



ORDER OUT OF CHAOS: ROBERT INDIANA AT YORKSHIRE SCULPTURE PARK

CLARE LILLEY

In the wake of recent momentous societal developments, the social implications of the work of Robert Indiana are especially timely. While never overtly declaring himself a political artist, Indiana perceived the world around him through an ethical prism that compelled him to compound his artistic talents with deeply held beliefs, particularly in support of civil rights, and to call into question those factors which he saw as corrosive to the American Dream. He was conscious of himself as an outsider and from a young age identified with the marginalised in a country which until 1962 criminalised same-sex relations, where it was necessary for many citizens to live in self-abnegation even after 1962, and where much of his internal life necessitated being played out in code. The majority of Indiana's early idols were writers and artists who faced similar challenges – Gertrude Stein, Marsden Hartley, Charles Demuth and Walt Whitman to name a few – as did a number of the painters and sculptors he befriended in his first years in New York and amongst whom he lived in Coenties Slip, including Cy Twombly, Agnes Martin, Andy Warhol and Ellsworth Kelly.

The late Fifties and Sixties were a time of high energy and experimentation, of an anti-establishment zeal and rebellion, played out against a backdrop of the fight for equal rights and a loosening of social constraints. The curious and the experimental were thrust into the art world, cheek by jowl: moral indignation was partnered with the absurd and the cryptic. Included in this exhibition is a silent film on which Indiana and Warhol collaborated in 1964, featuring Indiana as he (apparently) eats a single mushroom. Warhol shot **Eat** in Indiana's Coenties Slip studio in lower Manhattan, where the Slip community of artists shared critical concerns with Warhol's Factory further uptown. Warhol remarked, "Of course, people said the Factory was degenerate just because 'anything went' there, but I think that was really a very good thing. As one straight kid said to me, 'It's nice not to be trapped into something, even if that's what you are.'"¹

Indiana pushed the boundaries of poetry, painting and sculpture while treading a fine line between celebrating his country and condemning its injustices. He highlighted the egregious racism in the American South and actively campaigned for the de-escalation of nuclear proliferation, asserting in 1965: "... I don't mean [my political stance] to be hostile. I only mean it to be illuminating or instructive. I'm not antisocial. I hope that I would be pro-social... I'm not against society; I'm really for society. And all my comments would be to make society realise what it's up to in a passive way. I'm not a crusader and I don't take part in barricades and street demonstrations. I hope it would only be effected through my work."² In this exhibition, a demonstration of Indiana's support for Black civil rights is **Black and White LOVE** (1971), the original painting of which was intended as a tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. but all too quickly functioned as a memorial, whilst the 1965 **Mississippi** painting which gave rise to the 1971 serigraph of the same name shown here makes no attempt to disguise the artist's utter disdain for the lingering racist violence prevalent in formerly Confederate states. Indiana often repurposed the words of others, but those encircling the map of Mississippi are his own: "Just as in the anatomy of man every nation must have its hind part." Similarly, Indiana's understanding of the genocide perpetrated on Indigenous American peoples – those after whom his home state was named and who furnished his chosen name – is referenced in **The Calumet** (1961): "**The Calumet** is a heroic painting. It isn't about geography, it's about Longfellow and the Hiawatha and the continent's first citizens and again a great tragedy."³

The written word is central to Indiana's work. As a high school student, in the Air Force and at college, Indiana worked on gazettes and newspapers, learning the journalist's and typographer's trades. Whilst in the Air Force he taught typing and in 1958 he worked as a typist and proof-reader at the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine in New York. The force of metal type-slugs

hitting ribbon against the platen and the imprint of metal on paper is distinct, with manual typewriters especially requiring a physical interaction from the typist that is hard to remember or imagine in relation to today's keyboards. For this acute and attentive young man, the act of typing and the awareness of typography were integral to his artistic practice; words and letters had for him a physical, sculptural quality. This is already evident in the early herm constructions onto which Indiana first painted words: in 1960, whilst helping clean an area of Lenore Tawney's studio in Coenties Slip, serendipity presented him with the nineteenth-century brass stencils he adopted to create words on sculpture and then in painting. In this way, stencil typeface, universally applied to crates, pallets and sacks associated with manual labour, became Indiana's font of choice, applied to the services of 'fine art'. Indiana later favoured serif fonts – Bold Didone for **LOVE** – and for **ONE Through ZERO** and other works he used Clarendon, a bold, curvaceous and powerful typeface created in London in 1845 that was used for signage and in the US for 'wanted' posters. Indiana's work was destined to deeply penetrate the American psyche. The launch of **LOVE** in 1965 and the enormous display of **EAT** on the New York World's Fair Theaterama exterior in 1964, cemented its absorption into American popular culture, which had a pronounced sociological love affair with youth – from the popularity of John F. Kennedy and burgeoning youth movements to the educational films of animated letters and numbers of Sesame Street, which launched in 1969.

Indiana was a forager of urban-American life and his 'herm' sculptures, made from beams and other materials that he salvaged from the abandoned warehouses around Coenties Slip, were so named by Indiana as parallel forms to the classical Greek *hermae*, which marked boundaries and highway crossings. The ancient stone stele took the form of a male bust surmounted on a human-proportioned geometric slab, often adorned with carved male genitals. Many of Indiana's herms also sport a phallus as well as wheels and painted circles, triangles and numbers, together with stencilled words in paint. Indiana avoided any formal readings between his sculptures and those from the classical world and he absolutely rejected the descriptor 'totem', which in the mid-twentieth century had become a term misused and denigrated

by racist portrayals of Indigenous American culture in television, film and popular print. Nevertheless, an anthropological connection to the form does seem pertinent. Upright forms are seen in every Indigenous culture as carriers of cultural beliefs, of legends and of family and tribal histories. Probably the oldest form of communal sculpture, the three-metre-high wooden **Shigir Idol** recovered from a Russian peat-bog, is our earliest known work of ritual art, made 12,000 years ago at the end of the Ice Age. Indigenous American totems, too, connect their peoples to a spiritual guide and are carriers of legend and in Indiana's herm sculptures (and in paintings and prints) his literary and artistic inspirations, personal biography and concerns are signalled through painted and stencilled marks. **Hole** (1960), for example, refers to a town in Samuel Beckett's book **Molloy** (1951), the destination for a father and son bicycle ride. So, ordinary found materials, language, the signs that prevail in the American land and cityscape, memories of a story set in England, together with a chance hole in timber, are woven together and transformed, to create new dialogues that point to the making of objects and symbols of emotional value as intrinsic to human development.

Inspired by the raw energy of New York, its historic structures, and its constantly evolving cityscape, Indiana made art from cheap or freely salvaged objects out of necessity, and it is in part for this reason that Indiana's first mature works were assemblage sculptures, rather than canvases: "So in my native urge to economize, I simply looked about, and there in front of my studio, down on the New York waterfront, were all these nineteenth-century buildings, being demolished. Here was all this gorgeous debris."⁴ The reference to "native urge" is germane in pointing to a perceived American endeavour which both David Smith and Indiana were intent on capturing in sculptural form: a unique expression of 'American-ness' that spoke of their country's history through carefully chosen appropriated objects that emphasised the honesty of manual labour and of the handmade. Coincidentally, both were born in Indiana and endured compromised childhoods, eventually finding refuge in New York.

By the 1950s 'assemblage' was increasingly used by American artists, though for its early proponents,

particularly Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg, the motivation was more an anti-aesthetic approach to making art connected to the work of Marcel Duchamp, adopting methods that blurred distinctions between painting and sculpture. Indiana was included in the 'assemblage' exhibition **New Media – New Forms** at the Martha Jackson Gallery, New York in 1960, and in 1961 he was shown in the "controversial" **Art of the Assemblage** exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art.⁵ As well as including an impressive range of earlier European works, the exhibition helped establish assemblage as a serious artform for contemporary American artists. It included Indiana's **Moon** of 1960, a wooden beam painted with gesso moon phases and stencilled letters, sporting iron and wooden wheels from an earlier era (although it nevertheless marked man's "intrusion" into space), which MoMA acquired for its collection, joining the earlier acquisition of Indiana's oil on canvas **The American Dream, I** (1961).⁶ Indeed, Indiana's work was very well represented in a number of important MoMA exhibitions throughout the 1960s, including Dorothy Miller's **Americans** of 1963, which platformed what she considered to be the most important homegrown talent of that year. These and other exhibitions and acquisitions highlight Indiana's established and increasing reputation, long before the unrestrained advent of **LOVE**.

Indiana used American vernacular as his artistic vocabulary and in melding the materials and methods of painting and sculpture, he forged a unique voice. From the late 1950s onwards, he methodically constructed a complex and curious lexicon of forms, words, symbols, numbers and colours that were entirely his and were indebted to his autobiography in an exploration of American identity that is both affectionate and critical. His frequent inclusion of the five-pointed star, for example, takes us to the stars of the US flag, representing each of the states, and more obliquely to the form – often of star set within a circular motif – that spangled 1940s US military hardware, from the turrets of tanks to the bodies of fighter planes and utility trucks, familiar to Indiana from his four years in the US Air Force. Indiana lived the last four decades of his life on the island of Vinalhaven, Maine, at his home called The Star of Hope – originally a lodge founded in 1874 as the local Independent Order of Odd Fellows, whose regalia includes the five-pointed

star. Derived from medieval English guilds, the order's mission today remains one that sets out: "To improve and elevate the character of mankind by promoting the principles of friendship, love, truth, faith, hope, charity and universal justice."⁷ It's hard to imagine a more apt domicile name for Indiana. A form and symbol used in faith systems for millennia, the star is referenced in the Preface of **Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures** by Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of the Christian Science church, which Indiana attended as a child: "The Wisemen were led to behold and to follow this daystar of divine Science, lighting the way to eternal harmony."⁸

The circular motif Indiana frequently used in paintings and prints, such as **The Calumet**, follows in great part a form that is common to US state 'seals', a number of which incorporate the five-pointed star as a graphic device and signifier of the national flag. The prevalence of wheels in Indiana's paintings and sculpture resulted from the supply of old pram wheels, a chance gift from the artist Stephen Durkee. Indiana considered the circle to be an expression of the cycle of life and in another happenstance, he derived his first circular motif from a found stencil of The American Hay Company emblem. A frottage of 1962, now in the collection of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, shows how Indiana covered The American Hay Company circular stencil with paper, rubbed over it with pencil and added to the centre in a cruciform shape the frottage-stencil words Eat and Die. Other versions from the same time feature either Die or Eat. Repeated many times over the course of Indiana's life (used of course as the subject and title of his and Warhol's collaboration) 'eat' was the last word his mother spoke before she died, thereby forever linking the two words. "[Eat] is more than a word. It is a sign you see on every road as you leave the big towns, and signs are important to me... In the eyes of a child, a lighted sign can reflect all the wonders of the world. Besides, the word 'eat' is reassuring, it means not only food but life. When a mother feeds her children, the process makes her indulgent, a giver of life, of love, of kindness... But 'eat' can also mean death; it was my mother's last word. While I was a soldier stationed in Alaska, I was called home to her bedside. By sheer willpower, she had survived until I got back to Indiana where we lived. As I went into the room she said, 'Boy, have you had anything to eat?' and she died."⁹

To Eat and Die, Indiana added Err and Hug, and for him they collectively compressed and summarised the American experience, with Err alluding to and allowing for an individual or entire country to transgress and, in light of the proverb “to err is human, to forgive is divine”, to be forgiven – or as Indiana would have it, to be mortal: “... they were done unemotionally on my part. I was not intending ‘Die’ or ‘Eat’ as a command. That is not – this is not my intention. They are the briefest of two – in word forms – they are the briefest forms of two thoughts that I wish to deal with. It could have been ‘Life’ and ‘Death,’ but ‘Eat’ and ‘Die’ are more brief and one of the problems in my paintings, and particularly from the emblematic standpoint, I must always find... that which is less or that which is least in length, and in bulk and in everything else. So, therefore ‘Eat’ and ‘Die’ is a reduction to the absolute minimum of an idea. Certainly never intended in my mind as commands. The same is, the same was ‘Hug’ and ‘Err,’ although they might suggest the same thing. With ‘Hug’ I’m talking about love and with ‘Err’ I’m talking about mortality. I’m not saying, ‘Go out, go out and sin!’”¹⁰

In a 1969 lecture to students, Indiana stated that “No one ever spoke of love in my family. They would hug each other but never really loved each other.”¹¹ So a word normally associated with comfort, carries for him the antithetical meaning of lovelessness. The notion of hugging or clasping also brings to mind Walt Whitman’s paean to young love and freedom, **We Two Boys Together Clinging** from **Leaves of Grass** published in 1855. To both Whitman and **Leaves of Grass**, Indiana paid homage in a number of works. Identified as a poem of gay love, **We Two Boys** is also interpreted as representing the brotherhood of two young men, brought together by their experience of war: “Power enjoying – elbows stretching – fingers clutching, | Armed and fearless – eating, drinking, sleeping, loving.” Whitman was of parallel importance to David Hockney, whose 1961 **We Two Boys Together Clinging**, painted while he was a student at the Royal College of Art in London, is an overt tribute to the poem and a covert reference to Hockney’s sexuality at a time when same-sex relationships in both Britain and the US were illegal.

Such is the intricate coalition of personal and public in Indiana’s works. They serve as self-portraits, or ‘word

portraits’, a form of descriptive vignette Gertrude Stein developed in the early 1900s and that inspired Charles Demuth’s **I Saw the Figure 5 in Gold** (1928), which in turn pays homage to William Carlos Williams’s poem **The Great Figure** (1921). Both works by gay men provided motivation for Indiana’s **The Demuth American Dream No. 5** (1963). Like Marsden Hartley’s similarly conceived **Portrait of a German Officer** and Arthur Dove’s **Portrait of Ralph Dusenberry** (1924), **The Demuth American Dream No. 5** is a massing of associated images and symbols that create a rich and complex characterisation which pays tribute to Indiana’s exceptional intellectual ability. Correspondingly layered and intricate, intricate, Indiana’s **Decade: Autoportraits**, begun in 1970, is a series of paintings in three sizes that, together with the **Decade** print portfolio of 1971, chronicled his biography in the 1960s. The exhibition presents both the 1980 serigraph **American Dream #5 (The Golden Five)** and five of the ten serigraphs of the **Decade** portfolio.

The constant self-questioning of identity in Indiana’s early work runs parallel to his no less determined examination of the American Dream and his place within or outside it. It is significant that at the same time Indiana was starting his **American Dream** paintings in Coenties Slip, a one-act play was attracting significant attention in the theatre district – **The American Dream** by the up-and-coming Edward Albee who, like Indiana, was both adopted and gay. The play was declared “a ferocious, uproarious attack on the substitution of artificial for real values [and] the hollowness of the American Dream, as well as the fallacy of the ideal American family”.¹² It confounds folksy American stereotypes with intimations of the country’s dark underbelly and includes a murderous adoption and twin-brother substitution, leaving the audience questioning the actual versus the intended ideals of American values.

Much of Indiana’s youthful work responded to his understanding of the Bible. The coincidence of a Christian Science church being converted to the Aldrich Museum in Connecticut in the 1960s led to Larry Aldrich commissioning from Indiana his **Love Is God** canvas in 1964. It is one of the earliest iterations of **LOVE**, riffing off Indiana’s memory of the austere, unornamented church of his youth: “in fact, only one

thing appears in a Christian Science church, and that's a small, very tasteful inscription in gold, usually, over the platform where the readers conduct the service. And that inscription is God Is Love."¹³ It is tempting to speculate that the series of **Columns**, begun in 1964 that in 1998 Indiana adorned with gold paint, might also reflect that flash of gilded beauty in an otherwise minimal church. Whilst not ornate, the **Columns** are richly embellished, with broad and narrow golden bands and black or red stencilled lettering directly applied onto bare timber. Tellingly, these **Columns** – including **Dillinger**, **Call Me Indiana**, **My Mother** and **My Father** – explicitly correspond to Indiana's younger life. Created from Pitch Pine ships' masts that had been repurposed after New York's Great Fire of 1835 as construction material for the shipping buildings around Coenties Slip, the **Columns** are biographical sign posts. **Bob's Column** (1964/1998) is encircled with the gold-stencilled names of Indiana's significant homes: New Castle (his birthplace), Vinalhaven (his final home), places of learning – Chicago, Skowhegan and Edinburgh – with his Manhattan homes of The Bowery and Coenties Slip completing the totemic life journey. Conceived by Indiana in his mid-thirties and completed in his seventieth year, the **Columns** are close to being a lifelong undertaking and their contemplation is deeply poignant, intimating both affection for places he loved and remembered, and the encompassing cycle of time.

Commenting on the centrality of the written word in his practice, in 1991 Indiana stated: "what I'm doing is equating my paintings with my poetry. In other words they are concrete. The **LOVE** is a concrete poem as far as I'm concerned. Just a one-word poem. Repeated so endlessly by myself, and it's a little bit like, shall we say, like Gertrude Stein. Just don't stop using a word, you see... Remember there's another aspect about love and of course this really comes through in [the poem] **Wherefore the Punctuation of the Heart**. Love is a noun and a verb and so one must decide what my love is. It's a command, love, and it's a subject, love. It is an exercise, and grammar is one of my favorite subjects."¹⁴ Indiana's 1958-69 poem **Wherefore the Punctuation of the Heart** illustrates his close kinship with concrete poetry and his creative approach to typing; set as a central column on the page, the letters L O V E are interspersed with commas, colons, dashes, slashes, parentheses, full stops, question marks and

more. Indiana invents an ingenious structure and in so doing chronicles his turbulent lifetime relationship with the word and its meanings; in his late twenties and early thirties, we see him transmute the chaos of his early years into objects and images of order. At YSP, **LOVE (Red Blue Green)** (1966-98) stands as a formal, abstract configuration and a shaped poem with a colour palette that is symbolic of the artist's home state of Indiana, combining the fire engine red and dark green from the logo of the Phillips 66 gas station (where his father worked during the Depression) and the blue of the Midwestern sky.

LOVE Wall (1966-2006), commanding the view across YSP's valley, and **Imperial LOVE** (1966-2006) adjacent to the gallery, are fabricated from weathering steel, or Corten steel, which since the 1960s has become associated with large public sculptures. Indiana's first Corten sculpture was a 12-foot high **LOVE**, fabricated at the famous Lippincott Foundry in North Haven, Connecticut and in 1971 it was shown at 5th Avenue and 60th Street in New York's Central Park and subsequently in Boston in the plaza surrounding City Hall as part of the exhibition **Monumental Sculpture for Public Spaces**. Corten's rusted surface forms a protective barrier that changes colour according to the weather and environment; at YSP its dense orange-brown gleams spectacularly against green and the scale and form of these works is powerfully reinforced by their weathered steel surface. Almost all of Indiana's monumental sculptures – whether painted aluminium or Corten steel – have dimensions in inches that can be divided by 12, giving insight into Indiana's obsession with and love for numbers and proportions. Using this rule, the metal sculptures are always half as deep as they are high or wide – proportions which enable a particular sculptural volume to be visually and viscerally satisfying. Those shown in Yorkshire are examples from the hugely ambitious project which Indiana embarked on starting in 1989 with the gallerist Simon Salama-Caro, who describes visiting the artist's Star of Hope home and studio on Vinalhaven in 1987 and first seeing the large hand-written and illustrated ledger that Indiana had evolved since the 1960s.^{15 16} The ledger describes precisely those sculptures Indiana wished to cast, including their exact proportions, colours and materials. The project to translate a number of wooden herms into painted bronze – cast initially at

The Empire Bronze Foundry, New York, followed by Walla Walla Foundry in Washington – continues at the Kunstgiesserei St Gallen in Switzerland, where the remainder of Indiana's dream project is painstakingly discharged. For millennia, bronze has prevailed in the world of sculpture and Indiana considered it to be a "noble" sculptural material; by electing to render his wooden assemblages thus, he created works that he knew could last for thousands of years as well as knowingly connecting with a distinguished art historical trajectory.¹⁷

My first hands-on experience of Indiana's sculpture was seeing the two-metre high Corten **Numbers** unveiled in London's Regent's Park in 2018; swarthy, beautiful hunks of steel with unequivocal curves and edges; breathtaking and brilliant. At Yorkshire Sculpture Park, the polychrome **ONE** was first to be uncovered, powerfully disclosing its scale, volume, flawless fabrication and dazzling colour; placed on the gallery concourse as it waited for three February storms to pass and to be installed outdoors, the red and blue sculpture illuminated the space. Similarly, **The Electric LOVE** (1966-2000) reveals extreme care of fabrication in its recesses, shaping, and ranks of perfectly aligned light bulbs, while the palette of cream, navy blue and cadmium red indicate constraint in Indiana's choice of colours. Once lit, however, the sculpture is absolutely ablaze, fracturing its mass and speaking of a bygone and energetic age of ravishing, flashy theatre and fairground signs.

The scale of Indiana's herms is surprising – the earlier works have a relationship to the size of the human body that intensifies their anthropomorphic nature, whilst the solidity of the timber from which they are formed squarely defines them as abstracted sculpture. So, too, do the subtleties of the beams that Indiana selected, using their particular characteristics of mortise and tenon, dovetail and other joints to indicate head or body. Or in the case of **Monarchy** (1981), the king and queen's 'crowns', amusingly painted with soft gold and silver respectively; the queen's rudimentary breasts and heart-shaped genitalia being a rare and playful expression by Indiana of the female form. The varied grains of the timbers play an important role in determining the personality of the herms – some smooth, others craggy and seemingly time-worn; numbers and shapes painted onto raised metal discs or

onto circles embossed into the wood: all contribute to creating multifarious dynamic surfaces. As well as rusty wheels of different sizes and types, some bear what appear to be scythes, rotavator wheels, and propeller blades, together with heavy chain and salvaged metal stars. The sculptures' phalluses are formed from many different found objects and they, too, contribute greatly to the reading of these constructions as individual personalities. The herms relate to both the *hermae* of ancient Greece and to 3000-year-old Etruscan bronze chariot sculptures in which the rider melds into the wheels of his or her vehicle. Drawing from Indiana's lexicon of painted and aggregated signs and symbols, each herm is unto itself and while one can imagine the artist revelling in the process of their manufacture, none is overblown, all are restrained.

The constructions made after Indiana's move to Vinalhaven in 1979 demonstrate a shift in scale towards the monumental – not only at more than three-metres in height are they much larger, but **Mars** (1990, cast 2016) and **KvF** (1991, cast 2015-18) are assertively masculine, featuring large rusted wheels atop stacked beams, and emblazoned with pitchforks, scythes and heavy gauge salvaged steel related to Vinalhaven's farming heritage. Abbreviated from Marsden Hartley, **Mars** is one of a number of works that pay tribute to Hartley, whose work so influenced Indiana as a young man and who, fifty years earlier, had lived on the same island of Vinalhaven. The imperious and powerful sculpture conflates him with Mars, the Roman god of war and guardian of agriculture. The militaristic and darkly handsome **KvF** directly relates to Hartley's **Portrait of a German Officer**, a 1914 painting that expressed his grief and devotion for the Prussian lieutenant Karl von Freyburg, whom Hartley loved and who was killed in the Great War. Both works articulate physical, erotic love.

With a stacked base and adorned with a horse skull that inevitably signals the end of life and is emphasised by the split lower jaw bone on either edge of the work – and bulbous, rooty phallus – by comparison **Ash** (1995, cast 2017) is a muted, solemn sculpture. More memorial or memento mori than paean, it was made at the height of the AIDS crisis in the United States and it extends Indiana's exploration of **Die**. Enhanced with a cattle skull and painted in pastel colours with marks that perhaps riff off the American flag or allude to

homespun patterning, **USA** (1996-98, cast 2017) is the most organic of Indiana's works, formed from a large piece of driftwood or dead tree, which, like the skulls, was scavenged from the island. The rear of the work features a split beam with decorative moulding and unusual green graphic, with the artist's commonly used stencil signature and date together with the place of its making – Vinalhaven. The sculpture speaks lyrically yet firmly of the Eastern Seaboard island and possibly of Indiana's response to US and world politics, dominated at this time by the growing crisis in Iraq. That the sculptures on show in the large gallery at Yorkshire Sculpture Park are in fact painted bronze translations of the 'Vinalhaven Woods' is nothing short of astounding, their quality and detail indiscernible from those in wood in the adjoining spaces. They are indicative of the exceptional abilities of the Swiss foundry as well as the close working relationship between its owner, Felix Lehner, Simon Salama-Caro, and his son Marc.

Works in aluminium and steel were also contained within Indiana's vision for creating large metal sculptures, now immaculately fabricated at Milgo / Bufkin in Brooklyn, New York. At YSP, sculptures in the landscape include **ART (Red Bue)** (1972-2001) and four iterations of **LOVE** that include **Imperial LOVE** and **LOVE Wall** together with their Latin counterpart **AMOR (Red Yellow)** (1998-2006), blazing hot-yellow and flame-red across the landscape. The notion that sculpture occupies physical space and that its sensory and experiential nature make it especially compelling is demonstrated in Indiana's ability to create a physical relationship between sculpture and viewer. Outdoors, this relationship is especially acute as works are experienced within the landscape, as one walks with vigour or ease, seeing the painted and rusted surfaces in all weather and light conditions, and perceiving how the artist skilfully conveys a keen understanding of formal sculptural values – scale, volume, surface, and space.

Indiana often recalled his youth being dominated by numbers, most especially the signs on highways along which he was driven and the twenty-one addresses at which he lived before the age of seventeen. His relationship to numbers was as personal and critical as it was to words. In numbers he recognised a global language and great beauty: "I've been involved with

numbers much longer than I have been with love. My love affair with numbers goes way, way back. People don't stop to think how beautiful numbers really are."¹⁸ The polychrome numbers **ONE Through ZERO (The Ten Numbers)** (1980-2001) are sited on the lawn adjacent to the Underground Gallery, where they are a recurring presence seen through the huge concourse windows as people make their way through the exhibition. The **Numbers** represent not only Indiana's particular blending of painting and sculpture but the incorporation of a mathematical system of their presentation; with the depth of each numeral measuring half its height and width, their ratio and volumetric quality satisfy the eye as well as the mind. Each sculpture's correspondence to the human body creates an immediate physical relationship, whilst the relative dimensions and the sequence of forms set up a perceptible rhythm. Exactly fabricated in sheet aluminium, with no discernible joints or welds, the numbers project into space from what might have been a perfectly printed page, their colours singing individually, in pairs and as a chorus of ten forms.

At YSP, a short distance from Indiana's **Numbers**, the nine bronzes of Barbara Hepworth's **The Family of Man** or **Nine Figures on a Hill** (1970) ascend a hillside – starting at the foot with **Young Girl** and **Youth**, working their way through **Bride** and **Bridegroom**, **Parents** and **Ancestor** to **Ultimate Form** near the crest. **The Family of Man** is an expression of the artist's connection to the art historical tropes of the stages of human life, of her own biography, and of her spiritual and philosophical belief in humanity's finest endeavours. A woman who lived through two World Wars, was a supporter of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, and a proponent of the United Nations, Hepworth's **Family** is her most adamant assertion of universal humanity. She and Indiana were both schooled in Christian Science, the central text of which differentiates the 'mortal mind', connecting with the physical world, from the 'divine mind', which recognises the true, intangible nature of existence. Born twenty-five years and an ocean apart, Hepworth and Indiana nevertheless worked contemporaneously, both affected by their experiences of war and social change and both engaged with the idea of their art addressing humanitarian concerns. A rudimentary comparison between Hepworth's **Family** and Indiana's **Numbers** yields commonalities and differences in this respect.

While the nine figures created by the British sculptor are anthropomorphic and relate to the natural world, those of the American pertain to the built environment and are literally figures, numerals – the essence of abstraction – which for Indiana symbolised the human life cycle. The precedent was set as early as the sixth century BCE, when the Greek philosopher and ‘Father of Numbers’ Pythagoras credited numbers with specific mystical properties – the number 1 symbolising unity, 2 the female principle, 3 the male, 4 justice, 5 as marriage (2+3) and so on. In associated fashion, Indiana’s numbers represent the ages of man with **ONE** signifying birth, **TWO** infancy, with **SIX** symbolising the prime of life, **SEVEN** and **EIGHT** early and late autumn, and **ZERO** signalling the end of life.

Where the figures of Hepworth’s **Family** seem to have emanated from and are rooted in the earth, the unrestrained colours of Indiana’s numbers are

celebratory, corresponding to an instantly recognisable world of man-made signs and symbols. Both groups connect to ancient standing forms of totems, stele, henges and icons that speak of creative human endeavour, bridging millennia and diverse world cultures. At almost two metres high and wide, the hard-edged contours and vividly painted surfaces of the **Numbers** are dramatically offset by the huge century-old, dark-green Edwardian yew hedge that recedes behind them. These polychrome forms are further delineated by rain, hail and snow and lit by the rising and waning northern sun. They exemplify Indiana’s lifetime exploration of those elements that bring us together: poetry, identity, social equality, and spiritual unity. The abstract nature of Indiana’s numbers and letters are a celebration of universal emblems which transcend the barriers of language and reach beyond the tangible realities of the known world.

ENDNOTES

1. Andy Warhol and Pat Hackett, **POPism: the Warhol '60s** (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), p223.
2. Robert Indiana quoted in: John Jones and Nicolette Jones, **The American art tapes: voices of twentieth-century art** (London: Tate Publishing, 2021), pp92-3.
3. Robert Indiana and Susan Elizabeth Ryan, “Interview with Robert Indiana, November 14, 1991,” **Robert Indiana: Figures of Speech Archive, 1987-2005**. Quotation reproduced in: “**The Calumet**, 1961,” Robert Indiana: Selected Works, accessed January 9, 2022, <https://robertindiana.com/works/the-calumet/>
4. Barbaralee Diamonstein-Spielvogel, “Robert Indiana,” in **Inside New York's Art World** (New York: Rizzoli, 1979), pp157-58
5. “Press Release: public symposium on The Art of Assemblage,” Museum of Modern Art, New York, accessed January 9, 2022, https://assets.moma.org/documents/moma_press-release_326251.pdf?_ga=2.249901190.187291387.1641741309-195796088.1641297229
6. “Typically this piece may have something to do with Man’s intrusion on Orb Moon – an heraldic stele, so to speak, but a definite statement is out of keeping with the times, therefore let it stand as ‘A Formal Study in Wood, Gesso and Iron.’” Indiana quoted in: “Artist Questionnaire: **The American Dream, I** (1961) and **Moon** (1960), Museum of Modern Art, 1961,” in **Robert Indiana: Beyond Love**, ed. Barbara Haskell (New York, New Haven, London: Whitney Museum of American Art and Yale University Press, 2013), p205.
7. “Our Mission,” The Independent Order of Odd Fellows, accessed January 23, 2022, <https://odd-fellows.org/about/our-mission/>
8. Mary Baker Eddy, **Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures** (Boston, Massachusetts: The Christian Science Board of Directors, 1906), vii, <https://login.concord.christianscience.com/concord3/search/?query=vii%3A10-12&book=tfccs.main.sh>
9. Ninette Lyon, “Robert Indiana, Andy Warhol, a Second Fame: Good Food,” **Vogue**, March 1, 1965, pp184–86.
10. Arthur Carr, “The Reminiscences of Robert Indiana,” New York, November 1965. Arthur C. Carr Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Library, http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/archival/collections/ldpd_4079743/
11. Robert Indiana, “Lecture at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture,” Maine, 1969. Quotation reproduced in: “**Column Hug**, 1964,” Robert Indiana: Selected Works, accessed January 23, 2022, <http://robertindiana.com/works/column-hug/?id=1786>
12. Andrew Gans, “Albee’s ‘Dream’ and ‘Sandbox’ Begin Previews March 21,” **Playbill**, accessed April 28, 2022, <https://www.playbill.com/article/mulgrew-will-succeed-ivey-in-albees-dream-and-sandbox-off-broadway-run-extended-com-149055>
13. Diamonstein-Spielvogel, “Robert Indiana,” pp157–58.
14. Robert Indiana and Susan Elizabeth Ryan, “Interview with Robert Indiana, January 13, 1991,” **Robert Indiana: Figures of Speech Archive, 1987-2005**. Quotation reproduced in: “**LOVE**, 1967,” Robert Indiana: Selected Works, accessed January 9, 2022, <https://robertindiana.com/works/love/?id=3964>
15. The three distinct projects with Salama-Caro began with the series of bronze casts of the woods in 1989, followed in 1995 by sculptures fabricated at Milgo and then in 2014 the bronze Vinalhaven Constructions.
16. Simon Salama-Caro and Joe Lin-Hill, “An Interview Between Simon Salama-Caro and Joe Lin-Hill,” in **Robert Indiana: A Sculpture Retrospective**, ed. Joe Linn-Hill (Buffalo, New York; Bielefeld, Germany: Albright-Knox Art Gallery and Kerber Verlag, 2019), p96.
17. Salama-Caro and Lin-Hill, “An Interview Between Simon Salama-Caro and Joe Lin-Hill,” p98.
18. Marius B. Péladeau and Martin Dibner, **Indiana’s Indianas: A Twenty-Year Retrospective of Paintings and Sculpture from the Collection of Robert Indiana** (Rockland, Maine: William A. Farnsworth Library and Art Museum, 1982), pp7-8.



ONE through ZERO (The Ten Numbers), 1980-2003 at Frieze Sculpture Park, 2019
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New York, DACS, London 2019. Page 21: **LOVE (Red Blue Green)** 1996-98. Photograph: Jonty Wilde