

Oct. 24, 1975

ROBERT, NOT THE STATE

'Indiana? How Do You Spell It?'

By SUSAN MCKEE

"I paint many other things besides 'Love,'" insisted Robert Indiana. He then proceeded to show the Alliance of the Indianapolis Museum of Art what he meant during its meeting yesterday in the Showalter Pavilion of the IMA.

While two projectors kept hiccupping his slides out of synchronization, Robert Indiana gave a short autobiography illustrated by the work reflecting each period in his life.

THE ARTIST, who was born Robert Clark in 1928 at New Castle, told the 500-plus audience of one of his first boosters, Ruth Coffman, his first-grade teacher at Mooresville. She asked to keep a couple of his drawings for when he became famous.

"A couple of years ago I tracked her down and had coffee with her. She showed me the drawings she'd kept," he reported.

He also credits Sarah Bard, his art instructor at Arsenal Technical High School, with steering him toward his eventual career—although journalism almost claimed him. From 1943 until his graduation from Tech in 1946, Robert Indiana worked nights for The Indianapolis Star, starting as a copy boy and ending up as night dispatcher.

"MY PARENTS thought my being an artist was OK until they found out I was serious. They told me I'd end up living in an attic eating bean soup, and of course that's exactly what happened."

The attic was the top floor of an old ship's chandlery overlooking the

East River two blocks off Wall Street on Manhattan.

"I started painting natural forms," he said, "not the words and bright colors for which I've become known."

HE EXPLAINED that his "Love" series has a spiritual — rather than erotic — meaning. "It all started with the motto found in every Christian Science church, 'God is Love.'"

"My first 'Love' was done for a man whose private museum is in a former Christian Science church, and my early upbringing was in that religion.

"The series is really an homage to my father. He used to work for Phillips 66, back when that firm's signs were red and green seen up against a blue sky." He used those three colors in most of the "Love" paintings.

AFTER HIS TALK, Robert Indiana took questions from the audience. In response to a query about re-issuing his popular "Love" stamp, he asked the audience to inundate the postmaster general with requests. "I'd love to do a 13-cent version! Until then you can buy one of the new 70-cent special delivery stamps. I redesigned them for the rate increase."

Another woman wondered about his name change. "It was a pretty wild step," he admitted, and told of one encounter with a hotel desk clerk in Indianapolis. "Robert Indiana. How

do you spell that?" she said, and with a perfectly straight face!"

THE ARTIST was the guest of honor at a luncheon in the Garden Pavilion Restaurant following his talk. Over beef stroganoff and rose wine he chatted with Alliance officers and thanked them for their gift of three handcrafted ceramic baking dishes from the Alliance Gift Shop in the IMA.

The Girls

By Franklin Folger



Mrs. Gray hosts Bay View club

Bay View club met January 11 at the home of Mrs. Kenneth Gray with 21 members and two guests present. The program was given by

the hostess about her collection of carnival glass.

Next meeting will be January 25 at the home of Mrs. R. W. VanBokkelen.

Indiana, Robert
Times JANUARY 18, 1973

BECKY'S BIT . . .



ROBERT INDIANA "LOVE"

Several weeks ago the U.S. Postal Service announced there would be a "Special Stamp for Someone Special." Based upon the theme of "Love" the red, blue and green 8¢ commemorative will be issued January 26 in Philadelphia, the "City of Brotherly Love." There will be a nationwide distribution in time for the stamps to appear on Valentine cards. It is designed to be used on other special occasions such as birthdays, anniversaries, and weddings.

The designer Robert Indiana is a famous modern "pop art" painter and sculpturist who is well known for his other works around the theme of Love. His largest Love sculpture, done in Cor-ten steel standing twelve feet high was exhibited in New York City in Central Park in 1971, and was on the plaza of Indiana National Bank in Indianapolis several months. It is now at John Herron.

Robert Indiana attended his first year of school in Mooresville in the wing of the building which was in front of the Academy Building and was destroyed in 1936.

His teacher was Miss Ruth Coffman (Mrs. Maurice Haase). She said that his pictures were unusual and she told him to save them in a folder, and he did.

She says that even at that age his drawings were in perfect perspective, and they told a perspective, and they told a story. The little figures were little minatures. She recalls one of skaters and another with women with parasols. There was a rhythm in the figures, and he used pastels.

His name was Robert Clark and he chose the name Indiana because he was from Indiana, for his artist-name. Mrs. Haase said he visited here a few years

ago and reminded her of things that had happened when he was in school. He said that she was the only teacher that paid much attention to him until he was a junior or senior in high school.

It was her first year to teach in Mooresville and when she returned after the 1936 summer vacation he had moved away. She receives cards from him from time to time. The last one said he was having a vacation in the Virgin Islands, after a strenuous exhibit.

First day cancellation requests may be made to "Special Stamp for Someone Special" Postmaster, Philadelphia, PA 19104, enclosing the proper remittance. Requests postmarked through January 31 will be accepted for first day cancellation.

VACATION HOLIDAY

Irene (Mrs. Harold) Moore and son Richard had a vacation in Florida while Richard was home from college. They visited her grandparents Mr. and Mrs. Frank Wilham who lives at 1509 Lake Shore Blvd., St. Cloud, Florida.

The Wilhams lived west of Mooresville on Road 39 for several years and would be glad to hear from friends in Morgan County. They have been in poor health.

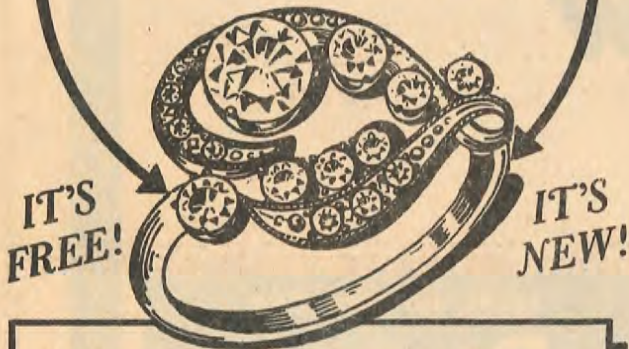
Irene and Richard left the second day after Christmas and returned the 7th. They stopped in Macon, Georgia just before the ice storm.

January 4 issue of the Times had pictures of a flood. Myrtle Keller says it was in 1913 instead of 1914. She remembers very well because she had stayed all night in town and couldn't get home for several days.

Referring to a picture of an old store, another reader said that the store where Mr. Pleas Mills worked was the Holeman Johnson Drygoods store which was located where Mooresville Furniture Store is now. Frank

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Robert Indiana is Research subject

James 4-19-77

Mooresville Research club met on Monday at the home of Mrs Robert Plummer. Her assistant hostesses were Mrs Forrest Caldwell and Mrs Maurice Haase. Eighteen members and one guest, Anna Jane Stiles, were present.

Mrs Maurice Haase gave the program on Robert Indiana, Hoosier artist, sculptor, designer, printer and poet.

Mrs Haase told of Indiana's background, education and accomplishments. The story was made more interesting by the fact that he was a first grade pupil of Ruth Coffman in 1935-36 in the Mooresville school. She recognized his art ability at that early age and kept two of his drawings he brought to her. She encouraged him and after he left her classroom she kept in touch with him. She changed her name to Haase for romantic reasons and he changed his name from Robert Clark to Robert Indiana for professional reasons. Indiana's grandparents lived in Mooresville. He changed schools many times due to the wanderlust of his father. He did attend and graduate from Tech

high school in Indianapolis. While a student there he sold his first painting for \$10. It was a picture of the old granary in Mooresville.

Research club members saw pictures of his four-floor studio and home in New York where in 1976 he gave a reception for his friends in honor of Mr and Mrs Haase.

The museum of art in Indianapolis purchased his famous "love" sculpture where it is now displayed. He designed the playing floor of the basketball court for the Milwaukee professional basketball team. The group saw pictures of his "love" sculpture design done in color.

Many of Indiana's works of art involve the use of numbers and words. To properly appreciate them it is necessary to understand their background.

Foreign countries have asked him to use their word for "love" to make a sculpture. One of his recent works is a sculpture using the Hebrew word for "love" which is to be given a permanent home in Jerusalem.



To CAS City of
Mooresville

Indiana

Robert Indiana, American, b. 1928. **Love**, 1966, oil on canvas.

James E. Roberts Fund, 67.08.

Indianapolis Museum of Art

Mooresville Public Library

October 25, 1999

Mr. Robert Indiana
Vinalhaven Island
Vinalhaven, Maine 04863

Dear Robert Indiana:

Please forgive the intrusion of a shameless old lady who has lived in Mooresville all of her 78 years, worked at the local library 33 years and now comes to ask a favor.

My present duty is to collect and preserve as much as possible of the artistic heritage we have had a share of or been blessed with.

Most of the town knew and loved Ruth Coffman Haase and the library is most grateful and proud to have inherited your valuable poster from her just before her death.

It would be the very greatest of favors if you would consider depositing with the Mooresville Public Library any small, large or insignificant possession from your fabulous career--especially from the tender formative years in grade school at Mooresville, Indiana.

Let this offset our reputation as the home of the infamous outlaw and perhaps inspire other young people to succeed.

In any case, I hope you will not be offended that I have chosen you to be the subject of my weekly article "Mooresville Moments" in the local newspaper.

LOVE,

Wanda Potts
Local History & genealogy.

enc.