

# Robert Indiana

**Robert Indiana** (born **Robert Clark**; September 13, 1928 – May 19, 2018) was an American artist associated with the pop art movement. His "LOVE" print, first created for the Museum of Modern Art's Christmas card in 1965, was the basis for his 1970 *Love* sculpture and the widely distributed 1973 United States Postal Service "LOVE" stamp. He created works in media including paper (silk screen) and Cor-ten steel.

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## Biography

Robert Indiana was born Robert Clark in New Castle, Indiana, as the only child of Earl Clark and Carmen Watters.<sup>[1][2]</sup> After his parents divorced, he relocated to Indianapolis to live with his father so he could attend Arsenal Technical High School (1942–1946),<sup>[3][4]</sup> from which he graduated as valedictorian of his class.<sup>[1]</sup>

After serving for three years in the United States Army Air Forces, Indiana studied at the Art Institute of Chicago (1949–1953), the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine (summer 1953) and Edinburgh University and Edinburgh College of Art (1953–1954).<sup>[4]</sup> He returned to the United States in 1954 and settled in New York City.<sup>[5]</sup>

In New York, Indiana's lover Ellsworth Kelly helped him find a loft on Coenties Slip.<sup>[1]</sup> On Coenties Slip he met neighboring artists like Jack Youngerman, Agnes Martin and Cy Twombly, with whom he shared his studio for a time.<sup>[1]</sup>

Robert Indiana



Robert Indiana at his home in Maine

<b>Born</b>	Robert Clark <div>September 13, 1928</div> <div>New Castle, Indiana, U.S.</div>
<b>Died</b>	May 19, 2018 <div>(aged 89)</div> <div>Vinalhaven, Maine, U.S.</div>
<b>Cause of death</b>	respiratory failure
<b>Education</b>	Herron School of Art and Design
<b>Occupation</b>	Artist, theatrical set designer and costume designer

In 1964, Indiana moved from Coenties Slip to a five-story building at Spring Street and the Bowery.<sup>[6]</sup> In 1969, he began renting the upstairs of the mansarded Victorian-style<sup>[7]</sup> Odd Fellows Hall named "The Star of Hope" in the island town of Vinalhaven, Maine, as a seasonal studio from the photographer Eliot Elisofon.<sup>[7]</sup> Half a century earlier, Marsden Hartley had made his escape to the same island.<sup>[7]</sup> When Elisofon died in 1973, Indiana bought the lodge for \$10,000 from his estate. He moved in full-time when he lost his lease on the Bowery in 1978.<sup>[8]</sup>

Indiana grew reclusive in his final years.<sup>[1]</sup> He died on May 19, 2018, at his home in Vinalhaven, Maine, of respiratory failure at the age of 89.<sup>[2]</sup> One day before his death, a lawsuit was filed over claims that his caretaker had isolated him from family and friends, and was marketing unauthorized reproductions of his works.<sup>[9]</sup>

## Work

Indiana's work often consists of bold, simple, iconic images, especially numbers and short words like *EAT*, *HUG*, and, his best known example, *LOVE*. In his *EAT* series, the word blares in paint or light bulbs against a neutral background; he regularly paired “EAT” with “DIE”.<sup>[7]</sup> In a major career milestone, the architect Philip Johnson commissioned an *EAT* sign for the New York State Pavilion at the 1964 New York World's Fair.<sup>[10]</sup> The sign was turned off one day after the opening of the fair because visitors believed it to mark a restaurant. Andy Warhol's contribution to the fair was also removed that day.<sup>[11][12]</sup>

Other well-known works by Indiana include: his painting the unique basketball court formerly used by the Milwaukee Bucks in that city's MECCA Arena, with a large M shape taking up each half of the court;<sup>[13][14]</sup> his sculpture in the lobby of Taipei 101, called *1-O* (2002, aluminum), using multicoloured numbers to suggest the conduct of world trade and the patterns of human life;<sup>[15]</sup> and the works he created in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, attacks and exhibited in New York in 2004 called the *Peace Paintings*.<sup>[16]</sup>

Between 1989 and 1994, Indiana painted a series of 18 canvases inspired by the shapes and numbers in the *war motifs* paintings that Marsden Hartley did in Berlin between 1913 and 1915.<sup>[17]</sup>

Indiana was also a theatrical set and costume designer, such as the 1976 production by the Santa Fe Opera of Virgil Thomson's *The Mother of Us All*, based on the life of suffragist Susan B. Anthony.<sup>[18]</sup> He was the star of Andy Warhol's film *Eat* (1964), which is a 45-minute film of Indiana eating a mushroom.<sup>[19]</sup> Warhol also made the brief silent film *Bob Indiana Etc.* (4 minutes, 1963), a portrait of the artist with appearances by Wynn Chamberlain and John Giorno.<sup>[20]</sup>

## LOVE

Indiana's best known image is the word *Love* in upper-case letters, arranged in a square with a tilted letter "O".<sup>[21]</sup> The iconography first appeared in a series of poems originally written in 1958, in which Indiana stacked LO and VE on top of one another,<sup>[21]</sup> then in a painting with the words "Love is God".<sup>[21]</sup> The red/green/blue image was then created for a Christmas card for the Museum of Modern Art in 1964.<sup>[21]</sup> It was put on an eight-cent U.S. Postal Service postage stamp in 1973, the first of their regular series of "love stamps".<sup>[21]</sup>



1973 LOVE stamp

The first serigraph/silk screen of "Love" was printed as part of an exhibition poster for Stable Gallery in 1966.<sup>[22]</sup>



*Ahava* (אהבה "love" in Hebrew), Cor-ten steel sculpture by Robert Indiana (American), 1977, Israel Museum, Jerusalem

In 1977, he created a Hebrew version with the four-letter word Ahava (אהבה "love" in Hebrew) using Cor-ten steel, for the Israel Museum Art Garden in Jerusalem.<sup>[23]</sup>

In 2008, Indiana created an image similar to his iconic *LOVE*, but this time showcasing the word "HOPE", and donated all proceeds from the sale of reproductions of his image to Democrat Barack Obama's presidential campaign, raising in excess of \$1,000,000.<sup>[24]</sup> A stainless steel sculpture of *HOPE* was unveiled outside Denver's Pepsi Center during the 2008 Democratic National Convention.<sup>[24]</sup> Editions of the sculpture have been released and sold internationally and the artist himself has called HOPE "Love's close relative".<sup>[24]</sup>

For Valentine's Day 2011, Indiana created a similar variation on *LOVE* for Google, which was displayed in place of the search engine site's normal

logo.<sup>[25]</sup>

## Exhibitions

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In 1962, Eleanor Ward's Stable Gallery hosted Robert Indiana's first New York solo exhibition.<sup>[26]</sup> He was represented by Paul Kasmin Gallery in New York City and Galerie Gmurzynska in Europe.<sup>[27]</sup>

From July 4 – September 14, 2008, Indiana's work was the subject of the grand multiple-location exhibition "Robert Indiana a Milano" with the main exhibition having been at the Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea (Pavilion of Contemporary Art), in the city, with other works displayed in public piazzas.<sup>[28][29]</sup>

In 2013, the Whitney Museum of American Art mounted a retrospective of his work entitled "Robert Indiana: Beyond LOVE", this exhibition traveled to the McNay Art Museum in San Antonio, Texas.<sup>[30]</sup>

## Appearances of his work in popular culture

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Millions of television viewers saw an orange, brown, and white version of *Five*, one of Indiana's 1965 *Cardinal Numbers* series, featured in an episode of *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* during the 1971–1972 season, in which Rhoda Morgenstern redecorates Lou Grant's dated living room. Lou, evidently not a fan of pop art, complains to Mary, "I bet she went through four other paintings before choosing this one!"<sup>[31]</sup>

In 2014, ESPN released *MECCA: The floor that made Milwaukee famous*, a short film in its *30 for 30* series of sports documentaries that chronicled how Indiana's floor at the MECCA was saved from being sold for scrap.<sup>[13]</sup>

## Collections

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Indiana's career took off in the early 1960s after Alfred H. Barr, Jr., bought *The American Dream, 1* for the Museum of Modern Art.<sup>[10]</sup>

Today, Indiana's works are in the permanent collections of numerous museums, including Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Farnsworth Art Museum, Rockland, Maine; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands; McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, Texas; Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh; Allentown Art Museum of the Lehigh Valley, Allentown, Pennsylvania; Williams College Museum of Art or WCMA, in Williamstown, Massachusetts; Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington; Detroit Institute of Art, Michigan; Baltimore Museum of Art, Maryland; Brandeis Museum, Waltham, Massachusetts; Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo, New York; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, California; the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, D.C.; Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; the Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indiana; and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, California, among many others.<sup>[32]</sup>

## Art market

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In May 2011, a 12-foot *LOVE* sculpture – one in an edition of three identical pieces – sold for \$4.1 million.<sup>[7]</sup>

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# Further reading

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# External links

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- Robert Indiana ([https://www.moma.org/collection/artist.php?artist\\_id=2812](https://www.moma.org/collection/artist.php?artist_id=2812)) at the Museum of Modern Art
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- Robert Indiana Sculptures on Google Maps (<http://www.arti-fact.com/sculptor/map/30/Robert-Indiana>)
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- 'It wasn't all he needed, or all he did: Robert Indiana and "Beyond Love" at the Whitney' *New York Times*, 10/09/2013 ([https://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/27/arts/design/robert-indiana-and-beyond-love-at-the-whitney.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/27/arts/design/robert-indiana-and-beyond-love-at-the-whitney.html?_r=0))

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