

INCENDIARIES: THE PEOPLE'S FLAG SHOW 1970

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80 Washington Square East

New York, NY 10003

EXTENDED WALL LABELS

INCENDIARIES

Incendiaries focuses on the landmark exhibition at Judson Memorial Church and the networks of artists, activists, and communities that shaped it into a defining moment in American art and cultural protest.

Organized in collaboration with NYU's Fales Library and Special Collections and in cooperation with Judson Memorial Church, *Incendiaries* draws on rare photographs, video documentation, and archival materials from the Judson Memorial Church Archive to trace a formative chapter in the intertwined histories of art, activism, and public dissent.

As a nexus of social activism and experimental culture in Greenwich Village and a vital hub for New York's downtown avant-garde, Judson Memorial Church actively supported the artists and collectives behind *The People's Flag Show*. Presented in November 1970 amid opposition to the Vietnam War and the broader movements for civil rights, feminism, and artistic freedom, the exhibition brought together over 150 artists who used the American flag as image, object, and material to confront questions of political expression and artistic agency.

During the exhibition, Faith Ringgold, Jon Hendricks, and Jean Toche were arrested under New York's flag-desecration law in connection with *The People's Flag Show*. Later known as the "Judson Three," their prosecution reflected broader national debates over artistic freedom and the constitutionality of such laws.

Incendiaries considers how artists and activists organized in response to war, censorship, and social change, revealing how collective action intersected with political dissent and artistic practice in times of profound upheaval.

Curated by Howie Chen with Jon Huron
In collaboration with Fales Library and Special Collections, NYU

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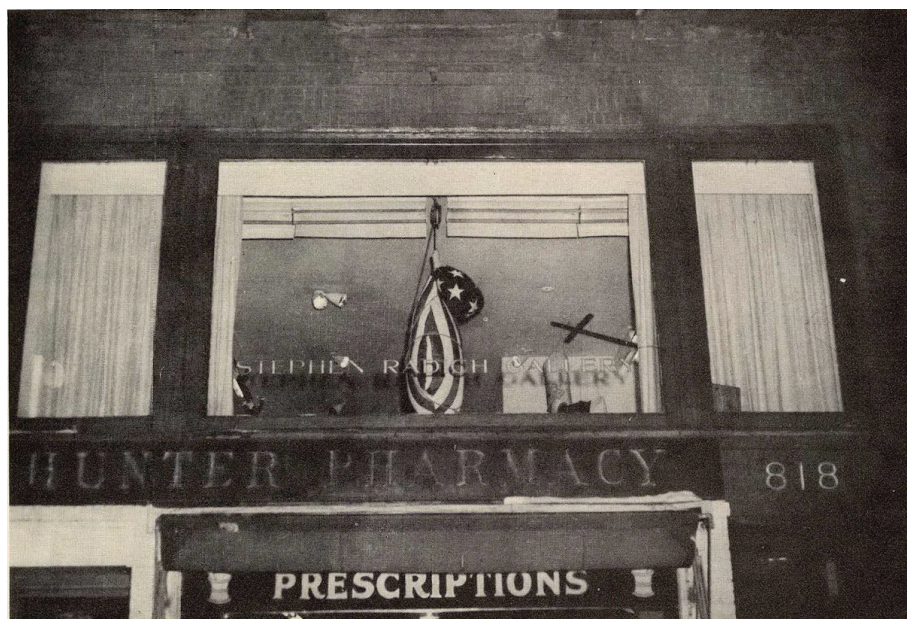
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Paula Rondon, Kevin Kelly, Nicholas Martin, Joan Kee
Michelle Faith Wallace, Yvonne Rainer, Jan van Raay,
Barbara Moore, and Jon Hendricks.

THE PEOPLE'S FLAG SHOW 1970

In 1966, New York gallerist Stephen Radich was arrested for exhibiting artworks incorporating the American flag, including one wrapped around a phallic form that prosecutors argued cast contempt upon the flag. As Radich appealed his conviction, his case helped spark the idea for *The People's Flag Show* and reflected growing government efforts to criminalize political expression in the wake of antiwar protests.

The federal government passed its first flag-desecration law in 1968 in response to protests against the Vietnam War, making it a crime to deface or burn the American flag. Over the years, some challenges to flag-desecration laws by activists and artists successfully chipped away at both state and federal flag-desecration statutes. In the landmark 1989 case *Texas v. Johnson*, the Supreme Court ruled that broad bans prohibiting flag desecration violated First Amendment protections for symbolic speech.

Since then, the federal government has made further attempts to criminalize flag desecration, including the Flag Protection Act of 1989, which was struck down by the Supreme Court. More recently, President Donald Trump issued the 2025 executive order "Prosecuting Burning of the American Flag." While the order does not make flag burning a crime, it directs federal authorities to pursue flag-desecration cases under other applicable laws.



Communion Table from Judson Memorial Church

Date unknown

Courtesy of Judson Memorial Church

Photographer unidentified (Stevens)

Interior of the Meeting Room, Judson Memorial Church, undated

Pigment print

From the Judson Memorial Church Archive (MSS 094)

Courtesy of Fales Library and Special Collections, NYU Libraries

Judson Memorial Church, located down the street at 55 Washington Square South, was founded in the 19th century by Baptist minister Edward Judson. From its inception, it was envisioned as both a place of worship and a space for community life. Reverend Howard Moody, the senior minister from 1956–1992, further established Judson's reputation as a sanctuary for all people. By the 1960s, the church was an active participant in civil rights, gay liberation, and other social movements and would later administer community health initiatives, including consultation programs for abortion, cancer, and HIV/AIDS.

In the 1960s, under the leadership of Reverend Moody and amid a reevaluation of worship practices, Judson Memorial Church removed its pews, elevated pulpit, and monumental eighteen-foot cross, transforming the sanctuary into a more flexible communal space. Moody later reflected that Jewish-Christian dialogue also prompted a reconsideration of the cross as a symbol that could evoke histories of persecution and exclusion. These changes reflected Judson's broader commitment to "a free platform" and helped establish the church as an important gathering place for artists, activists, and experimental forms of community.

The communion table presented here, on loan from the church, remained after these changes. A persistent congregational myth holds that wood from the removed cross was reused in its construction. Regardless, the table offers a suitable metaphor for Judson's commitment to community and the church's enduring role as a haven for the arts and public life in Greenwich Village.

Exhibition announcement for *The People's Flag Show*, 1970

***Historical Background of The People's Flag Show*, 1970**

Photocopy reproduction

From the Judson Memorial Church Archive (MSS 094)

Courtesy of Fales Library and Special Collections, NYU Libraries

This document was written and distributed by members of the Judson Three Defense Committee. It chronicles the organizing behind *The People's Flag Show* and situates the exhibition and subsequent arrests within a broader challenge to laws governing the use of the American flag. An expanded version with later addenda appeared in the 1978 publication *GAAG: The Guerrilla Art Action Group, 1969–1976: A Selection*, published by Printed Matter.

Howard Moody

"Symbols & Fetishes: A Left Handed Salute to the Flag" sermon, 1970

From the Judson Memorial Church Archive (MSS 094)

Courtesy of Fales Library and Special Collections, NYU Libraries

Jan van Raay

Howard Moody at the opening of *The People's Flag Show*, 1970

Pigment print

From the Jan van Raay Photographs of Art Strike Protests archive (YCAL MSS 1329)

Courtesy of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University

Distributed to the press prior to the opening of *The People's Flag Show*, this sermon articulated support for the exhibition and its challenge to laws restricting the use of the American flag. Drawing from his experience as a World War II Marine veteran and minister, Howard Moody compares the way patriots view the flag with how Christians view religious symbols.

The Art Workers' Coalition and Its Networks, 1969–71

Courtesy of 80WSE

The Art Workers' Coalition (AWC), formed in 1969, was a loose association of artists who organized around systemic issues they saw in the art world. Through protests, public hearings, and direct actions, the AWC pressured museums to address artists' rights, public access, representation, and political accountability. As AWC member Lucy Lippard described its loose structure:

"It has functioned best as an umbrella, as a conscience and complaint bureau incorporating, not without almost blowing inside out, groups and goals that are not only different, but often conflicting."

As a result of AWC's many goals, members of subcommittees sometimes splintered off into their own organizations, like Women Artists in Revolution (WAR) and the Guerrilla Art Action Group (GAAG). Eventually, the systemic fractures within the organization became increasingly apparent, particularly around issues of sexism, racism, and organizational structure. The AWC disbanded in 1971, in part because of the divisions that had characterized the organization. The AWC's campaigns helped establish artists as workers with the right to challenge the institutions that exhibited and profited from their work. It set an enduring precedent for artists organizing collectively to demand greater accountability from cultural institutions.

Global Village

Howard Moody interview (excerpt), 1970

Video, sound

From the Judson Memorial Church Archive (MSS 094)

Courtesy of Fales Library and Special Collections, NYU Libraries

The changes to Judson's space in the 1960s reflected the church leadership's desire to make Christianity responsive to the realities of the contemporary world. Liturgy directly translates to "the work of the people," and according to Moody's interpretation, no ritual is meaningful or authentic if it does not resemble people's lived experiences. This understanding of liturgy drove the church's activist stances and extended to the arts, which Moody saw as another way to bring the work and experiences of people into the life of the church.

The 1960s marked an experimental era of art in New York. Artists like Yvonne Rainer explored ordinary movement in choreography, and groups active in Greenwich Village, like the Living Theatre, blurred the lines between theater and ritual. Inspired by the burgeoning downtown art scene, Moody brought Al Carmines on as assistant minister. Carmines started the Judson Poets' Theater with the principle that artists would encounter no censorship or obligation to produce religious work. Judson Dance Theater also brought experimental dance and performance into the church, alongside poetry, theater, music, and visual art. The Judson Gallery, curated by Jon Hendricks, expanded this openness to the visual arts and became a site for Fluxus, performance, and other experimental practices.

By opening up the Meeting Room at Judson to secular artistic groups, the church created a space that reflected multiple experiences of reality and in which religious and artistic experimentation could coexist. Today, Judson continues to lend its space to artists, performers, and community organizations, cementing its legacy as an important center for the arts in Greenwich Village.

OPEN SHOW

The People's Flag Show grew out of discussions in early 1970 and was subsequently proposed to the Art Workers' Coalition (AWC) amid concern over flag desecration laws, including the prosecution of New York gallerist Stephen Radich for exhibiting artworks incorporating the American flag. Drawing on the AWC's organizing principles, the show addressed representation, political participation, and artistic autonomy. Coalition members challenged the selection practices of major museums, where women and artists of color remained largely excluded, asking who could participate in exhibitions and who determined which artists were shown.

The exhibition was an "open show," a concept called for by Women Students and Artists for Black Art Liberation (WSABAL) in its 1970 manifesto. Instead of a jury or curatorial committee, the organizers issued an open call for artists to contribute one work incorporating the American flag. The open format was intended to more closely represent the city's population, making participation itself part of the exhibition's politics. More than 150 artists took part, bringing together figures such as Faith Ringgold, Carl Andre, and Jasper Johns with artists without established careers. The Judson Memorial Church Archive does not contain an official list of all participating artists. Participants hung their own works throughout the Meeting Room in an exhibition spanning painting, photography, sculpture, and performance.

The exhibition opened on November 9 with a flag-burning action by members of Guerrilla Art Action Group (GAAG), followed by Yvonne Rainer's *Trio A with Flags* and a *Symposium on Repression*. The symposium brought together artists, activists, and representatives from political liberation groups for discussions of censorship, political repression, and freedom of expression.

Global Village

Symposium on Repression

at *The People's Flag Show (excerpts)*, 1970

Video, sound

From the Judson Memorial Church Archive (MSS 094)

Courtesy of Fales Library and Special Collections, NYU Libraries

The opening night of *The People's Flag Show* concluded with a *Symposium on Repression*, held in Judson Memorial Church's Meeting Room. Bringing together artists, activists, attorneys, and representatives of political and liberation groups, the event was moderated by artist Paul von Ringelheim.

Symposium on Repression: Thematic Selections

Artist and Art World

Alex Gross, art critic and AWC member

Faith Ringgold, artist and WSABAL member

Gregory Battcock, art historian and AWC member

Flag as Symbol

Joachim Neugroschel, literary translator

Sam Wiener, artist and AWC member

Kate Millett, artist, feminist scholar, and representative of the
Women's Liberation Movement

Revolution

Lil Picard (interviewed by Joachim Neugroschel), artist, writer,
and AWC member

Frank Justice, activist

Unidentified representative, Black Panther Party

"John Dewey," Gay Liberation Front

Jan van Raay

Kate Millett at the Symposium on Repression, 1970

Pigment print

Alex Gross at the *Symposium on Repression*, 1970

Pigment print

**Opening of The People's Flag Show,
Judson Memorial Church, 1970**

Pigment print

From the Judson Memorial Church Archive (MSS 094)

Courtesy of Fales Library and Special Collections, NYU Libraries

Kate Millett

***The American Dream Goes to Pot* (installation view), 1970**

Pigment print

From the Jan van Raay Photographs of Art Strike Protests archive
(YCAL MSS 1329)

Courtesy of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library,
Yale University

Jan van Raay

**Installation view of *The People's Flag Show*,
Judson Memorial Church, 1970**

Pigment print

Abbie Hoffman at the *Symposium on Repression*, 1970

Pigment print

From the Judson Memorial Church Archive (MSS 094)

Courtesy of Fales Library and Special Collections, NYU Libraries

Jan van Raay

**Installation view of *The People's Flag Show*,
Judson Memorial Church, 1970**

Pigment print

Work by Mel Roman at *The People's Flag Show*, 1970

Pigment print

From the Jan van Raay Photographs of Art Strike Protests archive
(YCAL MSS 1329)

Courtesy of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library,
Yale University

Faith Ringgold

The People's Flag Show, 1970

Screenprint

Courtesy of the Anyone Can Fly Foundation
and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

This poster, designed by Faith Ringgold to advertise *The People's Flag Show* across the city, features text by Michele Wallace: "A flag which does not belong to the people to do with as they see fit should be burned and forgotten. Artists, workers, students, women, third world people, you are oppressed. What does the flag mean to you?"

Women Students and Artists for Black Art Liberation (WSABAL) was founded in 1970 by Faith Ringgold, Michele Wallace, and others. Members included artist Tom Lloyd and students from the School of Visual Arts. While groups within the Art Workers' Coalition advocated for women and for Black and Puerto Rican artists, Ringgold observed that these efforts rarely overlapped. WSABAL sought to bring these struggles together.

In early 1970, the Emergency Cultural Government emerged from the New York Art Strike to protest U.S. involvement in the war in Vietnam and the bombing of Cambodia. Led by Robert Morris, the group urged artists to withdraw from the U.S. Pavilion at the Venice Biennale and organized a "Liberated" Venice Biennale in New York. Ringgold and Wallace challenged its claim to liberation because the selected artists were, in their words, "white male superstars." WSABAL argued that a liberated exhibition should instead be open to women and Black artists. Under pressure from the group, the exhibition adopted an open format, providing an important precedent for *The People's Flag Show* later that year.

Jan van Raay

Opening of *The People's Flag Show*,
Judson Memorial Church, 1970

Pigment print

Faith Ringgold at the *Symposium on Repression*, 1970

Pigment print

From the Judson Memorial Church Archive (MSS 094)

Courtesy of Fales Library and Special Collections, NYU Libraries

Installation views of *The People's Flag Show*,
Judson Memorial Church, 1970

Pigment prints

Work by Susan Monteith at *The People's Flag Show*, 1970

Pigment print

Installation views of *The People's Flag Show*,
Judson Memorial Church, 1970

Pigment prints

Work by Aristides Papadas at *The People's Flag Show*, 1970

Pigment print

Installation views of *The People's Flag Show*,
Judson Memorial Church, 1970

Pigment prints

From the Jan van Raay Photographs of Art Strike Protests archive
(YCAL MSS 1329)

Courtesy of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library,
Yale University

The Judson Gallery grew out of the church's arts program, which began providing exhibition space to artists in 1957. Its informal structure gave artists considerable freedom to experiment and became an early site for Happenings, with artists including Allan Kaprow and Claes Oldenburg presenting work there. These staged events emphasized audience participation and spontaneity, challenging conventional distinctions between art and everyday experience.

Jon Hendricks began working at Judson in 1965 as a conscientious objector during the Vietnam War. With the support of Reverend Howard Moody, he later reopened the Judson Gallery and served as its director through the late 1960s. Building on Judson's earlier history of Happenings, Hendricks expanded its program through projects including *12 Evenings of Manipulations* and the 1968 *Destruction in Art Symposium*. Artists associated with Fluxus and Destruction Art challenged conventional ideas about the production and commodification of art while responding to the Vietnam War and other political issues.

At Judson, Hendricks' practice moved from painting toward what he called "critical art activism." He became active in the Art Workers' Coalition and co-founded the Guerrilla Art Action Group (GAAG) with Jean Toche. In 1970, Hendricks and Toche proposed that Judson host *The People's Flag Show*.



THE JUDSON THREE

On November 13, 1970, Faith Ringgold, Jon Hendricks, and Jean Toche were arrested at Judson Memorial Church and charged under New York State's flag-desecration law. The artists, who became known as the Judson Three, were released and warned that reopening the exhibition could result in further arrests.

The following day, Moody and Hendricks posted a sign on the church doors announcing the exhibition's closure by order of the District Attorney's Office. Judson reopened for Sunday services with the works still installed. Over the weekend, the Judson Three and Moody held press conferences on the church steps and inside the Meeting Room and participated in a video interview with the independent video group Global Village.

The exhibition and arrests provoked sharply divided responses in the press. Some writers supported the exhibition and its challenge to flag-desecration laws, while others criticized the art or condemned Judson for allowing the exhibition to take place. The controversy extended into the wider Baptist community, where Judson's political and cultural activities became subjects of debate.

Fundraising efforts were organized to support the legal defense of the Judson Three. Their attorneys, Florynce Kennedy, Robert Projansky, and Gerald Lefcourt, circulated a letter challenging the constitutionality of the arrests and calling for support from the art community. Benefits and other efforts to support their legal defense followed in New York and Europe.

Press coverage of *The People's Flag Show* and the Judson Three

From the Judson Memorial Church Archive (MSS 094)

Courtesy of Fales Library and Special Collections, NYU Libraries

Press responses to *The People's Flag Show* and the arrests of the Judson Three were impassioned and often contentious.

Grace Glueck described "a strange assortment of flags" in *The New York Times*, while *Village Voice* critic John Perreault called it "a perfectly hideous but in its own way beautiful exhibition." Writing later in *Art in America*, Lucy R. Lippard situated the arrests within a broader conflict among political dissent, artistic freedom, and the state's power to regulate the flag as a national symbol.

Global Village

Judson Three Benefit flyer, 1970

Summons, 1970

The Committee to Defend the Judson Three Flyer, 1971

Judson Three Defense Fund

An Open Letter to the Art Community, 1970

From the Judson Memorial Church Archive (MSS 094)

Courtesy of Fales Library and Special Collections, NYU Libraries

Jan van Raay

**The Judson Three: Jean Toche, Jon Hendricks,
and Faith Ringgold, 1970**

Pigment print

From the Jan van Raay Photographs of Art Strike Protests archive
(YCAL MSS 1329)

Courtesy of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library,
Yale University

Global Village

**Interview with the Judson Three: Faith Ringgold, Jon Hendricks,
and Jean Toche, 1970**

Video, sound

From the Judson Memorial Church Archive (MSS 094)

Courtesy of Fales Library and Special Collections, NYU Libraries

Global Village recorded the Judson Three and Reverend Howard Moody following the artists' arrests as part of its broader video documentation of *The People's Flag Show* presented throughout *Incendiaries*.

Founded in 1969 by John Reilly and Rudi Stern, Global Village was part of the emerging alternative media movement. Working outside commercial broadcasting, the group brought cameras into streets and communities while developing new ways to produce and circulate independent television. Using portable video equipment, its members documented Northern Ireland's political conflict in *The Irish Tapes*, the Christopher Street Liberation Day march, and feminist perspectives on sexuality in *The Politics of Intimacy*, among other subjects.

Through workshops, public-access programming, and screenings, the group sought to create an alternative network for the production and exchange of video.

**Correspondence to Judson Memorial Church
concerning *The People's Flag Show*, 1970–71**

From the Judson Memorial Church Archive (MSS 094)
Courtesy of Fales Library and Special Collections, NYU Libraries

Letters sent to Judson following *The People's Flag Show* attacked Reverend Moody's patriotism and Christian values and criticized the church's involvement in the exhibition.

At Judson, the arts program flourished under Howard Moody's commitment to free speech. The principle of "a free platform in a free church" provided a sanctuary for controversial groups that might otherwise have struggled to find space. This position brought Judson into conflict with Baptist congregations around the country.

In 1965, *The New York Times* published an article titled "Nudes Dance in the Sanctuary of the Church" about a dance performed nude by Yvonne Rainer and Robert Morris in the Meeting Room. Baptist congregations from across the country flooded Judson with criticism based on the headline alone. In response, Moody asked Carmines to issue a statement defending Judson's relationship with the arts:

"Because somehow, if the church is going to be faithful in this age, it must cut its way through the sticky glutinous syrup known as religion and deal with real people in real situations who have real feelings—and real bodies."

Allowing artists to perform in the Meeting Room was not an endorsement of their views or actions, but rather reflected Judson's commitment to providing artists with a free platform. While some Baptist congregations objected to Judson's radical stances, Moody saw them as a continuation of the church's legacy of supporting immigrants, unions, and runaway children.

Jan van Raay

**Jon Hendricks and Jean Toche with exhibition closure signs
at Judson Memorial Church, 1970**

Pigment prints

Exhibition closure signs at Judson Memorial Church, 1970

Pigment print

(opposite wall)

**Howard Moody and Jon Hendricks with exhibition closure signs
at Judson Memorial Church, 1970**

Pigment print

From the Jan van Raay Photographs of Art Strike Protests archive
(YCAL MSS 1329)

Courtesy of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library,
Yale University

*"The Peoples' Flag Show
has been closed by the
District Attorney's Office
after the arrest of three committee members
and under threat of further charges and
seizure of the exhibition if reopened
[signed] Independent Artists 'Flag Show' Committee"*

*"We deplore the actions of
the D.A.'s office as a denial
of freedom of people to express
their dissent by the use of the flag.
Sunday Service will be held as usual
at 11:00 A.M.
The Judson Church Board"*

AFTERMATH

In the months that followed, the Judson Three carried their challenge to flag-desecration laws into the courts and public spaces. The arrests quickly became a subject of debate within the New York art community. At an Art Workers' Coalition panel, attorneys, artists, and arts professionals debated their implications, while Hendricks and Toche brought the campaign to the Museum of Modern Art by circulating petitions with supporters.

Supporters gathered on the courthouse steps at the Judson Three's first court appearance and burned miniature American flags. In 1971, other plaintiffs, including Abbie Hoffman, joined the Judson Three in a federal lawsuit challenging state and federal flag-desecration laws. They announced the suit with a demonstration at the Federal Courthouse at Foley Square, drawing support from artists, feminist groups, antiwar organizations, and art workers. The federal complaint was later denied.

In New York State court, the Judson Three were found guilty of violating the flag-desecration law. The New York Civil Liberties Union agreed to undertake an appeal, but the appeal was never pursued. Reflecting on the case years later, Ringgold recalled that she had hoped to take it to the Supreme Court: "I wanted to get to [the] Supreme Court, because I wanted to be made innocent."

Nearly two decades later, in the landmark 1989 case *Texas v. Johnson*, the Supreme Court ruled that flag burning was a form of expression protected by the First Amendment.

Jan van Raay

Art Workers' Coalition panel on the Judson Three, 1970

Pigment prints

From the Jan van Raay Photographs of Art Strike Protests archive
(YCAL MSS 1329)

Courtesy of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library,
Yale University

On November 30, 1970, the Art Workers' Coalition convened a panel at its headquarters at 729 Broadway to discuss the arrests of the Judson Three, the implications of flag-desecration laws for artists, and freedom of expression. The discussion also addressed the case of gallerist Stephen Radich, then awaiting Supreme Court review. After a statement from MoMA director John Hightower supporting the arrested artists, the Coalition passed a motion inviting the museum to exhibit *The People's Flag Show*.

Participants:

Dore Ashton	— Chair, Art History Department, Cooper Union
Richard Feigen	— Director, Richard Feigen Gallery
Howard Wise	— Director, Howard Wise Gallery
Elizabeth Shaw	— Director of Public Information, Museum of Modern Art
Allan Schoener	— Visual Arts Director, New York State Council on the Arts
Florynce Kennedy	— Attorney for the Judson Three
Robert Projansky	— Attorney for the Judson Three
Gerald Lefcourt	— Attorney for the Judson Three

Alex Gross — Moderator

Global Village

Abbie Hoffman and Gerald Lefcourt at the
Symposium on Repression, GAAG Action at MoMA (excerpts),
1970

Video, sound

From the Judson Memorial Church Archive (MSS 094)
Courtesy of Fales Library and Special Collections, NYU Libraries

Abbie Hoffman, a cofounder of the Youth International Party (Yippies), was a prominent antiwar and countercultural activist. In 1968, he was arrested after arriving at a hearing of the House Committee on Un-American Activities wearing a shirt patterned after the American flag and was later convicted under the federal flag-desecration statute. Hoffman participated in the *Symposium on Repression* at *The People's Flag Show*, appearing in a replica of the flag shirt. He later joined the Judson Three and other plaintiffs in their federal challenge to state and federal flag-desecration laws. His attorney Gerald Lefcourt who represented him in the flag case also spoke at the symposium.

Jan van Raay

Judson Three petition at the Museum of Modern Art, 1970

Pigment prints

From the Jan van Raay Photographs of Art Strike Protests archive
(YCAL MSS 1329)

Courtesy of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library,
Yale University

In December 1970, Jon Hendricks and Jean Toche brought their campaign against flag-desecration laws to MoMA. They collected signatures in the museum's lobby for a petition supporting their legal challenge to state and federal laws governing the use of the American flag. The campaign continued into January 1971.

The petition read:

"I hereby petition the state and federal government to cease and desist from arresting or molesting people for their use or display of the American flag in whatever way they deem appropriate. Interference with the free-expression of the artist or the individual are a sure sign of a repressive state. I fully support the fight of the Judson Three to have the state and federal laws regarding the use and display of the American flag declared unconstitutional."

Jan van Raay

**First court appearance of the Judson Three, New York
City Criminal Court, 1970**

Pigment print

From the Jan van Raay Photographs of Art Strike Protests archive
(YCAL MSS 1329)

Courtesy of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library,
Yale University

**Flag burning following the Judson Three's first court appearance,
1970**

Pigment prints

From the Judson Memorial Church Archive (MSS 094)

Courtesy of Fales Library and Special Collections, NYU Libraries

**First court appearance of the Judson Three,
New York City Criminal Court, 1970**

Pigment print

From the Jan van Raay Photographs of Art Strike Protests archive
(YCAL MSS 1329)

Courtesy of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library,
Yale University

**First court appearance of the Judson Three,
New York City Criminal Court, 1970**

Pigment print

From the Judson Memorial Church Archive (MSS 094)

Courtesy of Fales Library and Special Collections, NYU Libraries

On December 1, 1970, Faith Ringgold, Jon Hendricks, and Jean Toche appeared in New York City Criminal Court for their first hearing following their arrest at *The People's Flag Show*. The proceedings were postponed and the Judson Three requested a jury trial. After the hearing, they gathered with supporters on the courthouse steps. The group burned miniature American flags and sang "The Star-Spangled Banner" in falsetto in the presence of uniformed police officers.

Legal brief dossier for the Judson Three federal lawsuit, 1971

Legal brief for the Judson Three federal lawsuit, 1971

Photocopy reproduction

Jan van Raay

Announcement of the Judson Three federal lawsuit,

Federal Courthouse, New York, 1971

Pigment prints

From the Judson Memorial Church Archive (MSS 094)

Courtesy of Fales Library and Special Collections, NYU Libraries

On February 5, 1971, the Judson Three and their lawyers announced the filing of a federal lawsuit challenging New York State and federal flag-desecration laws as unconstitutional. The suit sought to prevent the prosecution of the plaintiffs and other citizens under the state and federal statutes.

Denied access to the press room at the Federal Courthouse, the plaintiffs and their supporters held the press conference outside in the rain and cold. Statements were read by the Judson Three, Abbie Hoffman, representatives of Judson Memorial Church, the Art Workers' Coalition, women's liberation and antiwar groups, and other organizations. During the press conference, the group used an American flag to stand on.

The federal suit was brought by the Judson Three together with artists and other plaintiffs, including Leon Golub, Geoffrey Hendricks, Lucy R. Lippard, Sabra Moore, Jan van Raay, Michele Wallace, and Abbie Hoffman. Their brief argued that New York and federal flag-desecration laws violated First and Fourteenth Amendment protections of speech and expression, including the use of the flag in art, protest, and other symbolic acts.

Statements were read by:

Carter Burden	— City Councilman of New York City (in absentia)
Leon Golub	— Artists and Writers Protest against the War in Vietnam
Alex Gross	— National Art Workers Community
Jon Hendricks	
Abbie Hoffman	
Poppy Johnson	— Ad Hoc Women's Committee
Cliff Joseph	— Black Emergency Cultural Coalition
Kate Millett	— Women's Liberation Movement
Anna Lou Pickett	— Judson Memorial Church
Faith Ringgold	
Allan Schoener	— Visual Arts Director, New York State Council on the Arts (in absentia)
Dena Shupe	— Art Workers' Coalition
Jean Toche	
Ron Wollin	— New York Peace Action Committee
Artists United (in absentia)	
Seth Siegelaub	— Moderator

Jan van Raay

Demonstration in support of the Judson Three, Foley Square, 1971

Pigment prints

(opposite wall)

**Jon Hendricks, Faith Ringgold, and Jean Toche at the demonstration
in support of the Judson Three, Foley Square, 1971**

Pigment print

From the Judson Memorial Church Archive (MSS 094)

Courtesy of Fales Library and Special Collections, NYU Libraries

On February 16, 1971, supporters of the Judson Three and Abbie Hoffman gathered outside the U.S. Federal Courthouse at Foley Square to call for flag-desecration laws to be declared unconstitutional. The demonstration was supported by WSABAL, the Black Emergency Cultural Coalition, Artists United, the Ad Hoc Women's Committee, Women Artists in Revolution, Artists and Writers Protest Against the War in Vietnam, the National Art Workers Community, the Art Workers' Coalition, the New York Art Strike, and the Greenwich Village Peace Center.

Later that afternoon, attorney Robert Projansky argued before a federal judge for the convening of a three-judge court to hear the case. The court later denied the request.

Faith Ringgold

***The Judson 3*, 1970**

Screenprint

Courtesy of the Anyone Can Fly Foundation
and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

FLAG BURNING

On the opening day of *The People's Flag Show*, Jean Toche and Jon Hendricks staged a public burning ceremony outside Judson Memorial Church in front of viewers and the press. The action centered on a handmade object resembling the American flag, but with its canton replaced by text associated with the Belgian Government in Exile's *Declaration of War*. Hendricks and Toche's action served two purposes: to protest laws that restricted free expression and to protest American involvement in the oppression of the Belgian people. Accompanied by a reading from the manifesto's opening chapter, the ceremony preceded Yvonne Rainer's *Trio A with Flags* performance and the public *Symposium on Repression*.

Prior to *The People's Flag Show*, Toche and Hendricks proposed an action at the United Nations involving altered American flags sewn into a sack and filled with animal bones, skulls, and entrails before being publicly burned. The artists modified their plans before the opening amid concerns that arrests could jeopardize the exhibition. Documentation and remnants of the burning ceremony were later displayed inside the exhibition.

Guerrilla Art Action Group (GAAG)

Burning ceremony of the American flag,

The People's Flag Show, 1970

Video, sound

Video documentation by Global Village

From the Judson Memorial Church Archive (MSS 094)

Courtesy of Fales Library and Special Collections, NYU Libraries

Original pew from Judson Memorial Church

Courtesy of Judson Memorial Church

Jan van Raay

Jean Toche and Jon Hendricks with the burned flag

at *The People's Flag Show*, 1970

Pigment print

Flag before the Guerrilla Art Action Group (GAAG)

burning ceremony, 1970

Pigment print

From the Judson Memorial Church Archive (MSS 094)

Courtesy of Fales Library and Special Collections, NYU Libraries

The "flag" used during the opening of *The People's Flag Show* consisted of two handmade flags stitched together, containing animal bones, skulls, and entrails. The recurring use of animal carcasses and bones in GAAG protests can be traced to destruction art presented at Judson Memorial Church. These practices were part of a broader international exploration of the relationship between destruction and the creation of art, brought together at the 1966 *Destruction in Art Symposium* (DIAS) in London. In 1967, Judson Gallery director Jon Hendricks and artist Raphael Montañez Ortiz organized *12 Evenings of Manipulations*, a series that allowed one artist per day to do anything with the space, often engaging with the theme of destruction. Invited artists included *The People's Flag Show* participants Kate Millett, Lil Picard, Bici Hendricks, Geoffrey Hendricks, and Jean Toche.

Government in Exile,
Republic of the Federal Socialist States of Belgium
Declaration of War, 1970

From the Judson Memorial Church Archive (MSS 094)
Courtesy of Fales Library and Special Collections, NYU Libraries

The Belgian Government in Exile was an artist project created by Jean Toche to confront cultural and linguistic problems in Belgium, his home country. In a later interview, he described it as an invented political identity through which he addressed broader political conflicts. Like members of the AWC, who connected American foreign policy to the actions of major art museums, Toche linked political tensions in Belgium with the war in Vietnam. Written in the revolutionary voice of a government operating from exile, the *Declaration of War* denounced political repression, social oppression, and imperialism, aligning itself with broader antiwar and liberation struggles of the late 1960s.

Jan van Raay
Installation view of *The People's Flag Show*,
Judson Memorial Church, 1970
Pigment print

From the Jan van Raay Photographs of Art Strike Protests archive
(YCAL MSS 1329)
Courtesy of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library,
Yale University

Guerrilla Art Action Group (GAAG)

Guerrilla Art Action Group's Contribution to The People's Flag Show, 1970

From the Judson Memorial Church Archive (MSS 094)

Courtesy of Fales Library and Special Collections, NYU Libraries

In 1969, Jean Toche, Jon Hendricks, and Poppy Johnson formed the Guerrilla Art Action Group (GAAG) out of frustration with the direction of the AWC action committee. The group shared goals with the AWC, opposing the Vietnam War and challenging museum practices and the exclusion of people of color from art spaces. In contrast to the AWC's inclination toward picketing as a form of action, GAAG was inspired by guerrilla warfare tactics and militant forms of action. GAAG's best-known action, *Blood Bath*, took place at MoMA in 1969. Members of the group, wearing plastic bags filled with beef blood, enacted a fight as the blood spilled across the museum's lobby. The action called for the resignation of the Rockefellers from the board of trustees due to their involvement in the production of military weapons used in Vietnam.

TRIO A WITH FLAGS

Yvonne Rainer emerged from New York's experimental dance and performance scene in the early 1960s and became a founding member of Judson Dance Theater. Rainer was interested in minimalism and "tasklike" movement, which led her to choreograph one of her most notable works, *Trio A*, a four-and-a-half to five-minute dance performed with no repetition, no eye contact with the audience, and no movement privileged over another. In this version of the dance, *Trio A with Flags*, each dancer, wearing only a flag tied around the neck, performs the movement twice. The performance featured Rainer, Barbara Lloyd, David Gordon, Nancy Green, Steve Paxton, and Lincoln Scott, dancers drawn largely from Grand Union.

When Jon Hendricks and Jean Toche invited Rainer to participate in *The People's Flag Show* in 1970, she was already thinking about integrating protest into performance as a response to the Vietnam War. She created *WAR* around the same time and incorporated the flag as a symbol, but felt the piece did not address flag desecration. In another performance of *Trio A*, Rainer planned for Steve Paxton to perform the dance nude in front of a flag at the Smithsonian. Paxton was stopped by the curator, leading to discussions about censorship. For Rainer, combining nudity with the flag was a protest against both repression and censorship.

Conceived amid Rainer's growing political activism and feminism, *Trio A with Flags* marks a turning point in her practice, foreshadowing the political concerns that shaped her work throughout the 1970s.

Although *Trio A* was later documented through film and labanotation, Rainer preferred to teach the dance in person, through body-to-body transmission. The dancers rely on their own rhythms, moving in and out of sync with the other performers. Because the dancers perform the movement on their own terms, *Trio A with Flags* asserts their right to use the flag in any way they choose. Later performances include a restaging in 1999 to raise money for Judson Memorial Church and a 2020 performance at Performa.

Peter Moore

Steve Paxton in Yvonne Rainer's *Trio A with Flags*,
Judson Memorial Church, New York, 1970

Gelatin silver print

Peter Moore Estate and Paula Cooper Gallery

Judson Dance Theater formed at Judson Memorial Church in 1962, after participants in Robert Dunn's choreography class sought a larger venue to present their work. Reverend Al Carmines and the church leadership welcomed the group into Judson's growing arts ministry, viewing artistic experimentation as an integral part of the church's mission rather than a separate activity. According to Howard Moody, Judson's support for artists stemmed from its commitment to engaging the world through the arts and defending creative freedom.

Judson Dance Theater helped define a new approach to contemporary dance characterized by experimentation and the questioning of established choreographic conventions.

Early participants included Yvonne Rainer, Steve Paxton, David Gordon, Deborah Hay, Fred Herko, Elaine Summers, and Trisha Brown, among many others. Although the original Judson Dance Theater lasted only two years, its participants continued to perform and collaborate at Judson and elsewhere.

Peter Moore

Barbara Dilley in Yvonne Rainer's *Trio A with Flags*,
Judson Memorial Church, New York, 1970

Gelatin silver print

Peter Moore Estate and Paula Cooper Gallery

Peter Moore

David Gordon in Yvonne Rainer's *Trio A with Flags*,
Judson Memorial Church, New York, 1970

Gelatin silver print

Peter Moore Estate and Paula Cooper Gallery

Peter Moore

Yvonne Rainer in Yvonne Rainer's *Trio A with Flags*,
Judson Memorial Church, New York, 1970

Gelatin silver print

Peter Moore Estate and Paula Cooper Gallery

Yvonne Rainer

Trio A with Flags, 1970

Film transferred to video, sound

From the Judson Memorial Church Archive (MSS 094)

Courtesy of Fales Library and Special Collections, NYU Libraries

Original pew from Judson Memorial Church

Courtesy of Judson Memorial Church

First performed at Judson Memorial Church in 1966 as *The Mind Is a Muscle, Part I*, *Trio A* became one of Rainer's most influential choreographic works. The dance underwent numerous revisions over the following years, and she later described these transformations as its many "transmogrifications."

For *The People's Flag Show*, she wrote that she wanted "a statement with stronger political overtones" and that combining the flag with public nudity would create a "double-barreled attack on repression and censorship." On November 9, 1970, Barbara Lloyd, David Gordon, Nancy Green, Steve Paxton, Lincoln Scott, and Rainer gathered in the Meeting Room of Judson Memorial Church, where flag-related artworks had already been installed. They tied three-by-five-foot flags around their necks, undressed, and each performed *Trio A* twice. The performance was recorded by NBC and Global Village.