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ROBERT INDIANA
Working With Composition

On the Cover

How did artist Robert Indiana's childhood shape his famous *LOVE* sculpture, seen on the cover? Find out on pages 4-5.

Cover: Robert Indiana (b. 1928), *American Love*. Photo: ©Christopher Furlong / Getty Images. © 2010 Morgan Art Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

The Power of Pop

In the 1960s, artists used popular culture to compose pictures of American life

▶ **"The spark of unlike images put together creates another idea."**
–James Rosenquist

James Rosenquist (b. 1933), *Presidential Election: Kennedy, 1960*. Musee National d'Art Moderne, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France/© DACS/The Bridgeman Art Library. Art© James Rosenquist/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY.

Does the giant sculpture on the cover look familiar? Artist Robert Indiana (pictured on the left) designed his first image featuring the word *LOVE* (seen on pages 8–9) in 1964. Since then, the image has appeared on everything from Converse sneakers to rings and postage stamps. Its popularity made the artist an instant success but caused many art critics to call him a sellout. One even suggested that Indiana's next piece should be based on the word *money*.

At the time, the art world separated "high art" from popular culture. But in the 1960s, Robert Indiana and a handful of pop artists broke down the barrier between the two worlds. These artists realized that they could paint a more honest picture of American life by using the pop images that people saw every time they turned on the television, flipped through a magazine, or drove to the nearest store.

Pop artist Andy Warhol used images from tabloids and movie posters to talk about America's celebrity culture. In his portrait of Marilyn Monroe (far right), Warhol used **hard-edged shapes** of **solid color** to simplify a photo of the actress into the features that made her famous. The result is a masklike portrait that works just like fame: It makes the actress more recognizable but keeps people from seeing her humanity.

Pop artist James Rosenquist, who began his career as a billboard painter, gave *Presidential Election: Kennedy* (above) the **horizontal composition** of a billboard and filled it with images taken from ads.

The goal of an ad is to communicate

▲ **Robert Indiana called himself "an American painter of signs."**

Andy Warhol *Eat* (1964) 16mm film, black and white, silent, 39 minutes at 16 frames per second. Collection of The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh. ©2010 The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA, a museum of Carnegie Institute. All rights reserved.

▶ **"There are more signs than trees in America. So I think of myself as a painter of the American landscape."**
–Robert Indiana

Robert Indiana, *USA 666*, 1964-1966. Oil on canvas, 102 x 102 in. Five panels, 36 x 36 in. each. Private Collection, Courtesy of Simon Salama-Caro. Photo: Morgan Art Foundation Limited/Art Resource, NY. © 2010 Morgan Art Foundation/ Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

a clear message about a product. But Rosenquist's painting is made up of **closely cropped fragmented images** that seem random and confusing.

The artist completed the piece in 1964, the year after President John F. Kennedy was killed by a sniper's bullet while waving to crowds from the backseat of the presidential limo. This tragic scene is suggested by the **juxtaposition** of Kennedy's face with the tail end of a car. The confusing composition echoes the confusion Americans must have felt when they learned that their president had been shot. The gray, unappetizing cake at the center of the painting suggests something that—like the Kennedy presidency—promised to be wonderful but turned out to be bitter.

Like billboards, signs cover the American landscape and are designed to send a message. Robert Indiana made *USA 666* (left) look like a sign by arranging **simple shapes** and easy-to-read text into a **balanced symmetrical composition**. The painting also seems to be trying to send a message, but

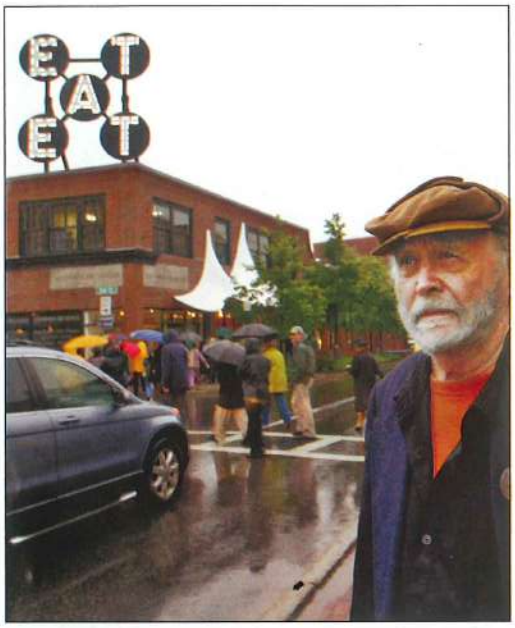
◀ **"My idea of a good picture is one that's in focus and of a famous person." -Andy Warhol**

Andy Warhol (1928-1987) © Copyright *Untitled* from the portfolio *MARILYN*, 1967. Serigraph, printed in color. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY. Gift of Mr. David Whitney. (70.1968.6) Digital Image: © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, NY. © Copyright The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc./ARS, NY.

what is it saying? The repeated pairing of USA with three-letter, **mirror-image** words feels obsessive. It's almost as though the artist is trying over and over again to figure out the relationship between these words and what life in America means to him. Maybe, like a real sign, Indiana's painting is telling viewers what they can expect to find as they travel through the country.

Sign Language

Artist Robert Indiana turned signs into stories about his life in America



◀ **A recent photo shows the artist standing in front of a sign he created 44 years earlier.**

Robert Indiana across the street from The Farnsworth Art Museum with his sign, Eat. Photo: ©AP Photo Images/Robert F. Bukaty. © 2010 Morgan Art Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

▼ **Indiana's *American Dream* (below) was inspired by the pinball machines and jukeboxes that used to be found at highway stops all over America.**

Robert Indiana, *The American Dream, I*. 1961. Oil on canvas, 6' x 60 1/8 in. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY. Larry Aldrich Foundation Fund. (287.1961). Digital Image © The Museum of Modern Art/Licensed by SCALA/Art Resource, NY. © 2010 Morgan Art Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Robert Indiana's memories are filled with signs. The artist—whose original name is Robert Clark—was born in 1928 in the town of Newcastle, Indiana. He grew up during the Great Depression, the period between 1929 and the early 1940s when the economy crashed and left one out of every four Americans unemployed. When Clark's father lost his job, his family was forced to move and keep moving. "Before I was 17 years old, I had lived in 21 different houses," the artist recalls. "It seemed that half my life was spent in an automobile."

Many of Indiana's paintings suggest signs seen from a car window. *USA 666* (page 2) refers to Route 66, the highway the artist's father followed when he abandoned his family. This painting also contains the word *eat*, the same word Indiana used to create the giant electric sign seen at the top of the page.

Made for the 1964 New York World's Fair, this sign had to be unplugged the day after it was turned on because it was confusing the tourists who kept wandering around it looking for a diner. In fact, the artist has said the word represents his mother, who had worked in roadside diners and whose last

◀ **"Birthdays, age, addresses, money—everywhere you turn numbers surround us." –Robert Indiana**

Robert Indiana, *Decade Autoportrait* 1962. 1977. Oil on canvas, 72 x 72 in. Private Collection, Courtesy of Simon Salama-Caro. Photo: MOrgan Art Foundation Limited/Art Resource, NY. © 2010 Morgan Art Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

word before she died was "eat."

Along with a reference to Route 66, Indiana's painting *American Dream* (opposite page, bottom) contains the numbers 37, 40, and 29—the numbers of the routes his father traveled in search of work. The painting's black and brown **background contrasts** with the small areas of **bright color** that leap out of the dark like neon lights. Tilted brown bands make the circles inside them look like coins rolling into a coin slot and create a sense of **motion**. The stars seem to be flashing and spinning. The words *tilt* and *take all* suggest pinball machines promising the classic American dream of winning big.

In 1954, Robert Clark moved to New York City to chase his own American dream of making it in the art world. He rented a studio near the shipping docks of Manhattan's East River. In the image above, **shapes within shapes** form a **radial composition**. In the center, a giant number 1 is drawn in a way that makes it look like a sailboat. Areas where shapes and numbers **overlap** vibrate with harsh **clashing color opposites** (red/green, blue/orange). Jumbled and **tilted** text circles the image and suggests the location of the artist's studio and the years he lived there.

By the time the artist created *LOVE*, his most famous image (pages 8–9), he had changed his name from Clark to Indiana. Like his new name, the colors the artist used in *LOVE* were inspired by his home state. The artist's most vivid memories involve looking up and seeing the red and green logo of Philips 66, the gas company his father worked for, framed by the deep blue of the clear Indiana sky.

Making History

Robert Indiana mixes politics and art

▶ **Robert Indiana working on a *LOVE* sculpture.**

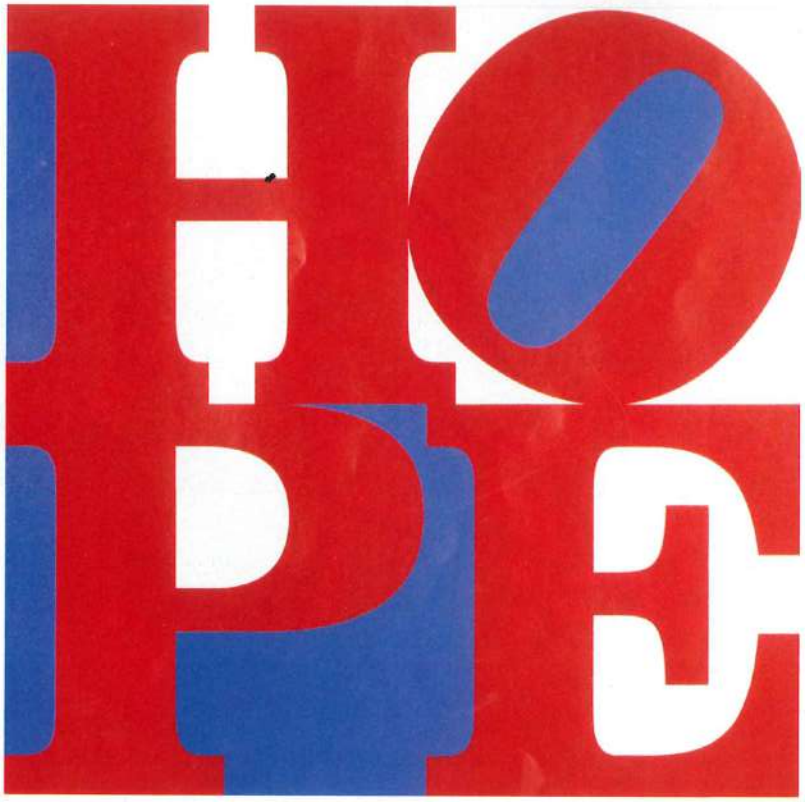
Robert Indiana, *Love*, Courtesy Paul Kasmin Gallery. © 2010 Morgan Art Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Many people who aren't usually interested in politics, were excited about the 2008 presidential election. America seemed to be at an important turning point, and three of the candidates, if elected, would make history: Hillary Clinton as the first female president, Sarah Palin as the first female vice president, or Barack Obama as the first African-American president.

The 2008 election inspired Robert Indiana to update his most famous work (seen on pages 8–9 and the cover). Just as *LOVE*, created in 1964, became a symbol of the peace movement during the Vietnam War (1963-1975), *HOPE* (right) became a symbol for the Obama campaign and was printed on campaign T-shirts, pins, and posters.

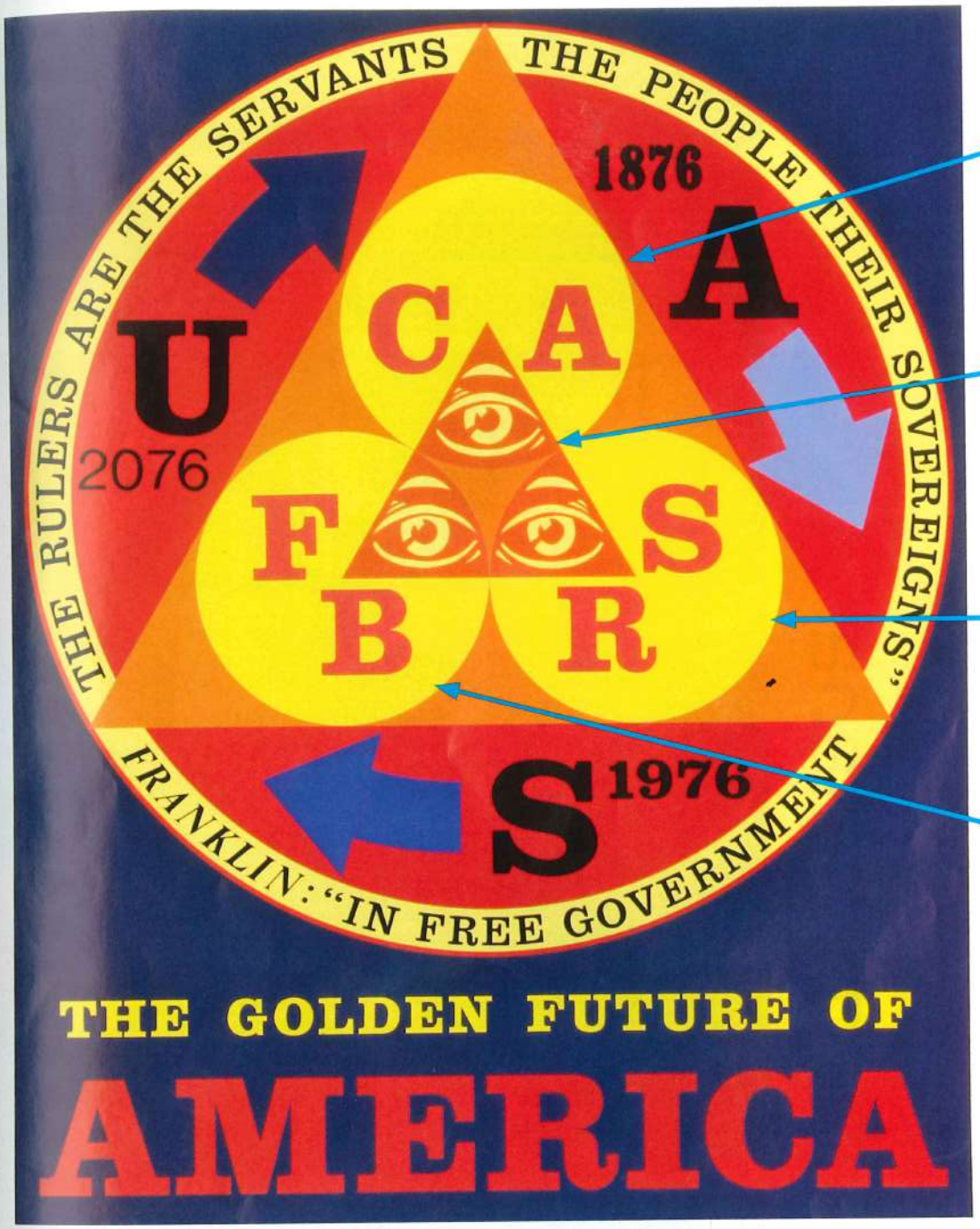
The **simplified** yet clever design of both images made them memorable and effective. By splitting the words into two lines, Indiana let viewers see them in a new way. He lined up the **edges** of some letters, grouping them into one big shape and turning the **negative spaces** between them into interesting smaller shapes. The thick **vertical** and **horizontal lines** that form these letters make them seem stable, reliable, and locked into place. In contrast, the tilted *O* seems to express the unpredictable side of love and hope by threatening to roll off its pedestal at any moment.

Both *LOVE* and *HOPE* contain only four letters, but Indiana's political print *The Golden Future of America* (opposite page) contains enough coded text and images to fill a book on American history. If the eyes and triangle at the center of the image look familiar, it's because a pyramid with a mysterious eye floating above it is part of the official seal of the United States and can be found on the back of every dollar bill. The eye on the dollar bill represents the eye of God watching over America. If you change each eye into the letter *I* and combine it with the two letters on either side of it, you get CIA, IRS, and FBI, three government agencies that also watch over the nation.



▲ **During the 2008 presidential election, Robert Indiana's design appeared on posters, T-shirts, and buttons.**

Robert Indiana, *HOPE, 2008*. Screenprint on canvas, 36 x 36 in. Signed and date on verso: R Indiana R/W/B 2008 Courtesy of Woodward Gallery, NYC. © 2010 Morgan Art Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.



▲ Above (from top to bottom) are the official seals of the CIA, USA, IRS, and FBI.

Part of the United States seal inspired the central image in *The Golden Future of America* (left). How do the other seals relate to this print? Here's a clue: Try replacing the eyes in the image with the letter *I*.

Robert Indiana, *The Golden Future of America*. Silkscreen, 26 x 20 in. Courtesy of Rogallery.com. © 2010 Morgan Art Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

U.S. government seals: Newscom
Pyramid from U.S. dollar bill.

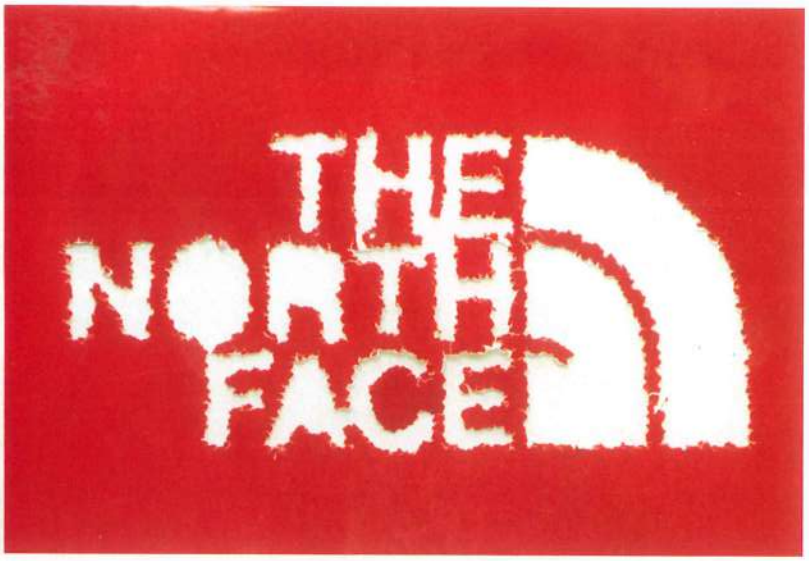
Indiana used color and shape to link the yellow circles containing the names of government agencies to the yellow **circular band** that contains Benjamin Franklin's description of an ideal government. This visual connection contrasts the great American political leader's belief that a government's purpose is to serve its people with the scary vision of a government watching its citizens.

America was born in 1776, when Franklin and other political leaders signed the Declaration of Independence. The dates in *The Golden Future of America* mark the first 100, 200, and 300 years of the country's history.

As viewers consider how America has changed since Franklin's time, they might notice that, unlike the other dates in the image, 2076 is written in a futuristic **sans serif font** (a font without any extra details at the end of each line). This simple design choice might inspire viewers to consider how different the country could be 100 years in the future.

Reading Art

Three artists find three different ways to communicate with text



Kevin Ford

Brand names tell stories. For contemporary artist Kevin Ford, Polo suggests a country club in Greenwich, Connecticut, the wealthy town near his more middle-class hometown of Norwalk. Patagonia and The North Face suggest a vacation home in Vermont and an expensive SUV with skis strapped to the roof.

The artist began working with these brands because they were powerful symbols of growing up torn between wanting to fit in with his wealthier classmates and wanting to be himself. He made the image above by placing a stencil of The North Face logo in front of a sheet of paper and shooting it through with a BB gun. This playful process also has a serious symbolic meaning. As a kid, the artist used to shoot at targets in his backyard. Looking back on his life, he realized that he also treated labels like targets: something he was both aiming for and shooting at.

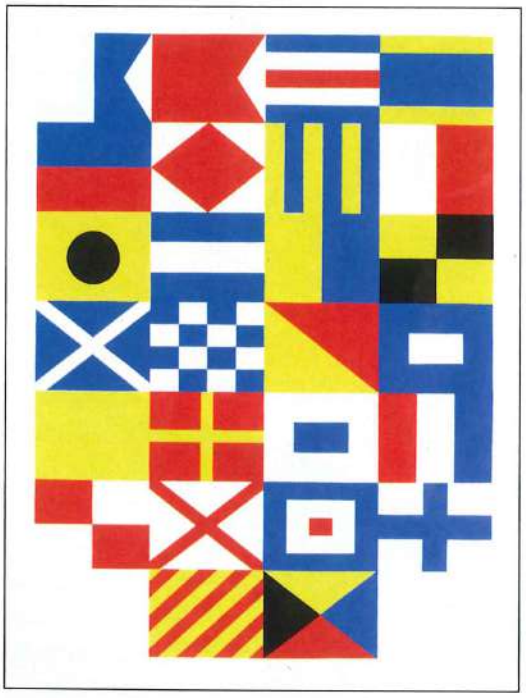
▲ Kevin Ford wearing a Patagonia fleece.

Tauba Auerbach

You might not see it, but contemporary artist Tauba Auerbach's (TAW-ba OUR-bak) *Maritime A-Z* (right) is sending you signals: *Man overboard. I need your help!*

The image is able to say this and more because it's made out of maritime flags—flags ships use to send coded messages that people aboard other ships can read from a distance. Each flag represents both a single letter of the alphabet and a more complete message, like the one mentioned above.

In *Maritime A-Z*, Auerbach used the **variety** of flag shapes to move viewers' eyes around the **composition**, and the **repetition** of colors to create **visual rhythm**. The result is an image that reads both as abstract art and as a tale of adventures at sea.



▲ Tauba Auerbach.

Kevin Ford: *The North Face* (red paper). Courtesy of the Artist. Kevin Ford portrait, courtesy of the Artist.

Tauba Auerbach: *Maritime A-Z*, 2006. Gouache on paper, 42 ⅛ x 32 in. Courtesy of Deitch Projects and the Artist. Tauba Auerbach portrait, courtesy of Deitch Projects and the Artist.

Joshua Abelow: *Forgive*, 2007. Oil on canvas, 30 x 40 in. Courtesy of the Artist. Joshua Abelow portrait, Jason Frank Rothenberg.

▲ Joshua Abelow with one of his paintings.

"The images and words I work with always have more than one meaning."
–Joshua Abelow

Joshua Abelow

Who is the bearded figure above? Ask contemporary artist Joshua Abelow this question, and he'll give you many different answers. Abelow first sketched the figure while watching a film about a family dealing with a difficult divorce. He modeled his drawing on the actor playing the father. Later, he realized that the figure might also represent a member of his own family, an uncle who suddenly abandoned his city life and moved to a wild patch of land miles away from the nearest house.

Like the artist's uncle, the figure is both a wise man and a wild man. He might be a saint from the Bible, or he might be a hunter in the woods. The artist **simplified** the figure so viewers could read their own meaning into it.

As Abelow thought about family and family conflict, he also thought about the word *forgive*. There are many different ways to forgive, and the artist wanted to create an image that helped viewers take a closer look at the word and really consider its meaning.

To do this, he presented the word in an unusual way: instead of writing it on one line, he wrapped it around a colorful wheel that looks like something out of a TV game show. He arranged the word so that its two parts–*for* and *give*–have to be read in opposite directions. To force viewers to read the letters one at a time, he gave each letter equal value by using only capital letters.

This strange format makes the painting feel like a game that viewers can play by combining letters in different ways to make new words. Reading down from *G* you get the word *giver*. Reading down from *F* to *V* and back up to *R*, you get the word *forever*.

The artist painted the figure in **earth tones** (dull, brownish colors) that make it blend in with the background color. He painted the wheel in **bright colors** that draw the viewer's gaze. This **asymmetrical composition** gives viewers the feeling that they are standing next to the figure, trying, like him, to unlock the mysteries of this simple word.

How many words and meanings can you find in the word *forgive*?

American Dream

Scholastic Art Awards winner Tatsuro Nakajima expresses his feelings about his adopted country

↑ Tatsuro Nakajima.

To make the image seen on the right, 16-year-old Tatsuro Nakajima painstakingly cut out and pasted nearly 1,000 tiny flags. This would be a tough job for anyone, but Tatsuro tackled the challenge despite having limited use of his hands. Tatsuro suffers from muscular dystrophy, a disease that has gradually weakened his muscles and made performing simple tasks feel difficult.

At one point, Tatsuro nearly gave up on the piece. "I was exhausted and wanted to quit," he explains. But when he won a gold medal in the 2008 Scholastic Art Awards, Tatsuro was glad that he'd kept going. "When I heard I won, I didn't show my excitement," he says. "But inside I was thrilled. Winning a gold award is one of the greatest honors of my life."

How did you first get involved in art?
In fifth grade, our class had to make a collage out of cut paper. I liked the way it looked, and it became my favorite art form.

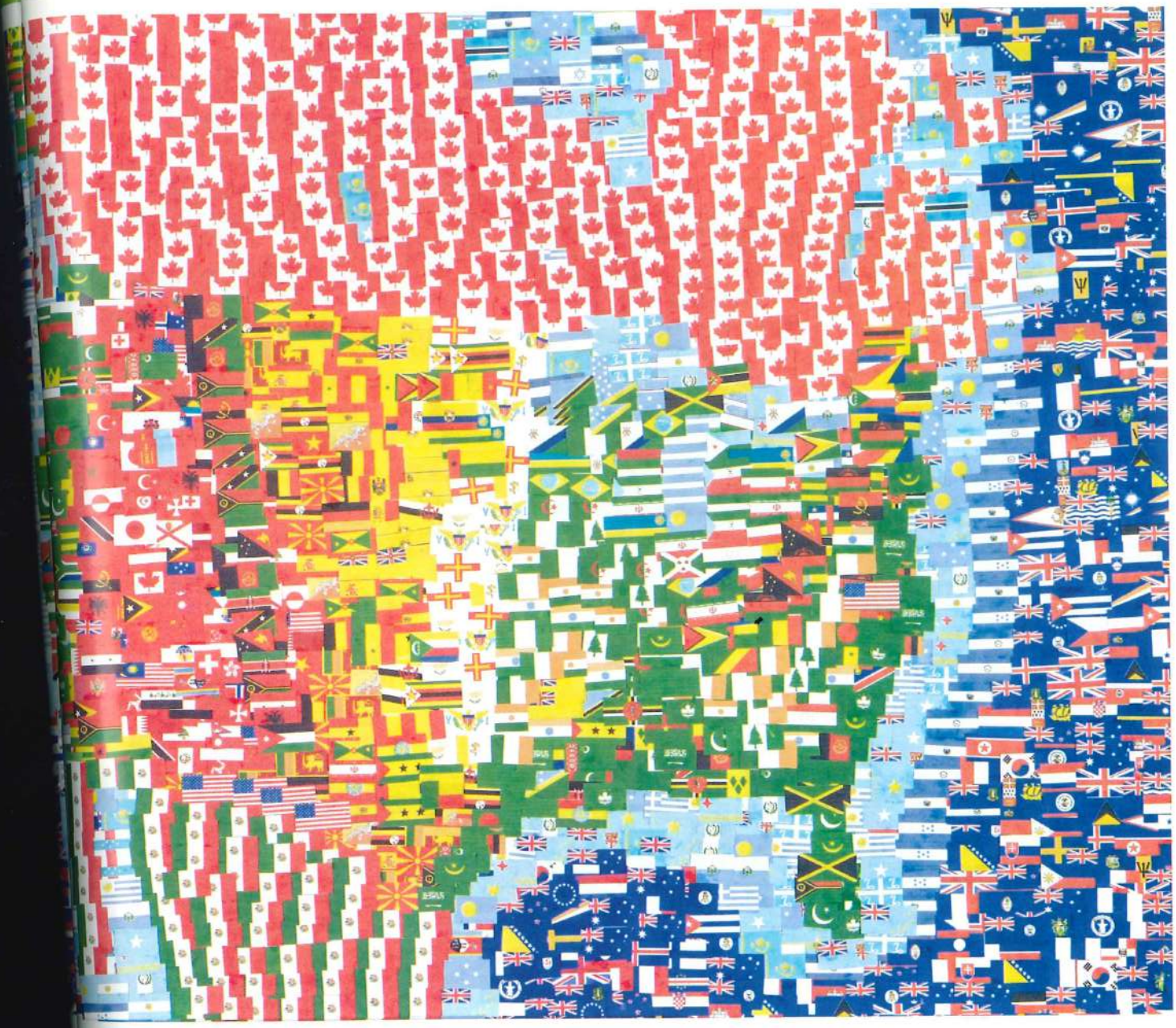
What inspired your award-winning piece? When I was 7, my family left Japan and moved to Washington State for medical reasons. We arrived searching for a better life, and people here really made us feel welcome. I started thinking about that experience and decided to use flags from every country to make a map of the United States. I wanted to show through my art that America is a nation where everyone is treated equally, no matter where they're from.

Which flags did you use?
I tried to use the flags of every country in the world. A few might be missing, but I'd say there are more than 100 countries represented.

How did you create your piece? First, I did some research on the Internet and found a Web site that showed the flags of every country. I printed out a few test flags to see how they would look. Once I decided I liked what I saw, I printed out many flags, cut them out, and sorted them into piles based on their color.

What did you do next? I sketched the outline of the United States, Canada, and Mexico on a piece of white poster board. I wanted to focus on the United States, so I drew it in the center of the composition.

"I wanted to show through my art that America is a nation where everyone is treated equally, no matter where they're from."
–Tatsuro Nakajima



After that, I started pasting flags until I filled up the entire image.

How did you decide where to place the flags? I covered Mexico with Mexican flags and Canada with Canadian flags. By doing that, I set the U.S. with its mix of flags apart from its neighbors. Inside the U.S., I used the color coding found on an elevation map. For example, the red flags show the Rocky Mountains, the highest points in the country. I used light-blue flags to show the Great Lakes and the shallower waters around the coast, and flags of deeper blue to show deeper ocean waters.

Were you satisfied when you were done? Definitely. A lot of the other images I've made were school assignments where I had to follow directions. I felt this was my own piece or art, a true reflection of who I am as a person. I didn't make it for art class. I made it for myself.

Do you have any advice for aspiring artists like yourself? Never give up. It takes a lot of work and patience to turn an idea into reality. The most important thing, disability or not, is to stay positive and be persistent. If you have the right attitude, you'll find a way.

↑ *Equality*, Tatsuro's award-winning piece.

Tatsuro is not the only *Scholastic Art Awards* winner featured in this issue. Andy Warhol (pages 2-3), Robert Indiana (pages 2-9), and Michael Beirut (page 16) are all past winners. To find out more about this program, ask your teacher to call 212-343-6892, or go to **www.scholastic.com/artandwriting**.

Create an Expressive Composition

Design a composition that uses text to tell a personal story

↑ These students are using colored pencils to experiment with different color combinations.

MATERIALS

- 12"-x-18" 80 lb construction paper in various colors
- Graph paper
- No. 2 pencils
- Pencil sharpeners
- Variety of stencil letters and symbols
- Color pencils or crayons
- Access to Internet
- Access to photocopy machine (to enlarge or reduce images)
- Photocopies of commercial style stencil letters
- Drafting tools (protractor, ruler, compass, shape template, T-square, French curve, etc.)
- X-Acto knives and scissors
- Elmer's Glue-All

You've seen how Robert Indiana created simple images full of deep personal meaning. For this workshop, you'll use words, numbers, and symbols to create a composition that expresses something about your life.

STEP 1 Develop the Composition

Make a list of letters, numbers, or simple words that express something about your life. Options include birth dates, initials, names, descriptive words, and multiple-meaning words. Use a pencil and graph paper to draw at least four different compositions that combine your numbers, words, or letters with simple shapes or images. You can use stencils or drawing tools to draw text and shapes. Think about which fonts best express your words. Consider enlarging, reducing, repeating, flipping, or overlapping letters, words, and shapes.

Make some reduced photocopies of your favorite composition. Experiment with different color combinations by coloring the photocopies with colored pencils.

TIP: Simple compositions with only a few bold colors work best.

STEP 2 Transfer the Composition

Make an enlarged photocopy of your composition. Select pieces of construction paper that match your chosen colors. Use a pencil to cover the back of the photocopy with graphite. Transfer elements of your composition by placing the photocopy over a piece of construction paper of the appropriate color and tracing over the element you wish to transfer. Use sharp scissors or an X-Acto knife to carefully cut out the transferred elements. **TIP: Be precise while transferring and cutting. Using a ruler or other drafting tool might help with accuracy.**

STEP 3 Complete the Composition

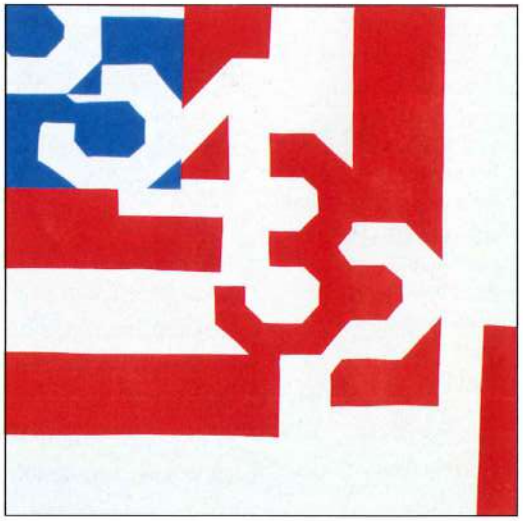
Choose a sheet of construction paper to use as a background. Repeat

→ **Madison's Composition**
Madison used the letter *M*, the first letter of her name, and the number 3, the first number of her birth date. She played with **scale** and **repetition** by painting the 3 in different sizes, and used **simple shapes** and **contrasting colors** to focus viewers' attention on the left side of her **asymmetrical composition.**

↓ **Molly's Composition**
Molly wanted to use the word *feel* because she found it meaningful. From there, she brainstormed three related words: *fire*, *pain*, and *light*. She rearranged each word by fitting letters together like puzzle pieces, and used these different arrangements to add **variety** to her **symmetrical composition.** She used **contrasting colors** to make her shapes and letters stand out.

the process from Step 2 to transfer your entire composition onto the background sheet. Carefully glue the cut-out elements of your composition into place. Figure out the order in which you need to glue down overlapping elements. When you're done and the glue has dried, carefully erase any visible pencil lines. Consider cropping your image. **TIP: When gluing down elements, use tiny drops of glue around their outer edges.**

→ **Hannah's Composition**
Hannah arranged the numbers 6-1 diagonally over alternating red and white stripes, creating interesting **overlaps** between the stripes and numbers. As the numbers decrease, they seem to disappear into the **background.** Hannah used this disappearing effect and a red, white, and blue **color scheme** to suggest that something is being lost in America.

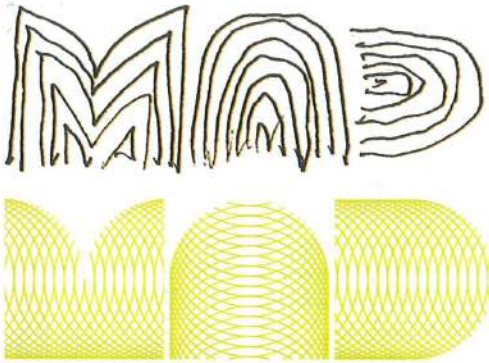


Photographed by Larry Gregory, Associate Professor, School of Art, Northern Illinois University, and Wade Duerkes, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL.

Graphic Designer

Michael Beirut's award-winning designs have been shown in museums. Find out how he got started and how you can too!

↓ Michael's designs for New York's Museum of Art and Design, from sketch to finished product.



All photos and artwork on this page courtesy of Michael Beirut.

CAREER PROFILE: GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Salary: First-year graphic designers make an average of $35,000 a year in large cities and $25,000 in smaller cities and towns.

Education: Most graphic designers get a bachelor's degree in fine arts or graphic design.

Getting Started Now:

- Train yourself to think about typography. "Whenever you write something on a computer, study what the different effects are when you try different fonts," Michael advises.
- Build a portfolio by designing flyers for school plays or local bands. "All you really need to start designing is a friend who's doing some gig around the corner," Michael says.
- Do well in school. You'll need good grades, as well as a good portfolio, to get into a top design college.

ART MAGAZINE: What do you do?
MICHAEL BEIRUT: I'm the part owner of an international design company called Pentagram, where I do graphic design.

AM: How would you describe your job?
MB: A graphic designer takes words and pictures and makes decisions about how to combine them to communicate a message to an audience.

AM: When did you know this was the right career for you?
MB: In junior high school, I designed a poster for a play. The drama club made copies of it over the weekend. When I came back into school on Monday morning, my poster was on every wall in every hallway. It was so exciting! Back then, I barely knew what graphic design was, but I knew I wanted to do more things like this.

AM: Is there a difference between graphic design and fine art?
MB: Graphic design is a mix of business and art. The business side is helping clients achieve a goal. The art side comes when you have to decide what color something is going to be or pick a typeface. The visual choices designers make come from inspiration, just like they do in fine art. Robert Indiana is both a fine artist and one of the great graphic designers.

AM: What skills do you need to succeed as a graphic designer?
MB: You need to know the tools of your craft. That includes developing your drawing skills and learning computer programs like InDesign, Photoshop, and Illustrator. It also helps to stay informed. The best designers I know bring their interest in music, art, politics, or history into their designs.

AM: What is the best part of your job?
MB: It's really exciting when I see people out in the world interacting with something I designed. All of a sudden, I've had an influence on someone I've never met. Some designers can count those people in the millions!

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