



La Biennale di Venezia

60. Esposizione
Internazionale
d'Arte

Eventi Collaterali

ROBERT INDIANA: THE SWEET MYSTERY

Collateral Event of the 60th International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia

Exhibition sheds new light on one of the world's most iconic artists

On View at the Procuratie Vecchie located in Piazza San Marco, April 17 through November 24

Presented by Yorkshire Sculpture Park and Curated by Matthew Lyons

Yorkshire Sculpture Park presents *Robert Indiana: The Sweet Mystery*, an official Collateral Event of the 60th International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia. On view in the historic and central **Procuratie Vecchie**, recently restored by Pritzker-prize winning architect David Chipperfield. Developed with The Robert Indiana Legacy Initiative, this exhibition offers a revelatory perspective on Indiana's work, focusing on the central themes of spirituality, identity and the human condition that are key to understanding his creative evolution. Artworks on view span six decades of Indiana's career and include significant early works, some of which have rarely been publicly displayed.

Simon Salama-Caro, founder and principal of The Robert Indiana Legacy Initiative, said, "With each passing year, it becomes more and more evident that Bob Indiana was one of our era's greatest artists. He had the gift of being able to connect deeply with the public zeitgeist, while making complex, innovative, multilayered works of great emotional intensity. It's wonderful to see Bob's artistic legacy now being recognized at the Venice Biennale, where his works can be appreciated through a new scholarly lense."

A preeminent figure in American art, Robert Indiana (1928-2018), widely known for his iconic *LOVE* series, was an influential leader of Pop who distinguished himself by addressing important social and political issues and incorporating profound historical, literary, and biographical references into his works. The exhibition's title, *The Sweet Mystery*, is adapted from one of Indiana's earliest paintings to incorporate words, a practice that came to define his career.

Clare Lilley, Director of Yorkshire Sculpture Park and curator of *Robert Indiana: Sculpture 1958-2018* (YSP 2022-23), said, "Public reaction to Robert Indiana's work indicates the continuing relevance of this exceptional artist to new generations of diverse people. Indiana responded to the material world, re-imagining and assembling objects and images into a new language that amplifies political and social concerns, and which calls for unity, acceptance, and love. Indiana's brilliance was in forging refined yet insistent poetry in precise material form. It is heartening that his work will both engage with the architecture of the Procuratie Vecchie and with new audiences."

Robert Indiana: The Sweet Mystery, curated by Matthew Lyons, is the most significant presentation to date in Italy of Indiana's work. The exhibition features more than 40 works including paintings and sculptures, which highlights the artist's exploration of the human condition and faith in turbulent times. Key works on view include *The Sweet Mystery*, *EAT/DIE*, *Love is God* and *The Melville Triptych*.

Matthew Lyons said, "This exhibition meticulously navigates Indiana's masterful use of self-referentiality to delve into profound metaphysical questions about the nature of life. By infusing his works with intricate biographical details, Indiana not only crafts a personal narrative but also underscores enduring ties to past radical American art movements. Through a thematic selection of works, the exhibition serves as a portal, introducing a new generation of viewers to Indiana's distinctive and transcendental Pop perspective, as they confront their own pressing existential dilemmas in this century."

The exhibition is on the second floor of the Procuratie Vecchie, while the third floor has been dedicated by Generali to the Home of The Human Safety Net, and its interactive exhibition "A World of Potential", a hub open to the international community on the themes of social inclusion, innovation and sustainability.

A fully illustrated catalogue will accompany the exhibition with new scholarship on the artist's work with texts by Clare Lilley, Allan Schwartzman and Matthew Lyons.

Robert Indiana

Following an itinerant childhood in the American Midwest and an art education in Chicago and in Europe, Robert Indiana arrived in New York City, in 1954 still using his given name Robert Clark. Two years later, a chance encounter with Ellsworth Kelly altered the personal and professional trajectory of his young life.

He soon found himself living in a loft on Coenties Slip, a forgotten pocket of lower Manhattan where the remains of a bustling maritime past rubbed up against the burgeoning financial sector. With little funds for art materials, Indiana created assemblages using the detritus of the seaport activity around him, while also developing his two-dimensional pictorial language in dialogue with his close-knit community of neighbors, including vanguard artists such as Kelly, Agnes Martin, James Rosenquist, Cy Twombly, and Jack Youngerman. In an act of reinvention and rebirth during this fervent time, he renamed himself after his home state of Indiana. By the early 1960s Indiana was producing bold canvases arranged with pure geometries, text, and numerals in unmodulated color, responding to the visual culture of an increasingly pervasive consumerism. Embedded with personal memories and biographical detail, his works point to universal questions about the human condition and faith during turbulent times while also processing issues of queer identity and the self. His particular form of Pop art extends a line of American radicalism with roots in the Transcendentalists of the 19th century and the formal experimentation of the early modernists. Through a focused selection spanning more than fifty years of artistic output, including many early works that are rarely exhibited, *Robert Indiana: The Sweet Mystery* frames Indiana for new audiences to contemplate the metaphysical in the face of pressing concerns about life in the 21st century.

Yorkshire Sculpture Park

Founded in 1977, YSP is a unique, international destination for modern and contemporary sculpture. It is an independent charitable trust and registered museum situated in the 500-acre, 18th-century Bretton Hall estate in West and South Yorkshire. With an exceptional learning programme, rolling exhibitions, and permanent and changing sculptures sited in the landscape, across its history, YSP has worked with over 1,000 artists from more than 40 countries. They include Ai Weiwei, Fiona Banner, Tony Cragg, Leonardo Drew, Barbara Hepworth, Damien Hirst, Robert Indiana, KAWS, Lindsey Mendick, Henry Moore, Annie Morris, David Nash, Sean Scully, Chiharu Shiota, Yinka Shonibare CBE, David Smith, James Turrell, Joana Vasconcelos, Bill Viola and Erwin Wurm.

The Robert Indiana Legacy Initiative

Established in 2022, [The Robert Indiana Legacy Initiative](#), LLC aims to increase awareness of and appreciation for the depth and breadth of the work of Robert Indiana. Addressing curators and scholars, collectors, art-market professionals and the public at large, The Robert Indiana Legacy Initiative maintains a collection and archive of Robert Indiana's art; encourages and supports exhibitions and public installations of Indiana's work; assists with and promotes scholarly research on Indiana and his artistic career; and manages the website www.robertindiana.com and distributes a newsletter.

About The Procuratie Vecchie

The Procuratie Vecchie opened to the public in 2022 for the first time in 500 years, following a major restoration by David Chipperfield commissioned by Generali and orchestrated by Generali Real Estate. The third floor houses The Home of The Human Safety Net, a Foundation working in 26 countries to unlock the potential of those living in vulnerable conditions. The permanent exhibition "A World of Potential" and its Art Studio are conceived as an experience that leads visitors to discover their unique combination of character strengths, while also enabling them to see the best qualities in the people around them.

Visiting the Exhibition

The exhibition is located on the second floor of the Procuratie Vecchie on Piazza San Marco.

Entrance is directly on Piazza San Marco, at number 105. The nearest vaporetto stops are San Marco and San Zaccaria.

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