

# I N T R O D U C T I O N

Each soldier has a different war.

—Tim O'Brien, *Going after Cacciato*.

It wasn't even a war. A plain stone memorial in Stamford, Connecticut, lists the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, the War of 1870, and so forth. Then come "The Korean Conflict" and "The Vietnam Era." No such euphemisms are possible today. More than 58,000 Americans, 2,000,000 Vietnamese, 200,000 Cambodians, and 100,000 Laotians were killed. Whatever the history books call it, we know it was a war.

But it was indeed a different war. Politically, militarily, and in its outcome. Vietnam did not resemble what we learned in high school about America's other wars. In Vietnam the U.S. triumphed over no evil empires, and the Southeast Asian adventure might have been virtually ignored as yet another in a long series of imperial incursions against indigenous peoples and Third-World countries. With the government and the military both busily manufacturing disinformation, the truth about Vietnam might never have emerged were it not for a grassroots antiwar movement—"the war at home," which led GIs and vets to speak out as well.

This too made it a different war. Back here, in what the GIs called "The World," even the enemies were different. There were two wars at home: one between the hawks and doves within the establishment, and one between the counter-culture and the centers of power. All of these differences affected the art made about the war. When we think about Vietnam and art, we think first of protest art. It was the first war during which there was more art opposing the government than supporting it. Within the isolated art world itself, there were other divisions: between

those artists who felt art should remain untouched by social issues, and those who felt artists should enter the fray. The latter split—again—between those who felt artists should protest in or outside of their artwork.

And this was the first war we were force-fed through The Tube, which had, then as now, its own version of the truth. The staging of the war in our living rooms did not guarantee any less bias or more realism than any other selected (i.e., censored) versions. If anything, television may have made the Vietnam War still less real than other wars, seen as it was, full-color but small-scale, wedged between the dominant culture's other fictions, competing with war movies and sitcoms and the government's ideological offerings. Artists were particularly susceptible to the visual power of war images on TV. Yet only the best-informed were able to sift out the real news between the dots and lines.

It was a different war "in country," for Americans in Vietnam—different in the cities, in the villages, in the field, and at the rear; different in a helicopter, in an F-4, and in a B-52; different in the Delta, in the Highlands, in the DMZ, in Laos and Cambodia; different on the rivers, in the mud, in the hospitals. Some soldiers never even saw Saigon. Outside of photojournalists and a few hired "war artists" who dutifully illustrated patriotic clichés—the few elements this war did have in common with others—images were being stored away in the heads and hands of survivors, to burst forth a decade later. Few combatants, even those already trained or considering careers as artists, made art on site. Of those who did,

many preferred to sketch the landscape and its people, reaching for those few beauties to be found in the midst of such ugliness.

It was a different war for women—the several thousand American women in Vietnam, the millions at home, and the millions of Vietnamese women. For those in Vietnam, it was a question of survival; for those at home in the U.S., it was a choice between conditioned passivity ("it's men's business") and activism—an activism that eventually extended beyond peace to our own liberation movement.

It was a different war for people of color, who were drafted (and enlisted) in disproportionate numbers, as their white middle- and upper-class counterparts got college or medical deferments, or left the country in protest. Minorities bore the brunt of combat—serving in lower ranks, mainly in the infantry, suffering race and class oppression as well as the terrors of battle. Many came to identify more with the Vietnamese "enemy" than with the culture they were sent to protect.

It was a different war for those who refused to go, for the conscientious objectors, for those who fled to Canada or went underground as fugitives, for those who went to jail, and for the courageous few who resisted within the military and found themselves suspect on all sides.

It is—present tense intentional—a different war in its physical and emotional aftermath here and in Vietnam. For the Vietnamese still dying from exposure to toxic chemicals and unexploded ordnance left behind. For the Vietnamese and Americans still dying from Agent Orange absorbed

two decades ago. For refugees. For those boat people who survived, and for those who did not. And for those who relocated and are still struggling to adjust to foreign cultures.

It was a different war for the invading Westerners and for the Vietnamese defending their country. In Vietnam the war even has a different name: "The American War of Aggression."

Finally, it is a different war today than it was twenty years ago, for those who cannot forget it, whether they were in Vietnam or not; for those who cannot remember it because they were too young; and for those of all ages who look at Vietnam through the lens of current events in Central America, who remember that it was the U.S. Marines landing in the Dominican Republic in 1965, less than a year after the government-orchestrated Tonkin Gulf incident, that forced the Vietnam intervention into public consciousness.

# IN RETROSPECT

Out in the street [back in the U.S.] I couldn't tell the Vietnam veterans from the rock and roll veterans. The Sixties had made so many casualties, its war and its music had run power off the same circuit for so long they didn't even have to fuse. The war primed you for lame years while rock and roll turned more lurid and dangerous than bullfighting, rock stars started falling like second lieutenants; ecstasy and death (and of course and for sure) life, but it didn't seem so then. What I'd thought of as two obsessions were really only one . . . Freezing and burning and going down again into the sucking mud of the culture, hold on tight and move real slow . . . Vietnam Vietnam Vietnam, we've all been there.—Michael Herr.<sup>2</sup>

In the arts Vietnam has been a time bomb. Recent art about the war is as powerful, though different, as that made during the war, reflecting not only the psychic and political complexity of the experience but its incorporation into everything that has happened since. In an ahistorical nation, we can not only thank the memory of Vietnam for preventing a full-scale invasion of Central America but we can thank Central America for not letting us forget Vietnam. If Vietnam is more welcome as fiction (through movies, novels, TV miniseries) than as fact, and if the Iran-Contra scandal was so incredible that it sounded like fiction, at least the confusion of fact and fiction is coming partly unveiled.

It was about nine years after the 1973 ceasefire, and six after the “Day of Shame” when Saigon fell, that art about Vietnam—by both vets and non-vets—began to attract attention, breaking a period of almost total silence on the subject. The election of Ronald Reagan, who had been the hawkish governor of California during the war, and his aggressive policies in Central America served to wake up a number of slumbering '60s activists, mobilized in turn by those who had not slept. In the veterans' community, shame had given way to rage as their conditions worsened

and remained unrecognized. The belated array of ticker-tape parades did little to allay their sense of anger and betrayal.

In May of 1981 Maya Lin's design was chosen for the Vietnam Memorial in Washington (fig. 61). When completed in 1982, this simple, low-profile, V-shaped wall of polished black granite, backed by the earth itself, listed the 58,135 U.S. casualties in chronological order of their deaths. Lin—who was chosen anonymously and turned out to be a young Asian-American woman, still a graduate student at Yale—said she “wanted to return the vets to the time-frame of the war, and in the process, I wanted them to see their own reflections in the names.”<sup>3</sup>

The controversy surrounding this impressive, eminently accessible, and modernist work has been recounted in detail by Elizabeth Hess.<sup>4</sup> Lin's monument was initially praised as apolitical but soon came to be viewed by many as subversive. Tom Wolfe called it a “ditch of shame,” “non-bourgeois art.” Phyllis Schlafly called it “a tribute to Jane Fonda.” Other epithets included “tombstone,” “a wailing wall for anti-draft demonstrators,” “a black gash of shame,” and “a black spot in American history.” The “gash” had unmistakable, even mythical, sexual connotations,

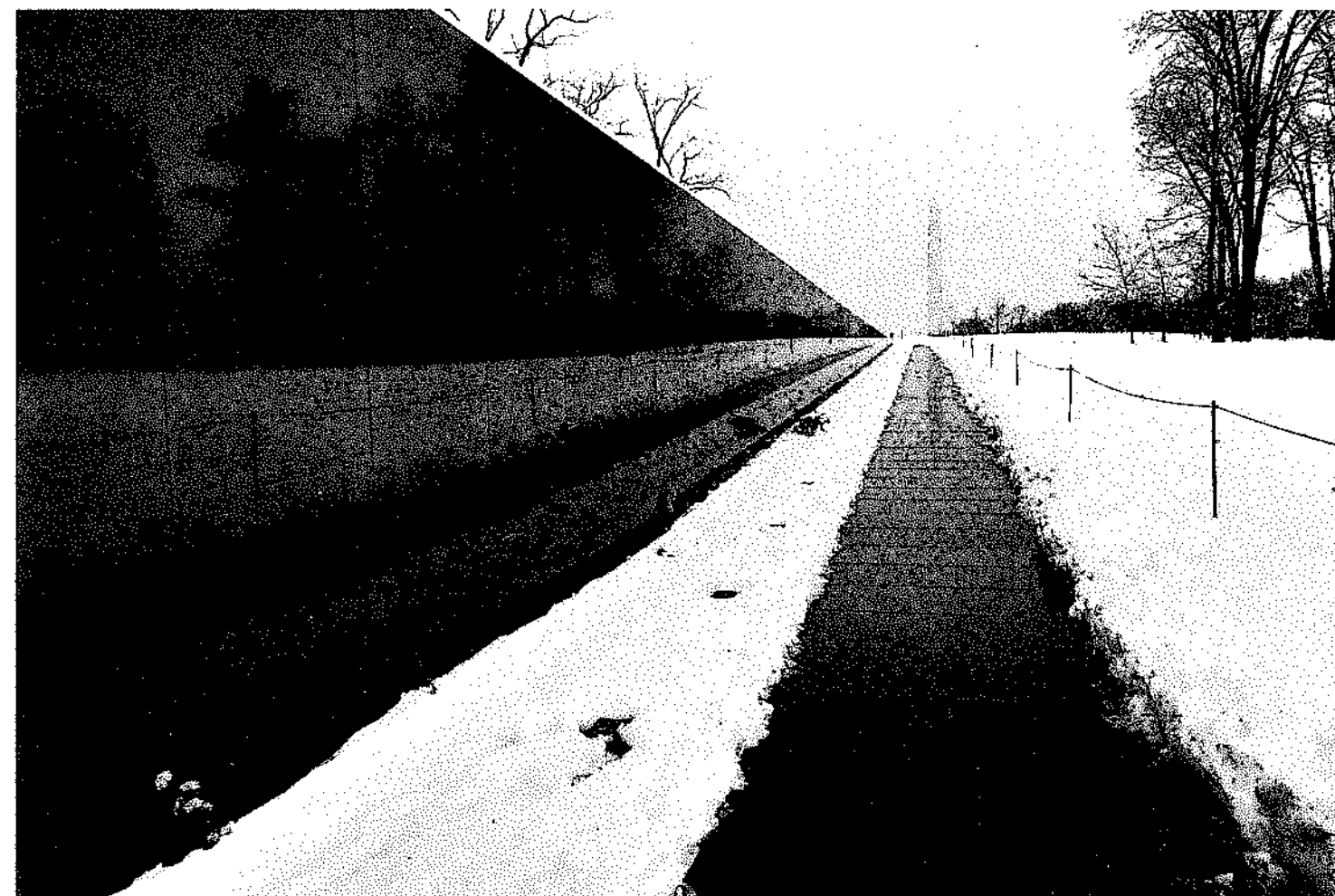


Fig. 61. Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington, D.C., 1982.

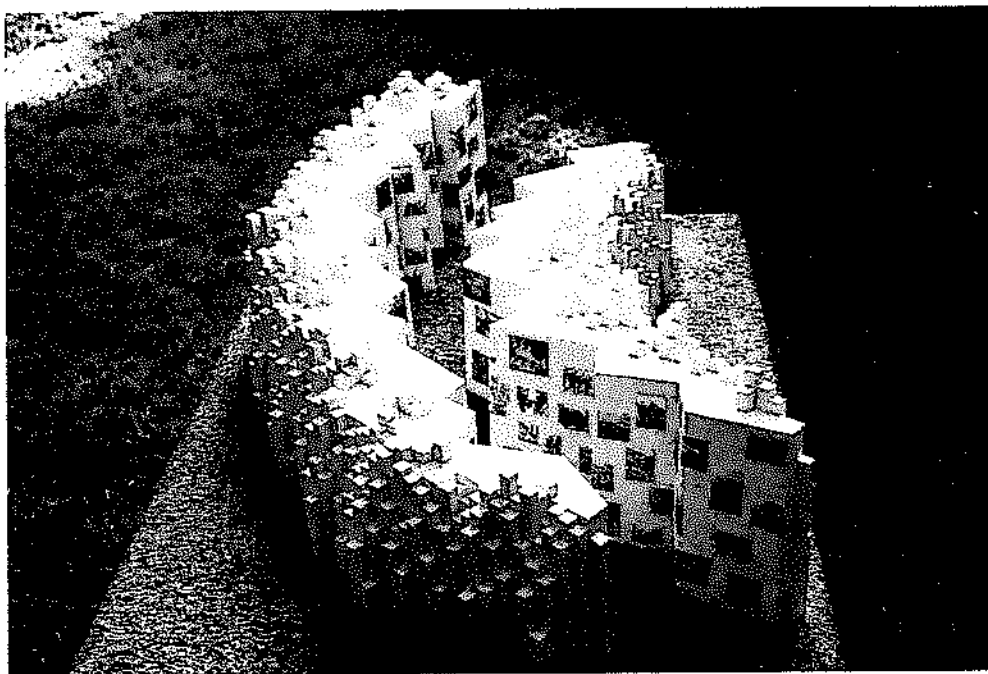


Fig. 62. Athena Tacha, *Model for Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia Memorial*, 1983–84, white concrete and photo-sandblasted documentation, courtesy of the artist.

while the V-shape was associated with the antiwar victory sign, co-opted by Richard Nixon. Black was erroneously labeled by veteran Tom Carhart, “the universal color of shame, sorrow, and degradation in all races, all societies worldwide.”<sup>5</sup> The memorial was eventually countered, ineffectively, by a small idealized sculpture by Frederick Hart. Three over-life-size bronze GIs now stare wistfully at the reigning monument from a nearby grove of trees; a similar bronze of a GI woman is planned.

Vets themselves have come to see the memorial with all the ambivalence of the war itself and its ongoing reverberations (or reflections) in American society. Some wonder if “you can honor the warrior without honoring the war.” Despite the strength of personal feelings, they insist that emotions must be separated from “meaning on the larger stage of what the U.S. government has been doing in the world since the Vietnam war and continues to do today.”<sup>6</sup> Some see the memorial as one more step in the rewriting of history, along with the “Honor the Vietnam Vet” and “Welcome Home” events, which the majority of veterans from across the political spectrum perceived as too little, too late. For most, however, the memorial is a deeply effective and affecting monument to the senseless deaths of over fifty-eight thousand soldiers. “Nobody can tell me what it means,” said one vet. “ ‘cause I feel what I feel when I’m there.”<sup>7</sup>

Across the United States, there are now many

other Vietnam memorials, and still more are on the drawing board. They tend to repeat the dichotomy in place in Washington with the Lin/Hart face-off, ranging from modest natural boulders at isolated intersections to the grandiose counterparts of equestrian statues. There is even a miniature portable replica of the Washington Wall. Three recent proposals expand the potential meaning of such monuments. In Berkeley, rock star Country Joe McDonald has been helping to plan a monument in honor of all war dead, including those in Vietnam and those who died resisting at home. Public artist Athena Tacha, working in Ohio, has exhibited a model that combines the monumental clarity of Lin’s work with the graphic specificity Hart failed to achieve (fig. 62). Dedicated to Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, it is envisioned as “a huge chasm, a desolated and split land.” Within the arid white cliffs of the sculpture (white is the color of mourning in Vietnam) would be rows of huge and haunting news photos sandblasted into the walls. A trip through this canyon (the form was suggested by natural rock formations) would be a nightmarish journey back through reality, rather than along a passive trail of modified nostalgia. The third monument is natural, as opposed to cultural. In 1980 vet Geoffrey Steiner sold his home and bought 100 acres of land in Northern Minnesota, where he began an ongoing project of planting a tree for every soldier killed in the Vietnam war, as well as



Fig. 63. George Segal, *In Memory of May 4, 1970—Kent State: Abraham and Isaac*, 1978, bronze with white patina, 84 × 108 × 102", collection of Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey, John B. Putnam, Jr. Memorial Collection.

some in tribute to veterans who have committed suicide. He is more than half way toward his goal, although he almost lost his memorial when a bank threatened to appropriate it. Other veterans and concerned local people raised the money to save it. "What we're trying to do," says Steiner, "is heal the people. This is a living memorial."<sup>8</sup>

The most memorialized event at home is the massacre at Kent State. (I know of no art about the killings that preceded it at Jackson State.) George Segal's 1978 *In Memory of May 4, 1970—Kent State: Abraham and Isaac* (fig. 63) depicts two vaguely contemporary-looking figures, one kneeling, one standing. In a classic case of institutional squeamishness in the face of any harsh reality, it was rejected by the university as late as 1978. It seems preposterous that biblical allegory was perceived as radical, but Segal's vision clearly struck too close to home for a university that had invited the National Guard onto its campus to "defend" it from its own charges, becoming in the process quite directly responsible for the murders of four young people when the nervous, also young, guards opened fire on the demonstrators.

Kent State lost another major artwork when it refused the gift of Peter Gourfain's *Kent State Doors* (fig. 64) in the early '80s. These huge wood-framed ceramic-sculpted doors, inspired by Ghiberti, were executed by Gourfain in collaboration with faculty and students when he was a visiting artist at the university. Each clay panel is an interpretation of a scene related to the murders, with Gourfain's own intense, neo-Romanesque style setting the tone.

Richard Posner's recent proposal, illustrated

in his drawing *Kent State Memorial Proposal*, 1986 (fig. 65), has little chance in such a climate. He suggests a vast but subtle earthwork on the open field where the massacre took place. It would be the shadow of a B-52, visible year-round in grass and snow, a quietly menacing phantom of war hovering over future generations of students. A conscientious objector during the Vietnam era, Posner has executed a 900-square-foot glass hearth for the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Seattle. Over a flickering fire, shuttered panels transform an image of soldiers going off to war into farmers sowing a field with a ploughshare wrought from swords.

Few mainstream artworks have offered a right-wing version of the war. Even Roger Brown's *Vietnam Commemorative* of 1982 (fig. 66) is somewhat ambiguous. One silhouetted officer figure kneels before another (a reference to sacrifice oddly reminiscent of Segal's *Abraham and Isaac*) against a series of lumpy metallic gray modules that might be read as the Wall, broken by Brown's typically stylized palm trees. A red Volkswagen bug—the quintessential symbol of the '60s counterculture—enters from the left, laying blame on antiwar protests for sacrificing the lives of American soldiers (the kneeling figure) to the North Vietnamese (the standing figure). Brown considers many of his paintings "political," although neither right-wing nor "all that tired left-wing existential bullshit." "It's just my view, like I was some old farmer sittin' on a fence rail talkin' about how things are in the world."<sup>9</sup>

The dedication of the Vietnam Memorial in October 1982 has come to be seen as a turning



Fig. 64. Peter Gourfain and the faculty/students of the summer sculpture program at Kent State University, 1980, *Kent State Doors*, 1980, oak and unglazed terracotta, 108 x 72", courtesy of the artist.

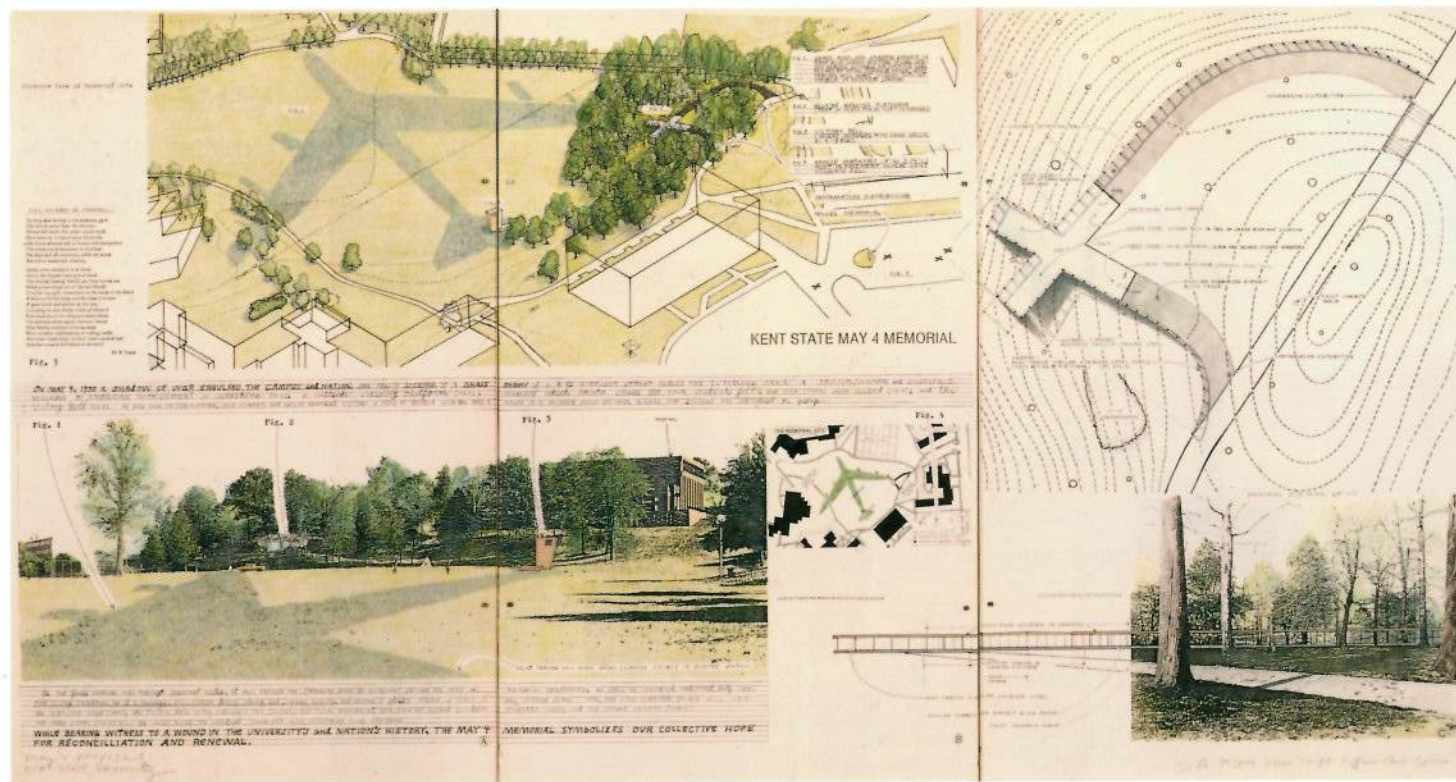


Fig. 65. Richard Posner, *Kent State Memorial Proposal*, 1986 (cat. no. 69).

point, when social amnesia about the war began to reverse—a moment when artists in prose, film, and visual arts began to let their memories out of the closet. The incredible flood of books on the war—fact and fiction, by scholars and participants—has no doubt been the most effective jogger of these memories. Thousands of poignant photographs document the responses of visitors to the Wall and the various rituals performed there by families and veterans across the political spectrum. The immense collection of notes, photos, and objects ranging from baseballs to plastic flowers to teddy bears that have been left at the Wall have been warehoused by the government, preserving an intimate dimension of the monument's extended effect.<sup>10</sup>

Among the many photographers who have shot the Wall and its endless variety of visitors, Wendy Watriss comes to the subject with a body of work devoted to the struggles of veterans to find peace of mind and compensation for their psychic and physical wounds. Her photographs of the Wall, from the "Vietnam Veterans Memorial" series (fig. 67), and of veterans still being killed by the war, from the "Agent Orange" series (fig. 68), are striking and compassionate. A father holds his son (one of his two children suffering from birth defects) after an Agent Orange court

decision, and a tear rolls down his cheek; two vets stand close together with their hands on a name carved on the Wall; an intimate altar-memorial to a dead soldier is created on top of the TV set in his family's home, and on the screen is a young man dead or sleeping; two buddies (ages 35 and 36, but looking far older) support each other, both wearing hand, arm, and neck braces because of muscle deterioration from Agent Orange, the dioxin-based herbicide that was widely used in Vietnam to destroy the enemy's jungle cover and has been implicated in a dreadful range of diseases, from cancers and birth defects to miscarriages and psychosis.

Watriss has visited and heard testimonies from many of those affected by Agent Orange. Approximately 245,000 people have filed for compensation in this country and over 230,000 have died in Vietnam.<sup>11</sup> In 1983 Watriss's series on the issue was shown in Texas with the works of Goro Nakamura (on the effects of the chemical on the Vietnamese and their land), Philip Jones Griffiths (on the process of its deployment during the war), and Mike Goldwater (on the effects of dioxins on agricultural and industrial workers in England).

A special Air Force outfit called the Ranch Hands flew the herbicide missions. Their motto was "Only we can prevent forests." Frances

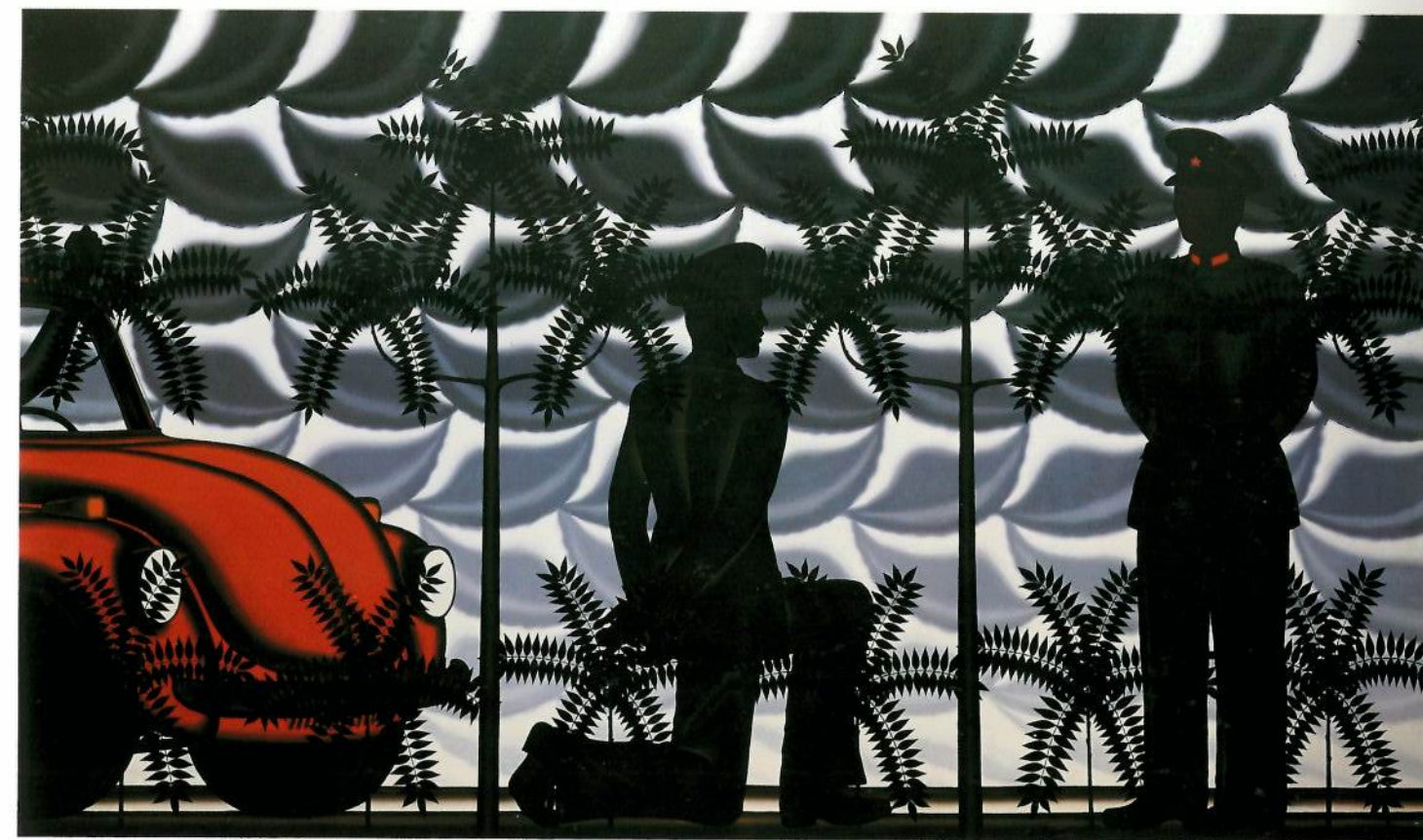


Fig. 66. Roger Brown, *Vietnam Commemorative*, 1982 (cat. no. 9).

Fitzgerald has written of the American forces' monument to themselves:

The grandest ruins are those of the American tanks, for the Vietnamese no longer build fine stone tombs as did their ancestors. . . . The U.S. First Infantry Division has carved its divisional insignia with defoliants in a stretch of jungle—a giant poisonous graffiti.<sup>12</sup>

This image was used by long-term political activist Luis Camnitzer in his extensive etching series *Agent Orange* (figs. 69, 70). He paired the jungle scar with Robert Smithson's earthwork *Spiral Jetty*—both photographed in 1970—in an ironic comment on the art and ecological connections. Camnitzer's etchings, following a similar series on torture in his homeland, Uruguay, include highly explicit images, such as a hydrocephalic Vietnamese baby and the statement of a Dow Corporation chemist pondering in *Science* magazine the need to recast the word "teratogenicity" because of its associations with Thalidomide in the minds of consumers.

But most of the fifty pictures are enigmatic closeups of small still lifes, each eerily captioned with an ambiguous handwritten phrase that comes

like a voice in a dream to ignite the understated pictures: a plastic kewpie doll on a body-like fabric landscape ("Her own harvest, too, would be different"); an abnormally pigmented man's hand ("They gave him an ointment") or a handless watch face on a crinkled paper ("Then they waited") (fig. 70). These lyrical etchings demonstrated their subterranean power when they were shown in Berlin, Maryland, in 1986; because of threats against the building and against the artist's life, the show was prematurely closed.

William Wiley made some isolated pieces about Vietnam during the war and then returned to the subject in depth in the '80s, spurred on by links to toxic waste, nuclear war, and Central America. The 1970 *Communication Contract and Peace Tattoo II*, for instance, used his trademark sticks and stones to form a slingshot, with a presumable David and Goliath reference. In 1983 Wiley introduced a multipurpose symbol—the acoustic guitar—as persona and emblem. The guitar is associated with protest songs and Latin music; Wiley plays the instrument. Sometimes, as in *Agent Orange*, 1983, and *Agent Orange, Again*, 1986 (fig. 71), the woodblock and sculpture in

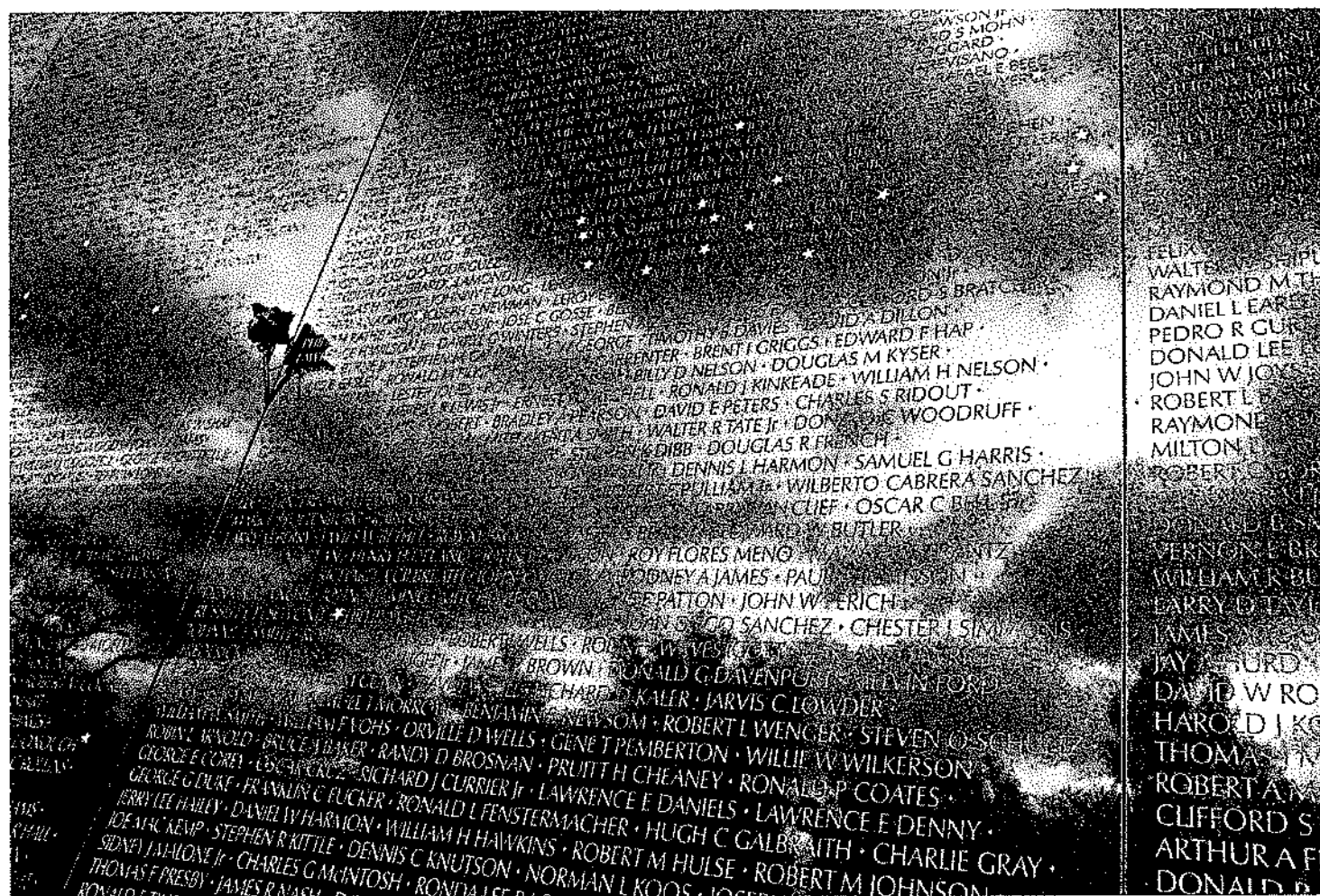


Fig. 67. Wendy Watriss, *Untitled*, from the "Vietnam Veterans Memorial" series, 1982 (cat. no. 99).

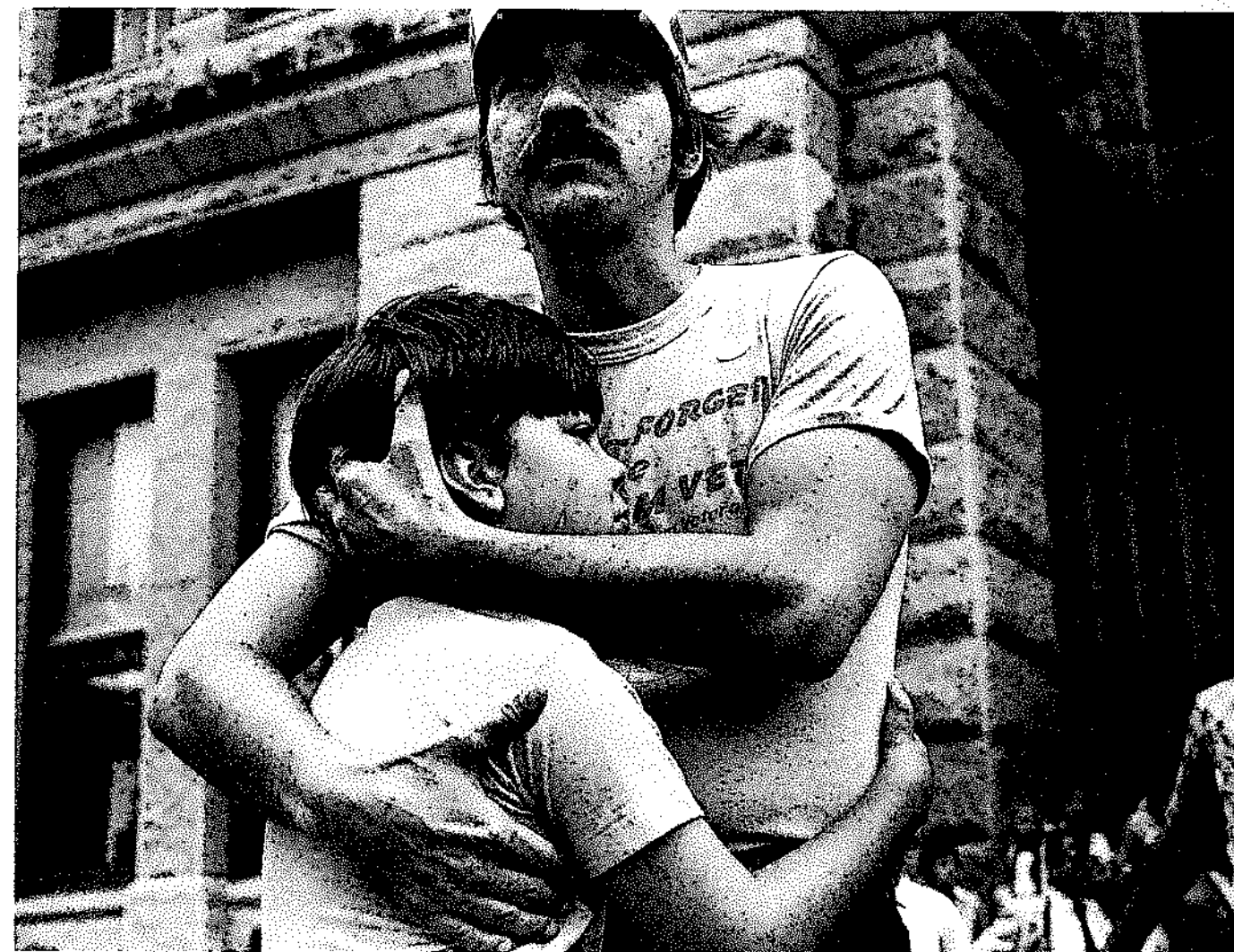


Fig. 68. Wendy Watriss, *Dan Jordan and His Son Chad*, Austin, Texas, from the "Agent Orange" series, 1981 (cat. no. 95).

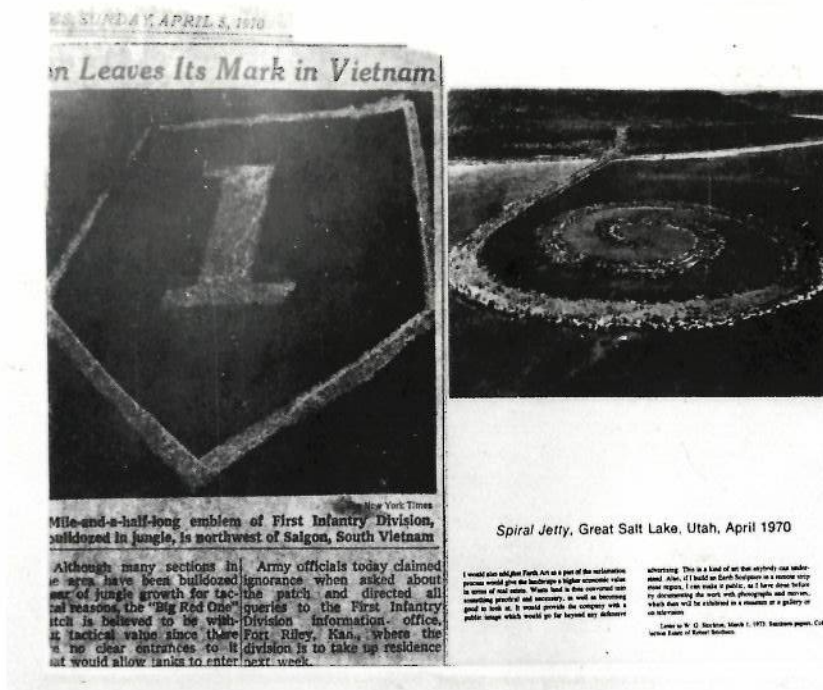


Fig. 69. Luis Camnitzer, *April 1970*, from the "Agent Orange" series, 1984, color photo-etching, 30 x 22", courtesy of the artist.

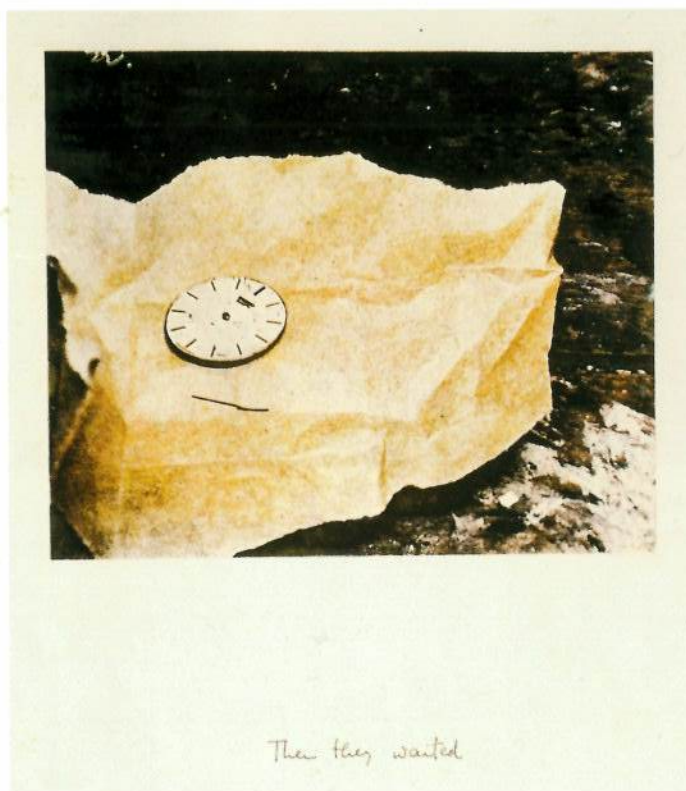


Fig. 70. Luis Camnitzer, *Then they waited*, from the "Agent Orange" series, 1985 (cat. no. 13).



Fig. 71. William T. Wiley, *Agent Orange, Again*, 1986 (cat. no. 106).



Fig. 72. Ben Sakoguchi, *Hawk*, from the "Vietnam" series, 1979 (cat. no. 79).

this show, the guitar is a skeletal face and cross, inscribed with puns like "Agent Orange, My lie Massoak cure." In the large assemblage/installation called *Agent Orange* of 1983, the guitar lies on its black, coffin-like case at the foot of what might be a homemade grave marker. Jeff Kelley has described this major piece:

The green and orange instrument, with its single string, will produce a distant, Oriental sound. . . . It will pluck a painful fiber in our minds. Close the case, and it will be a casket, its contents buried, stillborn and loaded in—and well beyond—the sixties. The word "Vet" is written on a small metal gong. If we "beat the Vet gong," whose funeral drum have we sounded—ours or theirs? . . . A map of Vietnam is the guitar's pick-guard. Puns aren't always fun.<sup>13</sup>

Retrospective depictions of veterans from the antiwar side run the gamut from hostility to compassion. Ben Sakoguchi's cheerfully dreadful 1979 "Vietnam" series is an outraged and unforgiving group of tiny paintings—black humor vignettes in which GIs are mostly evil or dumb or both. The tone of these works is curiously anachronistic—they might have been made in 1969 instead of a decade later—but their impact is not diminished. Sakoguchi has had no second thoughts, and his directness is both refreshing and applicable to other wars. He also does anti-nuclear subjects. A Californian, he has chosen old-fashioned orange crate labels (orange agent?) as his vehicle. Interrogation Brand (torture of Viet Cong suspects) is grown in "Westmoreland,

California"; Dinks Brand (the South Vietnamese Army) stems from "Arvin, California"; Wast'em Brand (My Lai Massacre) is from "Death Valley, California"; Hawk Brand (a quadriplegic embraced by a Beauty Queen and declaring "I'd proudly go back") is from "Rough and Ready, California" (fig. 72).

Rachael Romero's two haunting portraits of Vietnam vets from 1984 capture as no one else has the infamous thousand-yard stare by which survivors are said to be recognizable. *He Who Feels It Knows It* (fig. 73) gives the subject a modern crown of thorns—barbed wire around his baseball cap. *Vietnam Vet* relies on the headband and the wide-eyed, intense stare, a combination of terror and wisdom, to convey its empathy.

Sue Coe's 1986 *War Train* (fig. 74) shows an infernal subway tunnel with a gray procession of homeless and protesting Vietnam vets, suggesting in their angry emaciation the concentration camps (one proposed solution to homelessness), the London subway tunnels during the Blitz in World War II, and other symbolic undergrounds, bringing home not only the war, but the web of connections with other social issues that have become part of the Vietnam syndrome.

Cynthia Norton, a young woman raised on military bases during the Vietnam War, became obsessed with the subject in the '80s. In deceptively elegant formats, she paints helicopters, tanks, flags with lines of smoke for stripes. In *Madonna*, 1985 (fig. 75), she frames a hooded GI in a gold and black camouflage border like a Renaissance altar piece. His skin color is the same as that of the dead baby and, as in veteran



Fig. 73. Rachael Romero, *He Who Feels It Knows It*, 1984  
(cat. no. 70).



Fig. 74. Sue Coe, *War Train*, 1986 (cat. no. 19).



Fig. 75. Cynthia Norton, *Madonna*, 1985 (cat. no. 62).

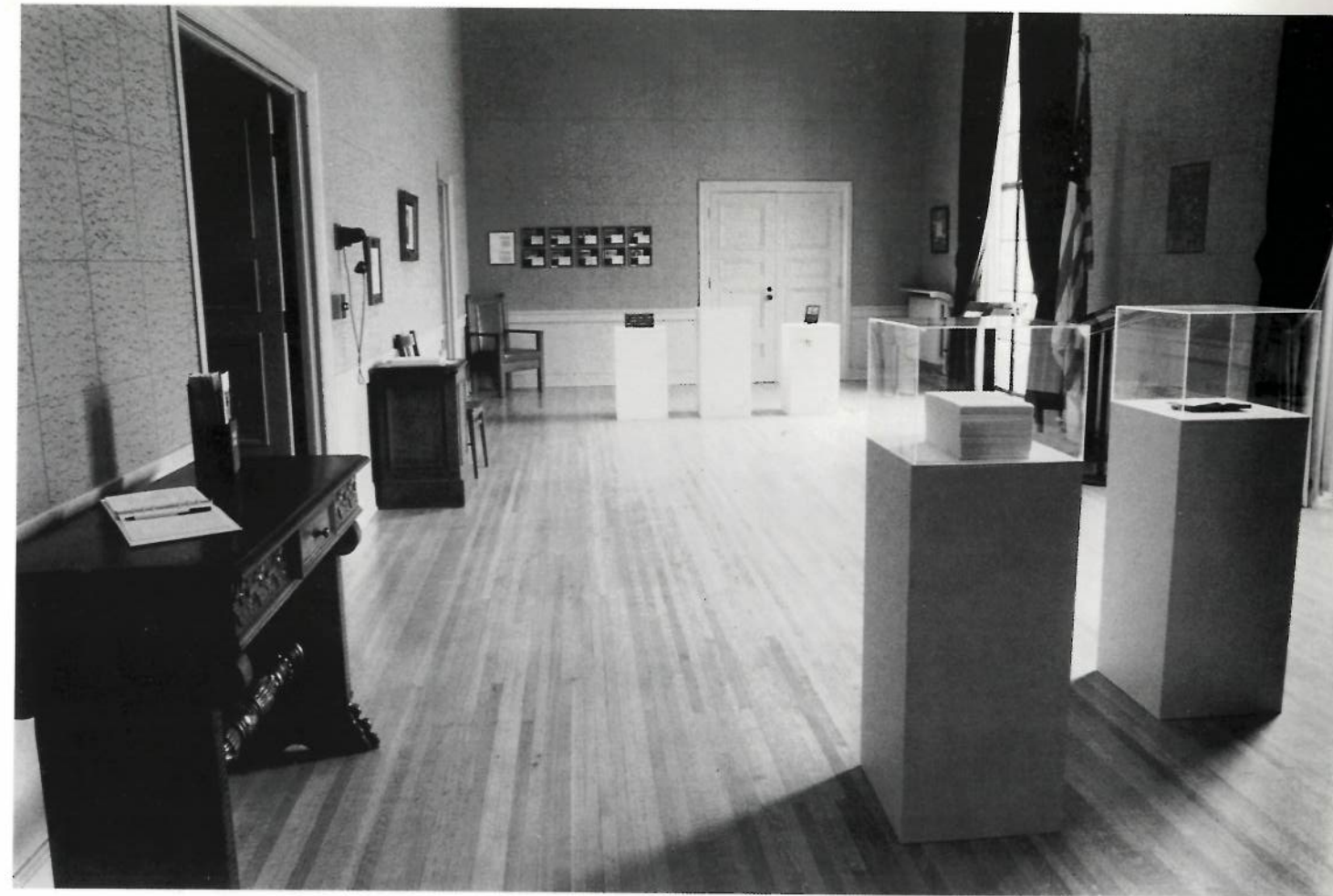


Fig. 76. Nancy Floyd, *The James M. Floyd Memorial*, 1986 (cat. no. 28).

Michael Page's *Pieta* (fig. 50), he wears an expression of profound hurt.

Another artist who was only a child during the war has made one of the most moving recent works. Nancy Floyd's *The James M. Floyd Memorial*, 1986 (fig. 76), is a straightforward but esthetically mediated documentation-memorial to her brother, killed in action in 1969. The multipartite installation—which includes his boyish letters and snapshots, official papers, and the stone souvenir of his name from the Wall—is shown as though it were in a town hall, complete with American flag and glass cases; it brings to mind scenes from Bobbie Ann Mason's touching novel *In Country*. As one reads the young soldier's diary and letters home, as one sees him with his dog, his medal, his peace sign, and the funny, heartbreaking photo where he is curled up on his army cot with teddy bear and thumb in mouth, the very ordinariness of his death and the tenderness of his sister's art carry an impact unlike that of most images from Vietnam.

A few photographic images have become icons

of the war, embedded in our consciousness of Vietnam: Haerberle's *My Lai*, Eddie Adams's *Loan*, and especially Wing Wong Ut's photograph of Kim Phuc—a little girl running down a road on a June day in 1972, naked, her arms spread, her body smoking with napalm, and on her face an expression of pure disbelief.<sup>14</sup> They are all images of victims. Only rarely, and usually in the poster-world of the Left, were there Vietnamese heroes in the U.S. during this war. None of these photos lend themselves to irony, which has often been the avant-garde political artist's first language and prime weapon.

In 1984, Denver artist Jim Cannata used the Adams photo in "They Killed Many of My Men" (fig. 77), which consists of seven Ektacolor photographs made by painting and then printing the negatives. By incorporating not only the well-known still but the rest of the sequence, putting the execution into a cinematic context, as the news media did not, Cannata brings the image back into real life. The unknown suspect is dragged out, threatened, shot, and carried away.



Fig. 77. James Cannata, *Untitled #1*, from "They Killed Many of My Men," 1984 (cat. no. 16).

Juan Sanchez's *It Is Beautiful to Love the World with Eyes Not Born*, 1987 (fig. 78), is a complex global palimpsest juxtaposing Kim Phuc with laughing, but also suffering, children from Nicaragua, where the same people who conducted "pacification" programs in Vietnam were supporting the counterrevolutionary mercenaries killing Central American civilians. A Puerto Rican *independentista*, Sanchez is deeply aware of the agony of such "non-wars." His painting is a rich weave of religious and political imagery with brilliant colors that underline the aura of hope that pervades all of Sanchez's art, expressed here by his title, which might paradoxically be perceived as ironic by those not as faithful as the artist. Below the altar-like rectangle, its arch a rainbow, are two hands with hearts imprinted on them, which can be read as the stigmata—the

Latino *mano mas poderosa*, the most powerful hand of Christ.

Jerry Kearns has used Kim Phuc's image three times in the '80s—first in a 1983 installation *Between Light and Shadow*, then in his 1983 painting *Hour of the Wolf*, in which Ronald Reagan swimming (up to his neck) occupies the left half of the canvas while the right is a quadruply layered image of Kim Phuc over a raging horror-comic wolf dog, an axe-bearing monster, and a barely visible row of soldiers. In the third work, the 1986 *Madonna and Child* (fig. 79), Kim Phuc's torso is imposed like a burning mask or tattoo on Andy Warhol's *Marilyn Monroe*, in a multifaceted commentary on the '60s, on our creation of heroines, fantasy "material girls," the victimization of idolized women, popular culture, the golden gloss of the American dream (in life

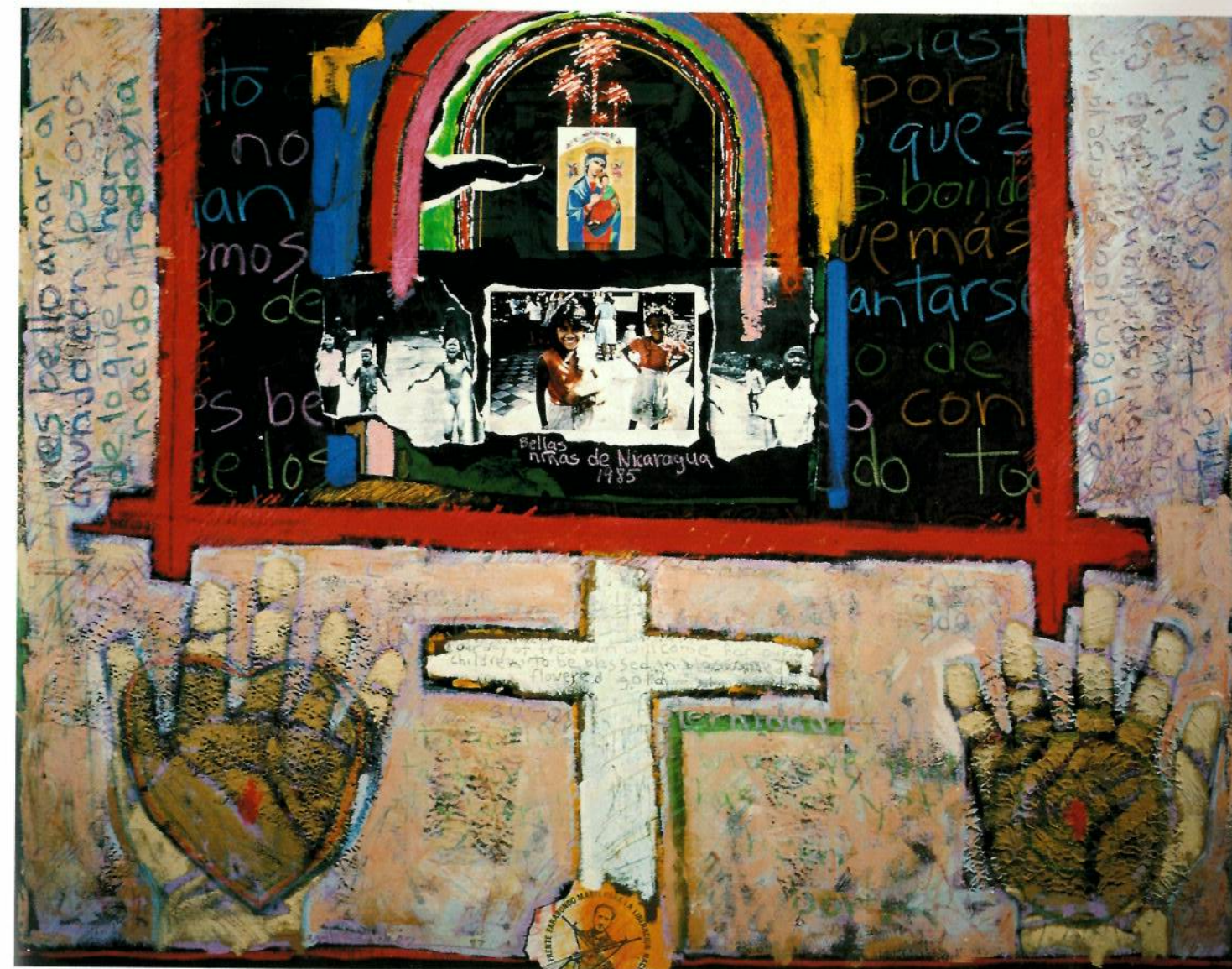


Fig. 78. Juan Sanchez, *It Is Beautiful to Love the World with Eyes Not Born*, 1987 (cat. no. 80).

and art), and the reality of the Third World. His 1987 painting *El Norte* (fig. 80), a "portrait" of Oliver North, refers to the connections recently exposed between heroin trade in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War and similar charges simmering around the CIA-backed Contras in Nicaragua some 20 years later, in which many of the same people have been involved, among them Mr. North. The skulls, barely visible in the news photo behind the hooded, swaggering, covert warrior, are from Cambodia, but they might also be the ghosts of those dead on the drug-riddled battlegrounds of Vietnam and of the urban ghettos.

Keiko Bonk, born in Hawaii, sees the parentage of war another way. In her 1986 pair of paintings *Dad* and *Mom* (figs. 81; 82), she raises the flaming black peace sign like a religious icon

amid a field of skulls, and the white peace sign wreathed in thorns on a field of roses against a horizon of fire over water. This might be a reference to a hexagram of the I Ching or to Frances Fitzgerald's *Fire in the Lake*, which took its title from that source. The acrid color and raw smoky darkness of Bonk's monumental images also reinterpret the peace sign in retrospect for a postwar era that did not bring peace.

Only recently has explicit art about Vietnam's historical turmoil emerged in this country from refugees, many of whom are vehement in their support of U.S. involvement in the war. In an exhibition at Chapman College in Orange, California, in 1987, artist Richard Turner collected the work of several U.S.-trained Vietnamese artists. The younger ones, such as Chi Le, are breaking tradition with passionately expressive works. Her

1984 painting *The Butcher Shop* (fig. 83) is a lurid abstraction of not-quite identifiable body parts. Of this and other war-related works, she says:

You feel the war has torn you apart. It pulled out my skin and my hair. Every night bombs dropped. . . . I make *Butcher Shop* because I remembered a butcher shop on a road in the country. They sold deer and other wild animals. I thought back to that, and I thought of the war. It was bloody . . . the meat of animals we eat looks exactly like the meat of people who blow up with bomb.<sup>15</sup>

Hanh Thi Pham, also a young refugee, struggles to maintain her own cultural identity by making labyrinthine color photographs, often of staged tableaux acted out by a multiracial cast consisting of friends, family, and her sometime collaborator Richard Turner. Amid isolated sculptural-architectural elements that suggest but never describe a splintering city, *Asking Questions of Mr. Sky*, from the series "Along the Street of Knives," 1985 (fig. 84), is the stage on which a war unlike that depicted in most Vietnam works is acted out. For all their theatricality, Hanh Thi Pham's visions ring true as a series of concrete metaphors for the stealth, intrigue, and suspense of a long battle against colonialism. A suspension bridge leading nowhere, a paper question mark, floor games, torture, prisoners, flag, monkey, masks, and cutouts all float on a black ground as though projected onto our consciousness in a movie from another world. The instability and vitality of these photographs suggest not only the atmosphere of war but of the cross-cultural experience in which the artist found herself then and finds herself now. One suspects a detailed personal iconography, a chain of meanings partially concealed from Western viewers. Yet we cannot help but be intrigued by our own parts in these pictorial puzzles.

Turner, in his role as curator and artist, has played a unique role in opening access to the Asian immigrant community. Son of a forensic scientist advising the Vietnamese police, he spent his high school years, 1959–61, in Saigon, and he maintains a deep respect and concern for Asia and its people. (He also studied in Taiwan and India.) His cleanly beautiful modernist versions

of Buddhist reliquaries, crumbling colonial architecture (or colonial structures, in the broader sense), brutal graffiti, funerary pavilions, shutters and mosquito net for mystery, broken glass, oddly serene bamboo and camouflage sculptures, and melancholy Asian gardens and hotels—all reflect the simultaneously vulnerable and protected vantage point from which he viewed the early stages of the war in Vietnam as an adolescent foreigner. Turner works most effectively in installation form, and calls his work "architectural narratives," which are often accompanied by actual narratives in book form that weave fictionalized autobiography with factualized fantasy.

In 1981 Turner made *Immolation Maze* about the Buddhist monks who set themselves afire in the late '50s and early '60s to call attention to religious persecution and the dismissal of peace efforts. In 1983, in *Reliquaries*, Turner assembled a group of red enamel cremation boxes stacked under a pavilion roof. In 1984, *The Book of the Disappeared*, with graffiti, banners, and sculpture, brought together the victims of human rights abuses in Asia and Central America. In 1985, *Coup d'Etat* recalled the unsuccessful attempt to overthrow Ngo Dinh Diem in 1960; as a high school student, Turner had gone into the streets and collected the remains of the struggle for his first sculpture—spent ammunition, blasted masonry, sandals and personal belongings left behind in the panic, and newspaper accounts.

In 1987 Turner made a very large installation—*Hotel Cô Hôn*—at the Washington Project for the Arts as part of its innovative and important exhibition on Vietnam, "War and Memory: In the Aftermath of Vietnam." Black, white, and gray, the work incorporated what seemed to be the remnants of a colonial hotel, complete with old photographs, maps, folding screens, tiles, sculpture, scrolls, two white sarcophagi, and blackboards, with scrawled messages such as "We heard the blast and saw him fly up, separate into thousands, become air. And then we were breathing him." Interior and exterior, beauty and destruction merged into an elegy for a civilization that will never again be the same.

*Caesar in Indochina*, 1988 (fig. 87), places the blazing white of classical plaster casts against the earthy brown of a water buffalo hide on which a map of Indochina is outlined, almost organically,



Fig. 79. Jerry Kearns, *Madonna and Child*, 1986, acrylic on canvas, 96 1/2 x 80", private collection, Merian, Pennsylvania.



Fig. 80. Jerry Kearns, *El Norte*, 1987 (cat. no. 55).

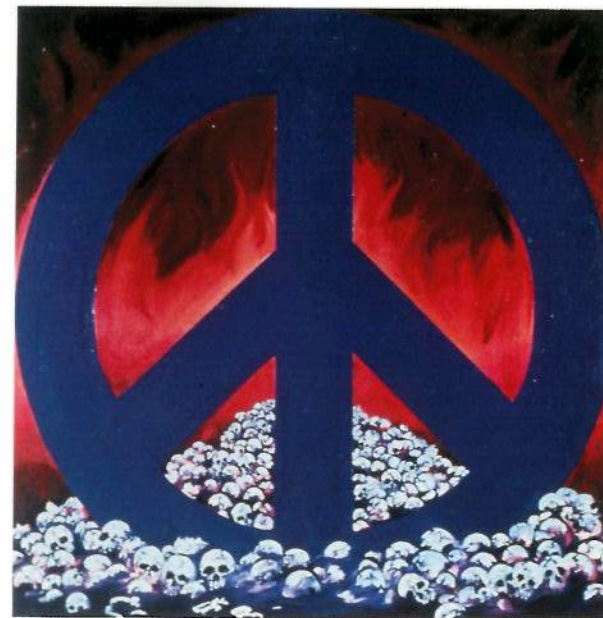


Fig. 81. Keiko Bonk, *Dad*, 1986 (cat. no. 6).



Fig. 82. Keiko Bonk, *Mom*, 1986 (cat. no. 7).

but suggesting a brand. Both images are an imposition—of white on Asian, of boundaries on nature. Turner was inspired by reading that Roman coins have been found in Vietnam, the farthest reach of the Roman Empire, providing a parallel with U.S. imperialism, and perhaps a more personal note, since Turner has had the buffalo hide since his childhood in Saigon when he too was an alien presence in Indochina. The water buffalo is the major beast of burden in Southeast Asia, and here it is hung on the wall like a trophy. Before it, however, stands the historically accurate trophy: a U.S. military canteen dangling from a bamboo cooking tripod, symbolizing the triumph of guerrilla warfare over high tech.

Postmodernism and socially concerned art have been enjoying a flirtatious and often incompatible relationship for years. The critical or deconstructive mode of Postmodern Conceptual art is reminiscent in both form and strategy of much work from the late '60s and early '70s and is fertile ground for social comment. In most cases, however, it lends itself uneasily to involved or engaged work, since its main tenet is a determinedly "objective" distance from lived experience and thus from virtually all of society's visual production. In the last decade Margia Kramer has been one of the few artists to use "appropriation" techniques to inform as well as to dissect. Using the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) as her instrument, Kramer has exposed devious and

illegal government surveillance campaigns aimed at activists harboring such suspect principles as peace, civil rights, women's liberation, and opposition to CIA covert actions. On the trail of latent racism, sexism, red-baiting, and paranoia, Kramer has come across a good deal of material from the '60s, including COINTELPRO (the Nixon White House's "counter-intelligence program" against all those perceived as radicals) campaigns against the actress Jean Seberg and the Black Panthers.

Recently Kramer came upon data about the "lost" address books of radical lawyer William Kunstler and peace activist Dave Dellinger. "Found" respectively on the subway and on a plane, they were suspiciously delivered to the FBI instead of to the respective lost and found offices. In her 1987 work *Address Book Triptych* (fig. 85), Kramer takes the black-barred, censored documents acquired through the FOIA, photostats them on acetate, and mounts them as small three-piece "screens," reminiscent of medieval altarpieces or dressing-table mirrors. The evidence framed, and framing the viewer, incriminates not those who exercise their constitutional rights to criticize government policy, but the government itself for spying on its citizenry.

Bruce Barber's 1985–86 *Remembering Vietnam* (fig. 88) situates itself somewhere between art and criticism. He combines color photographs from the period and three panels of "propaganda" from corporate supporters of the war. Barber

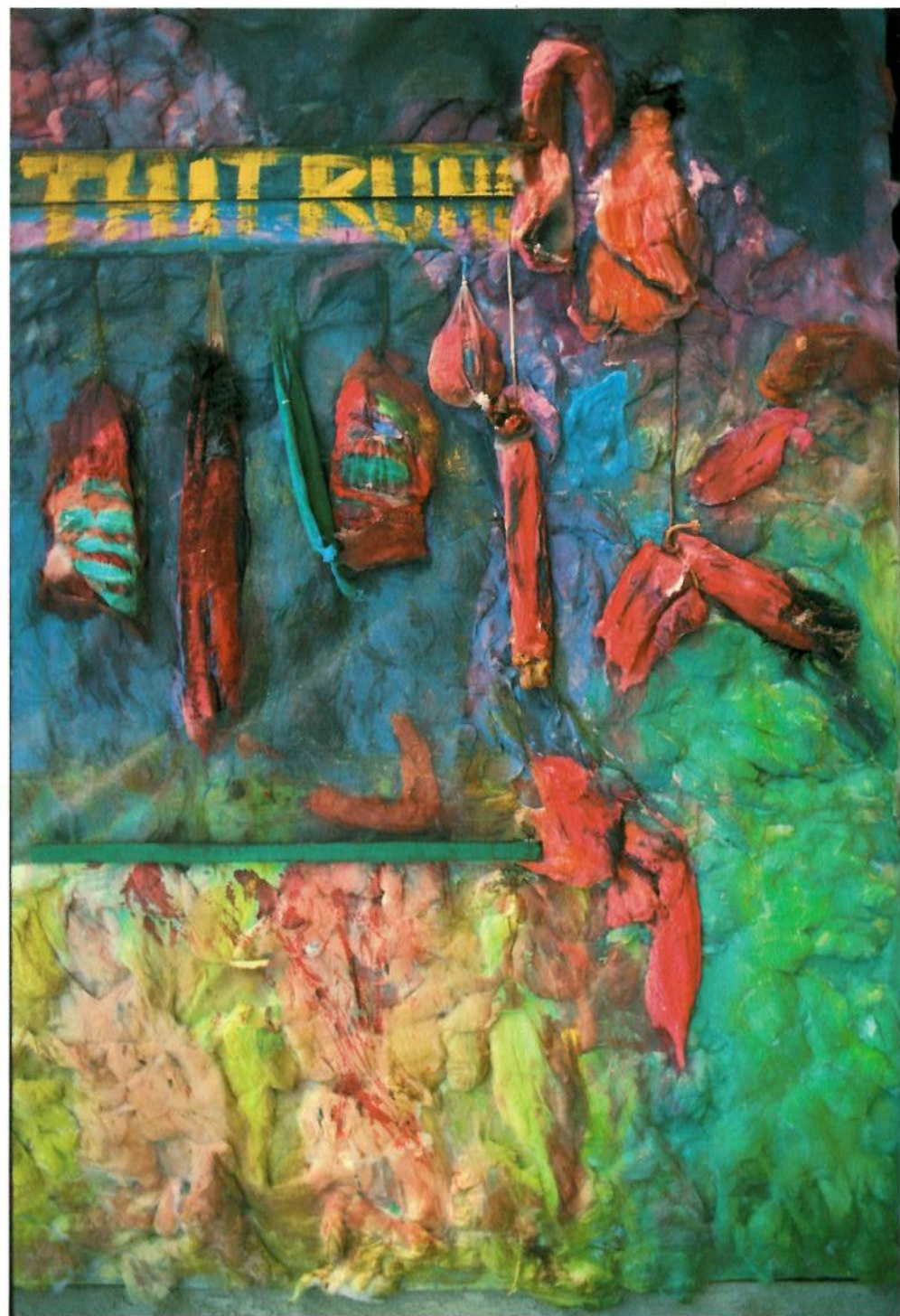


Fig. 83. Chi Le, *The Butcher Shop*, 1984 (cat. no. 18).



Fig. 84. Hanh Thi Pham and Richard Turner, *Asking Questions of Mr. Sky*, from "Along the Street of Knives," 1985 (cat. no. 46).

lives in Canada (we tend to forget that Canadians, Australians, and New Zealanders also fought in Vietnam) and has produced a large body of work deconstructing the so-called "advocacy advertisements" of United Technologies, a leading producer of aircraft engines, helicopters, and other military technology, then and now. In a manner as understated as the company's editorials, Barber points out where United Technologies' agenda pokes through the ads' neutral fabrics. It is all very straightfaced and straightforward, demonstrating how the mere isolation as art of apparently harmless propaganda from the military industrial complex can expose its ideological affect and bland authoritarianism.

The United Technologies editorial on Vietnam, for instance, quotes Ho Chi Minh and avoids the issues, piously declaiming:

Let others use this occasion to explain why we were there, what we accomplished, what went wrong, and who was right. We seek here only to draw attention to those who served. . . . Those who served in Vietnam deserve better than what they got. As a nation we have always tried to do what is right. Let us try to do right by the Vietnam veteran.

Terry Allen's "Youth in Asia" project began in the early '80s and is the most extensive and most complex body of work on the war and its ramifications. Allen has taken the Vietnam experience and applied it to a vast span of contemporary American life, especially the area in which cultures cross or bang into each other. Also a musician, he calls his project "Visual and Aural Mythologies." He began at the beginning with an assemblage called

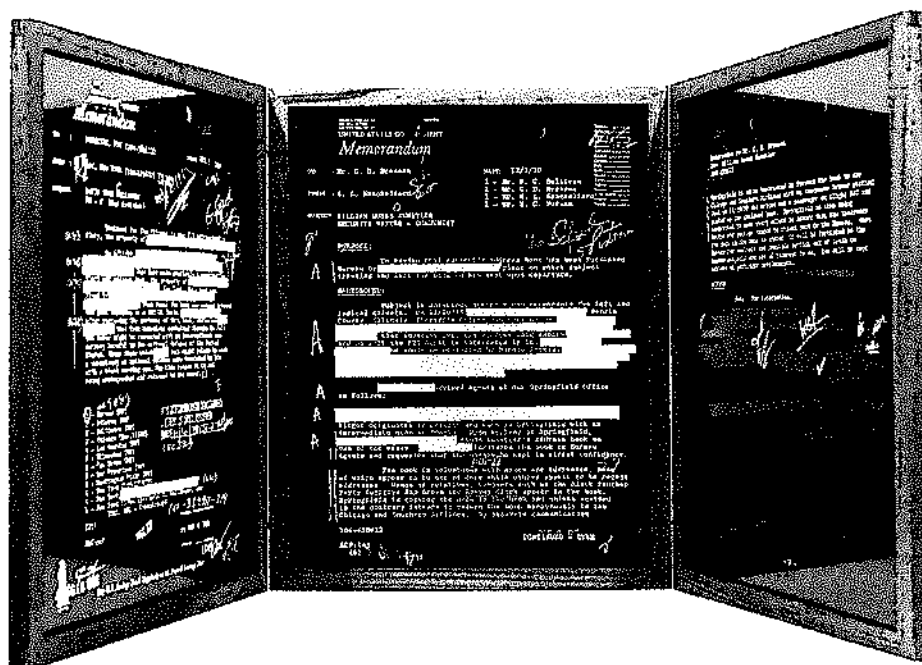


Fig. 85. Margia Kramer, *Address Book Triptych*, 1987, photostats on film in wood frames with plexiglas, 21 1/2 x 52 1/2 x 1", courtesy of the artist.

*The First Day (Back in the World)*, its erratic pace and mixture of mediums reflecting the vertiginous return of vets from Vietnam. They were given no transition between war and the peace that was not a peace at home. "I was killing gooks in the Delta and seventy-two hours later I'm in bed with my wife—and she wonders why I was different," as one man put it.<sup>16</sup>

Many of Allen's works are made with sheet lead—a soft, patinated, malleable, and symbolically deadly material. Some are extremely simple visually, pure as mourning. *Grace*, 1985, is mostly gray, black, and white; a stylized white bed with a Day of the Dead skull beneath it sits on a glassed-over map of Southeast Asia, backed by a framed night sky with a crescent moon, a bamboo cross, an Asian glyph, and the inscription "for one moment the anger is gone . . . but that's all." It is a sad, luminous work about mortality, about the distance and the familiarity of death in dissimilar cultures. Some of the same motifs appear in a very different work, *Bearing Straight at the Club Cafe*, 1984, which includes: the photo of a similar skull; a photo of a cafe on Route 66 in Santa Rosa, New Mexico; the typed text of a conversation perhaps from that cafe; a pointillist multicolored map of the Pacific and the North American and Asian continents reaching across the Bering Strait, almost touching; a real fork; and a poem. To the side is a much smaller painting labeled "the Mexican Shepard [sic] Boy." The boy holds a

crook and a lamb, is haloed by a burst of light, and adored by another haloed lamb.

*Boogie Chillin* (fig. 86) is a recent addition to this series. The vicious Dumbo (Rambo), with his teeth filed to sharp points, is a ghostly presence flying inverted across the windows of a house. In two other frames are the doorway, with a blood-red carpet leading to it, and a wall with a Vietnam service ribbon on it. The text is the entire lyrics of an old John Lee Hooker song about adolescence. It begins, "I'm a goin away baby, but I will be comin back," and continues, "Let that boy boogie woogie, he's a man now, can't hold him down. . . . Hey, jump chillin." (Perhaps the spelling of "chillin" is also a word play, given the chilling circumstances.) The effect is one of negative transformation, conveying the kind of energy and expectations that sent young men off to war and how that adventure turned out, or inside out.

Allen's art is not about being in Vietnam but is a grand design about coming home. Linking Southeast Asia and the American Southwest, he has embarked on a profoundly important journey through alienated restlessness, dislocation, and the loneliness of cultural cross-overs. The Native American and the Vietnamese are frequent protagonists, given the migration of indigenous peoples (from the Navaho to the Hmong) from Asia to North America, as implied by the "(Ka)China Night" work. Landscape, religion, time itself are also subjects. Throughout the

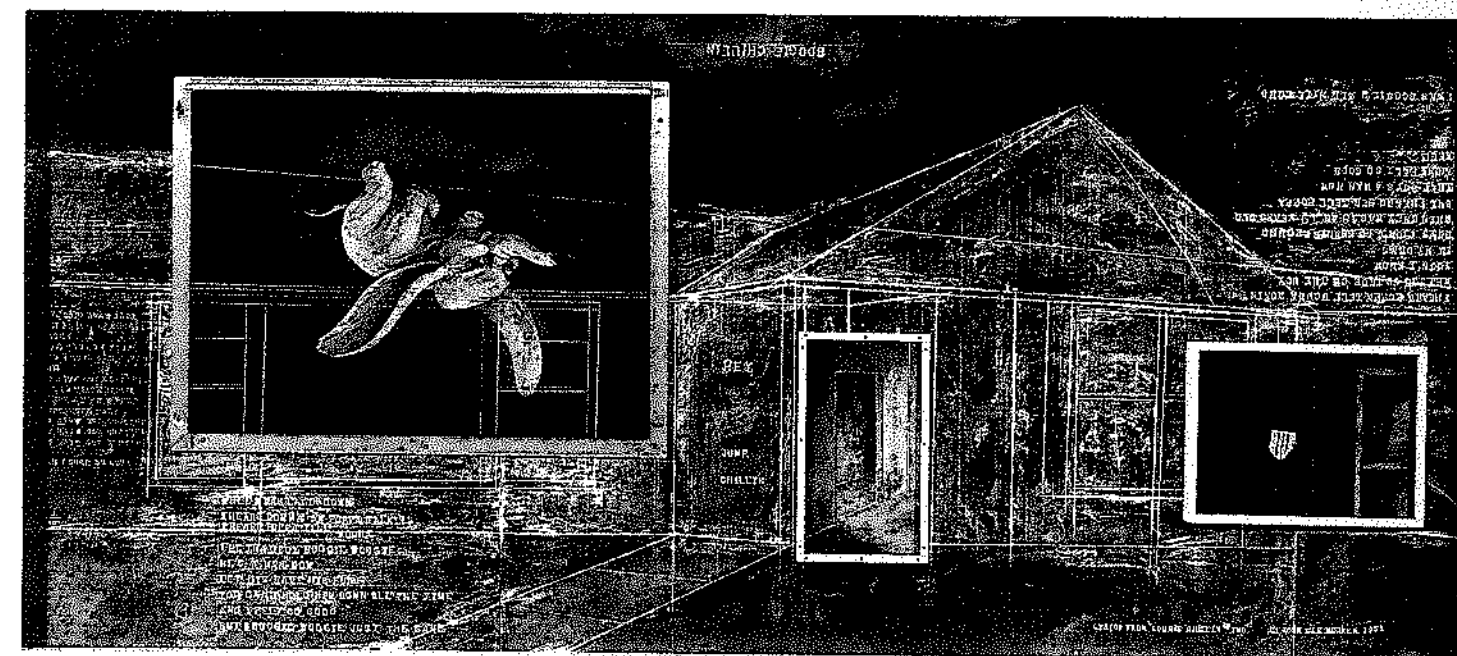


Fig. 86. Terry Allen, *Boogie Chillin*, 1988 (cat. no. 1).

"Youth in Asia" series, an intricate web of leaping, fleeting suggestions testify to the shifting ground beneath both war and peace.

Allen explicitly refers to drugs, alcohol, racial discrimination, and social despair in his work. He often uses Disney characters, familiar friends from another world, as iconography for imperialism, suggesting a certain childishness as well as the brutal superficiality of American culture and the disregard for deeper human meaning. (His Mickey Mouse predicts the ending of Stanley Kubrick's film *Full Metal Jacket*.) Sometimes his work is hallucinatory, hectic, like a night out of control in a honky-tonk bar. He strikes many chords. Like the rest of us, Allen is still trying to figure the Vietnam era out. In doing so, he weaves in so many sore points that seeing a show of his can literally hurt.

It is the role of the artist not merely to depict war, but to reveal its structures, its mechanisms, its history and sources. On one hand, polls as recent as 1982 indicated that "about 70 percent of the American population regard the Vietnam war not as a 'mistake,' but as 'fundamentally wrong and immoral.'" On the other hand, it is frightening to see Vietnam beginning to be treated in many subtle and overt ways as just another war, a war like all the rest. This is damage control at its most insidious.

"America doesn't like losers."<sup>18</sup> In 1982, President Reagan counseled the nation about Vietnam: "It's time to stop looking backwards at how we got here."<sup>19</sup> This is an attractive proposition to many. It has led us to the point where the Vietnam Memorial, with all the painful work of remembering that has gone on around it, has become a kind of history stopper—an anti-memorial. As the rosy haze of manufactured memory settles over us, the victims of the war are forgotten, to be replaced, even in movies as "realistic" as *Platoon*, by the good old-fashioned warrior hero of our past, wallowing in male bonding and learning to kill. All of this revisionism paves the way for similar wars and interventions. It is this false image that the art in this exhibition—*In Country*, *In the World*, and *In Retrospect*—serves to correct.

The temptation to provide a master narrative—"this is the way it really was"—has been avoided by most artists, even veterans, even as they also try to avoid the standard representations. Paradox and ambivalence continue to mark our responses to this different war and are responsible for the uncomfortable and unsatisfying aspect of so much art about Vietnam. A detailed analysis (including race, class, and gender) of the representations of the war's protagonists is the next step in the process of its disclosure through visual art. As Edward Said has said about image-making, or "representing," any subject:



Fig. 87. Richard Turner, *Caesar in Indochina*, 1988, (cat. no. 92).

## Remembering Vietnam

Vietnam occupies that part of the mind inhabited solely by memories. Our collective memories will recall that ten years ago this spring, America's involvement in Vietnam came to an end.

It is a date that will live in ambiguity.

In Ho Chi Minh's own words, "The Americans don't like long, inconclusive wars — and this is going to be a long, inconclusive war." It was.

Let others use this occasion to explain why we were there, what we accomplished, what went wrong, and who was right. We seek here only to draw attention to those who served.

They gave their best and, in many cases, their lives. They fought not for territorial gain, or national glory, or personal wealth. They fought only because they were called to serve. Some returned intact, some physically and emotionally maimed. Others never returned and are immortalized in a national memorial in Washington, D.C.

Perhaps they questioned why they were there. Certainly some complained. Yet they served. Many lie today beneath white crosses or buried in our personal memories. They all were soldiers.

No one wants war — not the civil leaders who proclaim it, not the civilians who suffer from it, least of all the

soldiers who must fight it. Yet we have it. In the words of Plato, "Only the dead have seen the end of war."

Whatever acrimony lingers in our consciousness, whatever regrets we may have, whatever "might-have-beens" or "if-only's," whatever people may say on this anniversary, let us not forget the Vietnam veteran.

It was on July 8, 1959, that the first American was killed in that war. For 16 years they died. Then, on April 30, 1975, the last Americans left Vietnam.

In a larger sense we all are veterans of Vietnam. It is part of our history.

Those who served in Vietnam deserve better than what they got.

As a nation we have always tried to do what is right. Let us try to do right to the Vietnam veteran. Let us begin by remembering.

Etched in granite on the face of a Vietnam Veterans Monument in Buffalo, New York, are feelings that should be etched in our hearts:

*They answered when called;  
Asked for little and got less;  
And made us richer for their sacrifice  
But poorer for their passing.  
In remembering the dead,  
We embrace the living.  
For we ought to remember  
Better than we do.*

**UNITED  
TECHNOLOGIES**

"There were Vietnamese officers, enlisted men, and NCO's that were there for the wiring of prisoners. You could take the wires of a jeep battery (it's a tremendous amount of voltage), put it most any place on their body and you're going to shock the hell out of the guy. The basic place you put it was the genitals. There were some people who really enjoyed that because people would really squirm."

The Winter Soldier Investigation Into American War Crimes in Vietnam. Boston, Beacon. 1972. p114.

Fig. 88. Bruce Barber, detail, *Remembering Vietnam*, 1985–86 (cat. no. 5).

Whether you call it a spectacular image or an exotic image or a scholarly representation there is always this paradoxical contrast between the surface, which seems to be in control, and the process which produces it, which inevitably involves some degree of violence, decontextualization, miniaturization, etc.<sup>20</sup>

Rudolf Baranik has contended for many years now that

political art is not in competition for specificity, information, and direct "effectiveness" with mass media, with film or photography, not to mention direct political action. . . . Holding political art to pedestrian serviceability perpetuates its ghettoization.<sup>21</sup>

Donald Kuspit raises some additional questions:

Protest is a form of political action, but protest art is a form of interpretation of political action . . . at best a form of psychic picketing. . . . Marx contrasts philosophers who interpret the world with revolutionaries who want to change it. Is art closer to philosophy or revolutionary action, particularly political or so-called protest art? Can art in any sense be said to be a species of action?<sup>22</sup>

I think it can, but it must be evaluated on its own turf rather than getting caught between action and information and deemed secondary or even useless on either count. Kuspit's separation of the philosophical sphere from political action is

unhealthy; in fact, art offers a bridge between thinking and doing because it is at its best a little of both, whether it remains in the galleries or gets out on the streets. Art isn't supposed to be practical, but it's great when it is.

If it is not clear precisely what art did for the Vietnam era, it is pretty clear what the Vietnam era did for art. It created a renewed sense that art can play a significant role in social change. The variety of political culture that has emerged in the last fifteen years, the employment of increasingly sophisticated esthetic and critical methods, and expanded knowledge of diverse contexts and audiences possible for art—all these are due in part to the lessons and experiences of artists who responded in so many diverse ways to the war.

# IN "THE WORLD"

1. An ironic phrase first used by vets and then by civilians at home; it suggests little regret and no control over whatever disaster occurs. Each section of this text is introduced by a phrase from the pungent slang of the Vietnam grunt.

2. Norman Mailer, in "Vietnam Opinions," *Partisan Review*, Fall 1965.

3. The letter in the *New York Times*, June 26, 1962, was signed by hundreds; the 1968 letter, in *Cow* (the SDS magazine), was signed by Rudolf Baranik, Leon Golub, Irving Petlin, and Jack Sonenberg.

4. Donald Duncan, *Free Press*, Los Angeles, March 4, 1966, p. 4.

5. Max Kozloff, "Art," *The Nation*, February 20, 1967, p. 248.

6. Leon Golub, "The Artist as an Angry Artist," *Arts Magazine*, April 1967, p. 48.

7. Ad Reinhardt, in cartoon "How to Look at More Than Meets the Eye," *PM*, September 22, 1946.

8. Robert Smithson, in "The Artist and Politics: A Symposium," *Artforum*, September 1970, p. 39.

9. Gregory Battcock, in *Open Hearing*, Art Workers Coalition, New York, 1969, document #4. (The same year, the AWC also published a companion volume called *Documents I*. Copies are still available from Printed Matter, 77 Wooster St., New York, NY 10012.)

10. Ian Burn, "The 'Sixties: Crisis and Aftermath (Or The Memoirs of an Ex-Conceptual Artist)," *Art & Text*, no. 1 (Autumn 1981).

11. Art Workers Coalition, in broadside "Reply to Letters Regarding 'The New American Painting and Sculpture: The First Generation,'" June 15, 1969.

12. Jean Toche and Gene Swenson, in *Open Hearing*, Art Workers Coalition, New York, 1969, documents #1, #6.

13. Carl Andre, interview with Jeanne Siegel, *Arts Magazine*, November 1970, p. 175.

14. In December 1966 a passing policeman noticed in the second-floor window of the Stephen Radich Gallery on Madison Avenue a sculpture in which Old Glory appeared to be hung in a noose. Marc Morrel's one-man show was overtly antiwar, centered on a giant octopus in a helmet with a flag motif. Another sculpture was in the form of a cross that included a flag-wrapped penis, protesting the lack of separation between church and state (both supported the Vietnam war). Radich, rather than the artist, was arrested and convicted (though Morrel's work was again removed from "The Collage of Indignation" at N.Y.U. in 1967), and the Art Dealers Association of America refused to support him. The appeal reached the Supreme Court, which divided 4-4, because of the almost inexplicable absence of Justice William O. Douglas, an outspoken liberal who was then under threat of impeachment by the right wing. (See the clear and detailed article by Carl Baldwin: "Art & the Law: The Flag in Court Again," *Art In America*, May-June 1974.)

In 1989 another flag desecration case came before the court. Although it was not directly art-related, the flag-burning during a 1984 demonstration raised the same issues and was equally crucial to artists, a group of whom filed an amicus brief accompanied by reproductions of their work which would become illegal. This time the court determined such laws unconstitutional; flag-burning is a protected form of free speech. Nevertheless, flag-wrapped politicians immediately introduced laws to bypass the Supreme Court decision, and as of this writing, one such statute was passed by the House and the Senate on October 12, 1989, while an amendment to the Constitution to protect the flag is also under consideration.

15. When the Judson Three appealed, they were joined by Abbie Hoffman, who had already been convicted for wearing a flag-like shirt when he appeared before the House Committee on Un-American Activities. One of the AWC's retorts to the law was "Look what the U.S. Post Office does to our flag every day!" The audience at a symposium on the show on December 1, 1970, was encouraged to wear a canceled flag stamp to related events.

## IN RETROSPECT

1. The ultimate denial, not only of facts or events, but of reality itself.
2. Herr, pp. 276, 278.
3. Maya Lin, quoted in Elizabeth Hess, "Vietnam: Memorial of Misfortune," in Reese Williams, ed., *Unwinding the Vietnam War: From War Into Peace* (Seattle: The Real Comet Press, 1987), p. 264.
4. See note 3.
5. Hess, p. 265.
6. See *Nothing to Lose*, the newsletter of Vietnam Veterans United to Prevent World War III, a militant New York-based group that is a constant presence at Vietnam-related events and is particularly interested in reaching today's youth. Now renamed Vietnam Veterans Against the War (Anti-Imperialist), one of its mottoes is "To Hell with Rambo, Ollie North, and All They Represent!" Reaching young people is also the goal of other Vietnam veterans' groups, such as the Smedley Butler Brigade in Boston, which uses art, poetry, video, music, and talks to high school students to convey its antiwar message.
7. A veteran speaking at a panel discussion, "Reflections on the Wall," at Columbia University, November 10, 1987, reported in *Nothing to Lose*, no. 2 (1987).
8. *The New York Times*, January 5, 1989.
9. Roger Brown, interviewed by "R. V." in "Roger Brown: A Universal Language of the Eye," *Dialogue*, vol. 10, no. 5 (1987), p. 28.
10. These objects are kept in the Museum and Archaeological Regional Storage Facility (MARS) near Washington. In 1987 Cynthia Carlson made a series of monotypes based on photographs of the memorabilia titled "Sorry About That."
11. Approximately 67,000 of the 245,000 are children with birth defects, and 40,000 are wives who had miscarried. The lawsuit was settled out of court, with a totally disabled veteran receiving only \$1,200. Protests and denials continue. Research is now being conducted by twelve state agencies as the federal government continues to drag its feet. (See Jane Gardner, "Answers at Last," *The Nation*, April 11, 1987.) Only in 1988 did the Air Force even admit publicly that dioxin "can't be ruled out" as the cause of all these health problems.
12. Frances Fitzgerald, *Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and Americans in Vietnam* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), p. 568.
13. Jeff Kelley, *William T. Wiley*, Fuller-Goldeen Gallery, San Francisco, 1983.
14. A moving 25-minute color film (*Kim Phuc*) was made about the subject as an adult by Manus van de Kemp in 1984. (It is distributed by Icarus Films.)
15. Chi Le, quoted by Allan Jalon, "Refugee Artists Display the Pain of Powerlessness," *Los Angeles Times*, November 8, 1987.
16. Anonymous veteran, quoted in Myra McPherson, *Long Time Passing: Vietnam and the Haunted Generation* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1984), pp. 53-54.
17. Noam Chomsky, "Intervention in Vietnam and Central America: Parallels and Differences," *Clinton Street Quarterly*, Winter 1986, p. 46.
18. Robert Olen Butler, *The New York Times*, August 4, 1987.
19. Ronald Reagan, "Main Street Americans" speech, February 1982, quoted in Gregory Lukow's important article "Anniversaries of Defeat: Post-Vietnam Revisionism and the Commodification of Cynicism," *Journal*, Winter 1986, p. 60.
20. Edward Said, "In the Shadow of the West," *Wedge*, no. 7-8, Winter-Spring 1985, p. 4.
21. Rudolf Baranik, letter to the editor, *Art in America*, September-October 1975, p. 36.
22. Donald Kuspit, "Golub's Assassins: An Anatomy of Violence," *Art in America*, May-June 1975, p. 63.