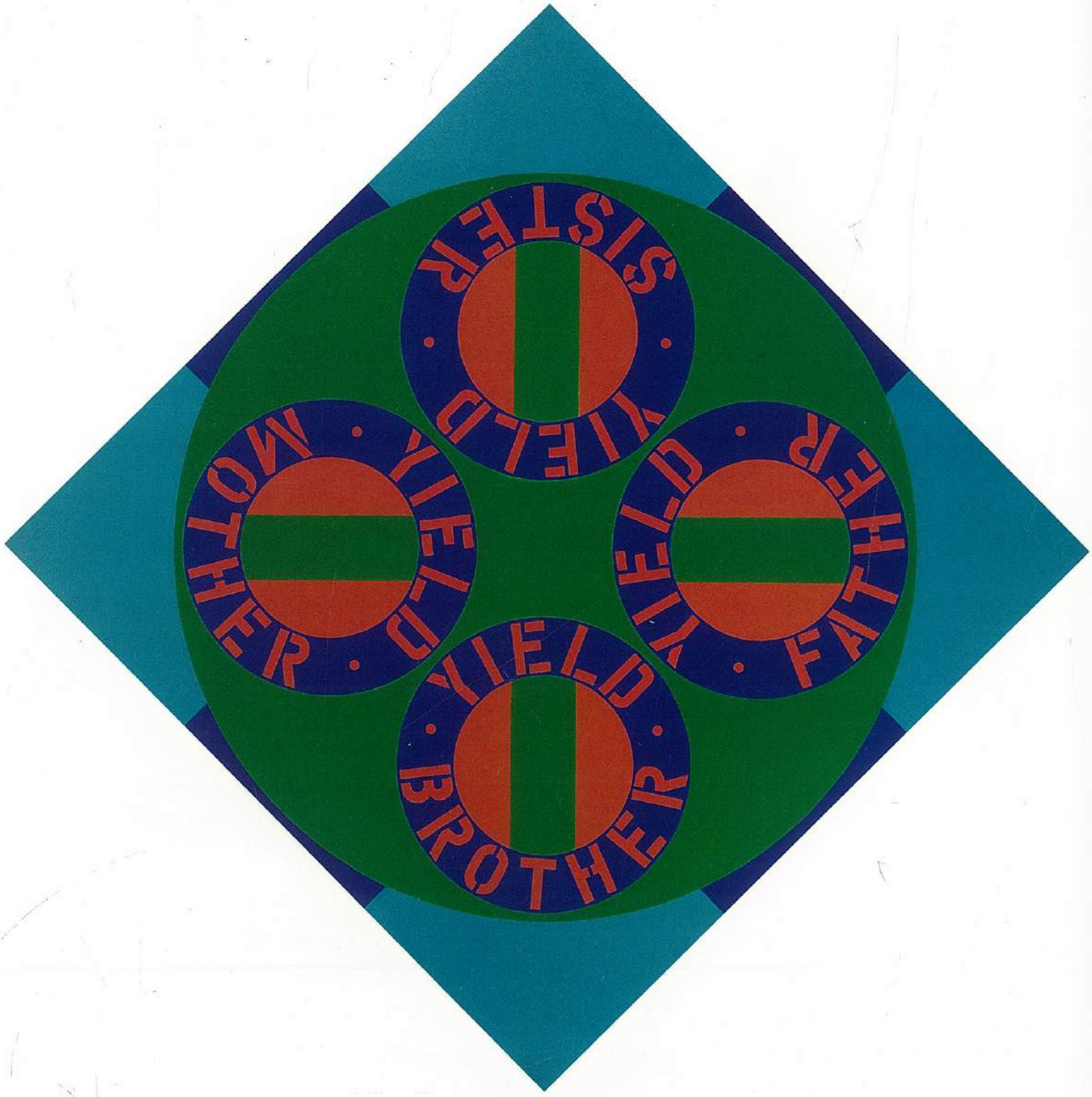
Private collection
Courtesy of Morgan Art Foundation and Galerie Gmurzynska, Switzerland


THE AMERICAN
PORT OF NEW YORK
COMPANY
SIAVE
THE REBECCA

77
THE AMERICAN REAPING COMPANY, 1961
Oil on canvas, 60 x 48 in. (152.4 x 121.9 cm)

The Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Israel
Gift of Virginia and Herbert Lust, Greenwich, Connecticut, through the American Friends of the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, 2002


THE AMERICAN
REAPING COMPANY



78
YIELD BROTHER II, 1963
Oil on canvas, 85 x 85 in.
(216 x 216 cm), diamond

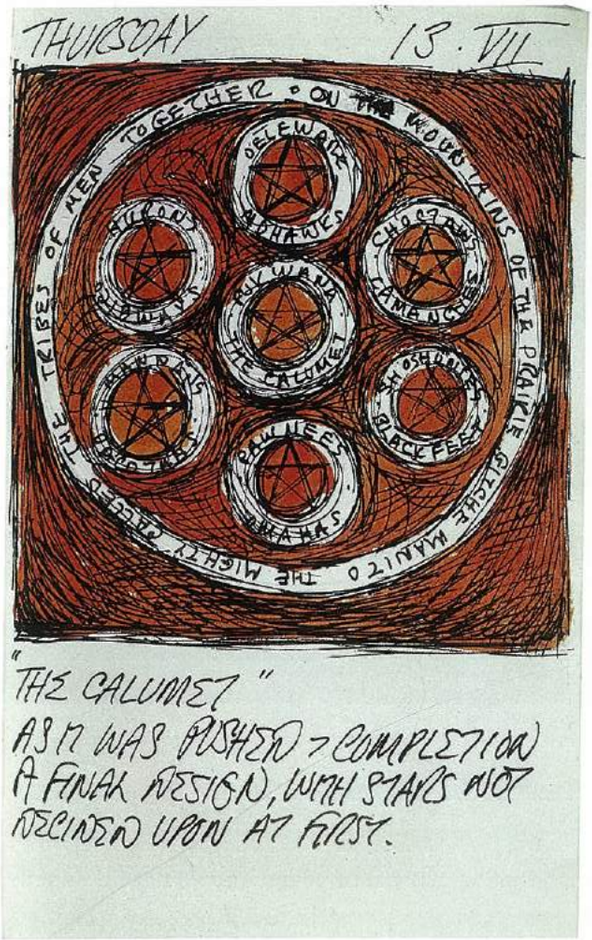
Private collection

overcoming the "passive resistance" of his earlier work—which Kaprow would have attributed to the "cool attitude" of artists and the civil rights movement in the late nineteen-fifties and early sixties—with an active art statement protesting nuclear armament, though still "coolly" uttered with its graphic-design poster-like immediacy in terms of style.

Indiana has given us a wonderful retrospective account of the intermeshed sources and meanings of the *Yield Brother* series conjuring personal and universal, sacred and secular, as well as timely and timeless symbols. Regrettably looking to him in 1963 like a cathedral's rose window,[38] *Yield Brother* consists of a black cross whose legs end in triangles (purposefully reminiscent of the descending triangle of the "yield" traffic sign, which inspired the smaller and now lost painting from which *Yield Brother* originates as a polemically political variation); partly seen through four dials (vaguely evocative of a nuclear gas mask) of a seemingly overpainted blue disk, its black bands comprise a cruciform arrangement of four peace signs. The peace symbol was designed by Gerald Holtom in 1958 as a combination of the semaphore signals for the letters N and D standing for Nuclear Disarmament for the Direct Action Committee's first Easter march to Aldermaston and the British Ban-the-Bomb movement.[39] Its firm association with Russell (supporter of the actions of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and president of the more militant anti-nuclear-war Committee of 100) and its early adoption in the United States (by the radical Polaris Action group and the more informal Women Strike for Peace, for instance) made its recognizability key for the Pop "visual catechism"[40] of the painting's topical and timeless pacifist message, especially as a gift to Russell's latest peace endeavor. But Indiana further reinforced it through the peace symbol's emblematic repetition. Echoing, however, a medieval symbol meaning "death to man," according to Indiana,[41] while also signifying martyrdom and victimization in its schematic evocation of a "human being in despair,"[42] according to its designer, the peace symbol's bodily connotations in *Yield Brother* make it also, in my opinion, an eloquent signifier of the numerous black bodies violated by local and

state guardians of "White Supremacy"[43] before and during the civil rights struggle, embedding the painting's pacifist message within the context of America's internal strife over racial inequality. And in light of the Christian underpinnings of the civil rights rhetoric, the conjunction of biblical and colloquial language in Indiana's use of the world "brother" seems to turn his generically philosophical and socio-historically specific admonishing of worldwide brotherhood to peacefully "give the right of way"[44] to life into an angry plea for non-violent restitution of racial equality through an active ordering of the yielding of the way to black brothers.

The fact that Indiana produced *Yield Brother* in response to the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation's appeal to artists hardly diminishes its political significance. On the one hand it initiates a pattern of donation of works to benefit political causes as Indiana's signature gesture of social and artistic activism—marked by his uninterrupted participation in Artists for CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) between 1964 and 1966—while on the other hand it differs, with its thematic commitment, from other artists' donations of works unyieldingly irrelevant to the causes they seek to aid in defense of their art's autonomy. Moreover, going out of his way to send *Yield Brother* to England, while not yet having contributed to CORE, might signify a lot more than a naïve or opportunistic gesture, as implied by some, of self-aggrandizement by association with the celebrated pacifist, especially if seen in light of Russell's changed reception in the United States at that time. As a twentieth-century Nobel Prize-winning philosopher and an active crusader for peace, Russell enjoyed tremendous international respect. Yet by 1963 his fight for peace was underpinned by an anti-Americanism that was hardly lost on the American press, which occasionally misportrayed him as communist, whether due to his work as an instigator of acts of non-violent civil disobedience, such as protests against the Polaris missiles at American nuclear bases and embassies in the United Kingdom; his preaching against the American resumption of nuclear weapons testing in 1962; and above all his critique of President Kennedy's handling of the Cuban Missile Crisis after his active



79
The artist's journal, dated Thursday, July 13, 1961 (drawing refers to the painting *The Calumet*)

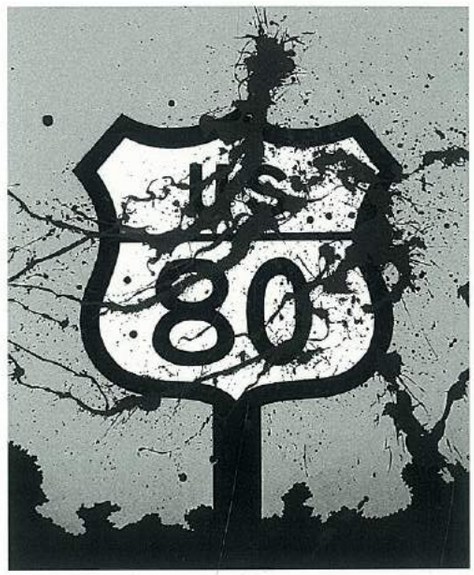
Collection of the artist

mediation between the leaders of the superpowers in hopes of averting conflict, and his exposure of the "fear of communism," rather than communism itself, as the real menace for humanity.[45] The mission statement of the just-founded Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, which accompanied the letter inviting artists to donate works, made clear the breadth of its agenda, which included the study and dissection of Cold War politics. Seen in this light, with its pacifist message sanctioned by Russell's broader critique of Western totalitarianism and American foreign policy, *Yield Brother* might be seen as a culmination of Indiana's veiled critique of Cold War politics, first hesitantly enacted with his *French Atomic Bomb*, and interwoven with his first major protest against racism.

Perhaps it was the concurrent stream of homegrown anti-Americanism that fomented the revolutionary impulse of the nineteen-sixties that enabled Indiana to so explicitly readdress the issue of racism as an American vice in his *Confederacy* series in 1965, while the first legal victories of the civil rights struggle kept being countered by violent resistance to racial equality and the Vietnam War elicited its first protests, morally pressuring the revision of the artist's role in society. In all four canvases, Indiana has zoomed in on the maps of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, and Mississippi through a bull's-eye-like combination of concentric circles that carry his "vengeful"[46] slogan. In a further development of what Susan Elizabeth Ryan has identified as the signature

80
Demonstrators Facing Fire Hoses in Birmingham, Alabama, 1963

"mandala-plus-legend"[47] format that characterizes Indiana's combination of visual and textual patterns in the early nineteen-sixties, the artist has split the message into two wheels and has painted in stencil letters the name of the corresponding state at the bottom of the canvas. Despite subtle compositional differences, such as color combinations or the starred ring in *Mississippi*, it is the repetition of this strikingly target-like motif that cements the connection of the paintings as a series. Yet in a playful combination of seriality with sequentiality, Indiana seems to have intentionally moved the slightly aligned beginnings of the two sections of his message by forty-five degrees in each painting, causing a Pop kinesthetic illusion of a clockwise rotating dial when the four paintings are viewed one after the other, in the order in which they were made: *Mississippi* (1965), *Alabama* (1965), *Louisiana* (1966), and *Florida* (1966).[48] In this torrent of letters and colors, it takes a minute to piece together the message and fathom the cartographic origins of the encircled abstract patches of color. But Indiana has reinforced his point with symbolic coloration: emblazoning the hole that reveals the state in each painting by using his "caution" red for the letters of "MUST HAVE ITS HIND PART," he paints each state a Pop flesh-pink, making sure that the bodily equation will not be missed. How could it be, however? Given the mass media—especially TV—coverage of the civil rights movement, the sheer resonance of the names of the states that Indiana selectively



81
Allan D'Arcangelo
HIGHWAY 80 (IN MEMORY OF MRS. LIUZZO), 1965
Acrylic on canvas, 24 x 20 in. (60.9 x 50.8 cm)

depicted turned their inscription on canvas into metonyms for all kinds of horrors exercised for a whole decade against the bodies of innocent blacks or interracial black freedom fighters in the South, from the arrest of Rosa Parks when she declined to give her bus seat to a white man in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955; the brutal beating of black protesters in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963, unforgettable for the TV broadcast of their pursuit by policemen armed with water hoses and dogs; the police-covered murder by the Ku Klux Klan of three civil rights workers near Philadelphia, Mississippi, in 1964; to the murders and relentless abuse with clubs, whips, and tear gas of voting rights protesters marching from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, in March 1965 and the incalculable incidents of shooting, skull cracking, lynching, and burning that went on between and beyond. With the blood being shed for black equality in the South still fresh, especially in the cities he chose to "stain"[49] with the Confederacy flags' stars or to ironically characterize (as in "The Fair City Bogalusa"), Indiana's cartographic appropriations were inevitably rendered into an aphoristic mapping of enduring sources of national shame that cut across slavery, legalized segregation, and the fratricidal resistance with which the South defied black freedom; an elliptical portrayal of the American South as the veritable hind-part of a nation. But unlike artists of all degrees of coolness, empathy, or political commitment, Indiana did not dwell on the sensationalism of atrocity, as Warhol did with his repetition of the violent confrontation of protesters and segregationists in his *Race Riot* series (fig. 56) or Allan D'Arcangelo did with his spattering of blood on the sign of the highway on which Viola Liuzzo was murdered after the march from Selma to Montgomery (fig. 81). Instead, annotating U.S. state maps coolly copied from a map book, he unveiled the social injustices that cartography, as a technology of power, masks in a deconstructive gesture of proto-postmodernist conceptual value and radically explicit (for Indiana) questioning of the American utopia.

Set free from the McCarthyite dirt that covered the grave of social art, to paraphrase Lucy Lippard,[50] Indiana allowed the liberal democratic humanitarian agenda underlying his latently political


ATER
NCOLN
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APR64
LOFTIEST TRUCKS
5
PENTAG

82
Michael Evans
Robert Indiana in his Coenties Slip studio, 1964


USA

83
NEW GLORY PENNY, 1963
Oil on canvas, 2 panels,
each 24 x 24 in.
(61 x 61 cm)

Private collection

work to resurface with the literally vocal—in light of his verbal-visual aesthetics—force of his mid-sixties art of social engagement. As in the case of other artists in New York and elsewhere, as Thomas Crow has rightly observed, "the first key to this engagement was the national crisis provoked by the struggle against racial segregation in the south" which "moved social radicalism away from the terrain of industry and mass parties toward the realm of conscience, symbolic expression, and spontaneous organization from below."[51] Neither politically radical nor an activist, but a conscientious liberal democrat in the spirit of America's great fathers and poets, as well as a debatably closeted homosexual, Indiana must have been profoundly affected by the "national crisis" toward redefining the relation of his art to politics and unmuffling his voice. Though he would continue to obliquely interweave his identity and sexual politics in his art,[52] it is not accidental that one of the many causes to which he systematically tried to link his art in the mid-nineteen-sixties to highlight his liberal agenda was the student free speech movement; at least if William Katz is right in remembering that Indiana was "involved with the University of California" and made a F.U.C.K. painting, whose initials stood for "Freedom under Clark Kerr," a slogan of the Berkeley Free Speech movement in 1965.[53] And discussing the *Confederacy* series in 1966, Indiana has described his sensitivity to the contemporary injustices that played a crucial role in the reinvention of his political art since 1963: "The situation in the South affects everyone; I can't wake up in the morning and see a newspaper or listen to the radio without becoming perhaps ill at the news that comes through. I am sensitive to this, and . . . one aspect [of my painting] is this social comment."[54]

But Indiana also reinforced that that was not all his painting was about. Perhaps the taboo against political art in New York kept undermining the ontology of political art as art to such a degree that Indiana, despite his challenges to a normative understanding of sculpture and formalist abstraction, was not willing to further compromise his status as an artist. But, above all, for him artistic alienation was not opposed to being a part of the society but a prerequisite for his

equally important commitment to art and society.[55] And Indiana had proved both with his nonetheless patriotic rehearsals of an art but also acts of social engagement: his systematic donation of works of befitting political content to benefit social causes, such as the anti-bomb and anti-racism movements, as well as the ensuing annexing of political meaning to those that were more vaguely thematically related.[56] In addition to the "integrated" colors of *Black and White LOVE,* which he donated in 1966 to CORE for instance, in 1968 he dedicated its multipanel expansion *Love Rising: Black and White LOVE* to Martin Luther King Jr. who was assassinated while Indiana was completing the painting, once again enfolding political history within his work and its stories.

CODA

Fortunately President Johnson has been less ready to assert that "God has favored our undertaking" in the case of Vietnam than with respect to civil rights. But others are not so hesitant. The [American] civil religion has exercised long-term pressure for the humane solution of our greatest domestic problem, the treatment of the Negro American. It remains to be seen how relevant it can become for our role in the world at large, and whether we can effectually stand for "the revolutionary beliefs for which our forbears fought" in John F. Kennedy's words.

—Robert N. Bellah[57]

The last key, however, to the "national crisis" that repoliticized American art was the dirty war in Vietnam. This makes the artist's limited references to the war in Vietnam and response to the anti-war movement puzzling, especially in light of the increased politicization of his art in the mid-nineteen-sixties, his early support of the Artists and Writers Protest against the War in Vietnam, and the collective

protest that shook the New York art world in the late nineteen-sixties. In 1965 Indiana's name was included among the signers of a letter published in the *New York Times* by the nascent collective Artists and Writers Protest that expressed opposition to the Vietnam War, symbolically ending the silence of the New York artistic community on the issue. Yet his name did not appear again either as supporter of the collective's protest letters or participant in the collective art projects that they initiated.[58] Unless proven otherwise by the artist's archives or the murky historic records of the massive collective reaction to the Vietnam War in New York and Los Angeles, which engaged a wide spectrum of New York artists from 1966 to 1967, I can only speculate two non-mutually exclusive scenarios. They are supported by the unlikelihood, in my opinion, of artistic collaboration and street activism as an option for Indiana's art of social engagement in light of his unyielding belief in authorial individuality. The latter is evidenced as much by his careful working through of artistic influences and the deliberate fashioning of a signature style from the beginning of his career as by the meticulousness of his manual production and the centrality of his studios in his art-making, which spatially privileged the nobility of artistic alienation over political commitment.[59] Conversely, Indiana, who wanted to be a "people's painter" as much as a "painter's painter," had achieved it with the communicative immediacy of the vernacular sublime of his Pop and his graphic work, especially his posters; the latter, often based on paintings, allowed his art to further "address every person in America" through various channels of common and popular culture while still "talking to himself" as every artist was supposed to do by his account.[60] But above all my scenarios are based on my working hypothesis that Indiana's radically political work was always conditioned by a profound—both idiosyncratically personal as well as timely collective—pride in being American that enabled him to critique America while affirming it in a way characteristic of American patriotism and "civil religion," which made it hard for him to question the decisions of America's governments and leaders.[61] His devotion to the civil rights movement, as in the case of other supporters of it, was after all another way of not giving up on America while "complaining"

about the shortcomings from the ideal that America signified since its conception to the "best of all possible worlds" of his youth. Or as Sacvan Bercovitch has put it, further analyzing how American ideology turns even radical thinking and protest in America into affirmation of the system, it was the dominant culture's adoption of utopia "that allowed Martin Luther King Jr. to mobilize the civil rights movement on the grounds that racism was Un-American."[62] As such, I assume that the *Confederacy* series, with its framing of the nation's shame, *was* Indiana's reaction to the Vietnam War—a dissident critique of American violence abroad disguised as a patriotic critique of racist violence in America and an unfinished series of history paintings by means of its historic title. Or that as the war was bringing the revolutionary nineteen-sixties' short innocence to an end, Indiana temporarily retreated from his art of social engagement as other sharp critics of his time did, letting his many variations of *LOVE* act as his penultimate answer to a world gone irreversibly wrong.

Epigraph quotations: Robert Indiana, Archives of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, artist records, 1961; Robert Indiana quoted in Irma Jaffe, *Conditional Commitment*, exh. cat. The Brooklyn Center of Long Island University (New York, 1966), p. 10; Allen Kaprow, Statement published in Barbara Rose and Irving Sandler, "Sensibility of the Sixties," *Art in America* (January/February 1967), p. 45.

1 G. R. Swenson, "The Horizons of Robert Indiana," *ARTnews* (May 1966), p. 48.
2 Suzanne Hudson, "Robert Indiana: 'A People's Painter,'" in *Pop Art: Contemporary Perspectives*, exh. cat. Princeton University Art Museum (New Haven, 2007), p. 15.
3 *Indiana: Peace Paintings*, exh. cat. Paul Kasmin Gallery (New York, 2004).
4 Indiana, in G. R. Swenson, "What is Pop Art? Part I," *ARTnews* (November 1963).
5 Indiana, Interview by Richard Brown Baker, 1963, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
6 Indiana, in Donald B. Goodall, "Conversations with Robert Indiana," *Robert Indiana*, exh. cat. University Art Museum (Austin, Texas, 1977), p. 27.
7 Peter Selz, "Introduction: Paths to Engagement," in *Art of Engagement: Visual Politics in California and Beyond* (Berkeley, 2006), p. 33.
8 Indiana, in Baker 1963 (see note 5).
9 Indiana, in Vivien Raynor, "The Man Who Invented Love," *ARTnews* (February 1973), p. 62.
10 Indiana (see note 1).
11 Indiana, in Baker 1963 (see note 5).
12 Barbara Tischler, "Promise and Paradox: The 1960s and American Optimism," in Michael D. Shafer, ed., *The Vietnam War in the American Imagination* (Boston, 1990), pp. 30–57.
13 Compare for instance his *Peace Paintings* (2003) with his painting *Afghanistan* (2001)—a painting done in personal response to the 9/11 massacre but which can also be seen as a confounding yet patriotic reprise of the *Confederacy* series' structure in support of the American "war on Terror" in Afghanistan.
14 See Hudson 2007 (see note 2).
15 Robert N. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," *Daedalus* (Winter 1967), pp. 1–21. Distinguishing American civil religion from Christian faith and church, or the worship of the American way of life, Bellah has emphasized that the central tradition of the American civil religion is not a form of idolatrous national self-worship but the subordination of the nation to ethical principles that transcend it. No matter how Bellah defined America's civil religion, the quasi-divine sovereignty of American presidents in fulfilling America's promise worldwide captures the quasi-religious submission to America's foreign policies that distinguishes American patriotism.
16 See Francis Frascina, *Art, Politics and Dissent: Aspects of the Art Left in Sixties America* (Manchester, 1999).
17 Indiana has linked the reportorial interest in current events manifested in his art to his experience in journalism during both his student years and while serving in the military.
18 While wall-hung constructions like this one were endemic to the contemporary New York assemblage scene, *Wall of China* perhaps also confirms the influence of Agnes Martin's early constructions, as repeatedly claimed by the artist.
19 Indiana, artist records (see first quote in epigraph), 1965.
20 Especially since Indiana has later linked commemoration with celebration as central functions of his art, an equation that plays a particular role in the ambiguity of his early sixties commemorations, like *French Atomic Bomb*.
21 Given that Indiana often kept reworking his wood assemblages, the elaboration of *French Atomic Bomb* might have been cut short due to its early sale.
22 Indiana himself has speculated on the topicality of *Moon* (formerly *Moon Machine*) as possibly having "something to do with Man's intrusion on Orb Moon," when it was included in *The Art of Assemblage*, New York, MoMA, 1961. See Indiana, artist records (see first quote in epigraph), 1961, and the year 1961 in his "Autochronology."
23 Contemporary and also related to this group of works is *Agadir*, a painting known only from journal sketches because Indiana later overpainted it with his first *American Dream*. *Agadir* abstractly chronicled with its title (but perhaps also formally through a crooked band that referenced the tectonic plates that had caused the earthquake) a natural disaster, the earthquake that destroyed the eponymous Moroccan city. However, the fact that he dropped the painting,

significantly overpainted by his master exploration of the American Dream, indicates that he was consciously zooming in on events that had an immediate impact on American politics, life, and identity.

24 Attesting to this is the fact that when *French Atomic Bomb* was first exhibited in Martha Jackson's *New Forms—New Media I* exhibition in 1960, it was presented as *Untitled*, because Jackson found the topic too hot, as Indiana said to Julie Martin and Billy Klüver (untranscribed interview with Robert Indiana, January 17, 1993, Billy Klüver and Julie Martin Archive, Berkeley Heights, New Jersey). And while he honored Yuri Gagarin with his *Le Premier Homme*, Indiana chose the French title of a magazine cover as a metonym for the first man who orbited the moon, "in order not to make it too sympathetic to communist propaganda," as he told Baker.

25 See Jonathan D. Katz, "Passive Resistance: On the Success of Queer Artists in Cold War American Art," and "The Silent Camp: Queer Resistance and the Rise of Pop Art," http://www.queerculturalcenter.org.

26 Daniel E. O'Leary, "The Journals of Robert Indiana," in *Love and the American Dream: The Art of Robert Indiana*, exh. cat. Portland Museum of Art, Maine (Seattle, 1999), p. 16.

27 Although it is not known if Indiana knew about the letter, the dialogue of Indiana and Rauschenberg, which by Indiana's account stopped with found object experimentation in *Wall of China*, merits further investigation (overshadowed by his dialogue with Jasper Johns in the literature on Indiana). Rauschenberg's capturing of the face of the American sixties with his silkscreen reminders of sixties' "love, terror and violence" is in a sense worth a closer comparison with Indiana's own different and essentially faceless portrayal of the turbulent decade.

28 Kenneth E. Silver, "The Presidential Spectacle: Art, Culture and JFK," in *JFK and Art*, exh. cat. Bruce Museum, Greenwich, Connecticut (London, 2003).

29 O'Leary traces the conception and beginning of *Election* immediately after the election in November 1960, as well as its development, through entries and sketches in Indiana's journals and record books.

30 See Michael Lobel, *James Rosenquist: Pop Art, Politics and History in the 1960s* (Berkeley, 2009). *Election* was damaged prior to the assassination of Kennedy, but it was trimmed after his death so that the three quarters of the composition stood for the three years of his presidency.

31 While also referring to a popular pinball game of his childhood, "for Indiana, the word *ballyhoo* captured the spirit of the political events in 1960," according to Susan Elizabeth Ryan, *Robert Indiana: Figures of Speech* (New Haven, 2000), p. 81.

32 See Michael Plante, "Truth, Friendship, and Love: Sexuality and Tradition in Robert Indiana's Hartley Elegies," in Patricia McDonnell, ed., *Dictated by Life: Marsden Hartley and Robert Indiana* (Minneapolis, 1995), pp. 58–86.

33 Indiana, unpublished lecture, 1984, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

34 The revolt in Algeria is actually one of the few world events with no immediate impact on life in America and American politics that Indiana has marked in his journals around the time of *The Calumet*'s making.

35 Vincent Harding, "A Long Time Coming," in *Tradition and Conflict: Images of a Turbulent Decade, 1963–1973*, exh. cat. The Studio Museum of Harlem (New York, 1985), p. 17.

36 Indiana, in *Indiana*, exh. cat. Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia (Philadelphia, 1968).

37 Indiana, in Baker 1963 (see note 5).

38 Ibid.

39 See Kenn Kolsbun, *Peace: The Biography of a Symbol* (Washington, D.C., 2008).

40 Indiana, "Yield" 1968, statement by the artist first published in *Indiana* 1968, p. 20 (see note 36).

41 Ibid.

42 Holtom cited by Kolsbun 2008 (see note 39).

43 Indiana, "Yield" 1968 (see note 40).

44 Indiana, in Baker 1963 (see note 5).

45 See, for instance, Sidney Hook, "Better Red than Dead, or Lord Russell's Guide to Peace," *The New York Times*, January 14, 1962, p. BR123, and "Is Communism a Menace? Russell's Answer," *The New York Times*, April 7, 1963, p. SM. It is worth mentioning that the *New York Times*, the paper that Indiana evidently read daily,

covered very thoroughly anything that had to do with Russell's actions in the early nineteen-sixties.

46 In his discussion with Klüver and Martin, Indiana reinforces that he was very "fond of words" due to his literary background, and states that "I use words with a vengeance."

47 Ryan 2000 (see note 31).

48 As established by various archival sources and the exhibition history of the series.

49 Swenson 1966 (see note 1).

50 Lucy R. Lippard, *A Different War: Vietnam in Art*, exh. cat. Whatcom Museum of History and Art, Bellingham, Washington (Seattle, 1990).

51 Thomas Crow, *The Rise of the Sixties: American and European Art in the Era of Dissent* (London, 2004), p. 11.

52 See for instance his reference to Mae West in *The Triumph of Tira* (1961), the feminist underpinnings of his collaboration with Virgil Thomson for Gertrude Stein's opera *The Mother of Us All*, and his unending artistic dialogue with queer intellectuals and artists.

53 William Katz, in "Bill Katz interviewed by Leah Carol Reichman, April 26, 1979" in Reichman, *Robert Indiana and the Psychological Aspects of His Art*, unpublished M.A. thesis, Hunter College, New York (1980), p. 120. In addition to the centrality of the acronym F.U.C.K. in the Berkeley Free Speech Movement, the use of obscene language in the rhetoric of the emerging anti-war protest movement and the renewed meaning of "fuck" in the context of John Thomson's protest in Berkeley in March 1965 must also be taken into consideration.

54 Indiana, recording from "Alienation and Commitment," panel organized by Irma Jaffe in 1966, in Irma B. Jaffe Interviews, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

55 Ibid.

56 According to his "Autochronology," works donated to CORE benefit shows are: *Black Yield, Mississippi*, and *Black and White LOVE*.

57 Bellah 1967 (see note 15).

58 "End Your Silence," *The New York Times*, April 18, 1965, p. E5. See also Beth Ann Handler, *The Art of Activism: Artists Writers Protest, the Art Workers' Coalition, and the New York Art Strike Protest the Vietnam War*, Ph.D. diss, Yale University (New Haven, 2001).

59 Attesting to this, perhaps, is his participation in the exhibition *Protest and Hope* at the New School for Social Research in 1967 with *Yield Brother*. For its difference from the activist art of the Angry Arts Week against the Vietnam War, see Frascina 1999 (see note 16).

60 Indiana, in Jaffe 1966 (see note 54). See for instance his *VOTE* (1976), a poster for National Voter Registration produced in support of Jimmy Carter's campaign, as well as *An Honest Man Has Been President: A Portrait of Jimmy Carter*, serigraph (1980) from the presidential portfolio commissioned by the Democratic National Committee as a fundraiser for Carter's unsuccessful re-election campaign of 1980.

61 It is important to highlight that in contrast to the anti-patriotic sentiment expressed in a second letter published in June by the same collective under the name Artists Protest (namely, shame in being Americans due to the Vietnam War and an open accusation of the President), which might have discouraged Indiana from signing it, the letter with his name still expressed hope in the promises of negotiation given by President Johnson in 1965 in a speech at Johns Hopkins University. As the escalation of bombings proved the president's failure to fulfill his promise, fueling the protesters' confrontation with the state, a few members of the Artists and Writers Protest who had signed the first letter found it immoral to take part in the White House Festival of the Arts in June 1965. Indiana did participate, however, and proudly remarked on the exhibition of *The Calumet* in the White House and the dinner hosted by the president and his wife in his "Autochronology." For the moral controversy about the participation in the festival, see Robert Lowell's letter to the president and the Freedom House's accusation of members of Artists and Writers Protest as communists in Handler 2001 (see note 58).

62 Sacvan Bercovitch, "The Problem of Ideology in American Literary History," *Critical Inquiry* (Summer 1986), p. 644. See also George McKenna, *The Puritan Origins of American Patriotism* (New Haven, 2007).

Quotation on page 106:

Robert Indiana, in *Robert Indiana,* exh. cat. Institute of Contemporary Art of the University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, 1968), p. 52.

Quotation on page 126:

Robert Indiana, in Richard Stankiewicz, *Robert Indiana: An Exhibition of Recent Sculptures and Paintings* (Minneapolis, 1963), n.p.

84
MARILYN, MARILYN, 1999
Oil on canvas, 68 x 68 in.
(172.7 x 172.7 cm), diamond

Private collection