

Carl Andres 1963 poem

**America Drill**  
**Red Cut White Cut Blue Cut**  
in memory of Thomas Morton of Merry Mount 1625



*America Drill* is based on three interwoven texts, respectively titled *Red Cut*, *White Cut* and *Blue Cut*. *Red Cut* consists of excerpts from Ebenezer W. Pierce's *Indian History and Genealogy* pertaining to the good sachem Massasoit of the Wampanoag Tribe (1878). *White Cut* includes excerpts from Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Indian History and Genealogy Journals* from 1820 to 1824 and 1838 to 1841. The text in *Blue Cut* is taken from Charles Lindbergh's *We* (1927) and from Kenneth S. Davis' *The Hero: Charles A. Lindbergh and the American Dream* (1959). The text concludes with a quotation from F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*.

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# Carl Andre

## *America Drill*

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\*Obligatory mention : © Vera Kotaji pp. Michèle Didier

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### **About *America Drill* by Carl Andre**

Taking a look at the poetic work of Carl Andre today reveals two keymost aspects. On the one hand, the sheer importance of this activity within his whole works, creates a new angle for its approach. Carl Andre started writing poems at the age of nine, long before contributing, in the unavoidable way that we know, to the evolution of the plastic language, and in particular to Minimalism, through his sculptures. By rigorously ordered alignments of identical modules, Carl Andre invites the spectator to cross them and this displacement through the work creates multiple prospects. The artist also proposes to walk on the work when for example, some squares are assembled on the ground.

The relationship with the book will be obviously different, maintaining the reader in a position, a «point of view», by nature frontal. The perception of the work will be done in the space limited by the format of the page (format standard generally used). Example is his collaboration on the Xerox Book, a famous book made of photocopies, published in 1000 copies and signed in 1968 by seven minimalists and conceptual artists. Carl Andre arranges on 25 pages a serie of squares whose number corresponds each time with the numbering of the page. The progression follows an arithmetic logic, but the forms take place at random. However constraining the system seems to be, the artist is encouraged to develop a freedom and a dynamic which take place according to a method completely different from his sculptural work, rigorously registered in space, always according to a modular system, in rigorous assemblings of one single piece.

In addition, it is the implication of the artist in the History. His book entitled *America Drill* is a high testimony of this very concern and shows to be the result of an infinitely rich and complex line of thought. At the beginning the work consisted of 48 flying pages.

Carl Andre entrusted the publication to Michèle Didier, editor of artists' books who designed a facsimile, operating choices which made the work possible to find its completion.

Carl Andre has been elaborating books from the end of the fifties by gathering mixes of typewritten texts, collages, calligrammes. But in the year 1957 the artist discovers the text «Indian History and Genealogy», written in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Ebenezer W Pierce, who was born like Carl Andre in the State of Massassuchet, where the genocide which eradicated the native Indian population took place one century earlier.

This document deals with the King Philip's War, which represents for the artist a typical example, the kind of battle that was fought many times before and has been fought many times since. It gives account of the suffering of a population, destroyed, and of the crime on which the history of the United States was built. The artist initially tries to collect the cry of despair of the victims in its brutal truth. He isolates some groups of words, transcribes them on his typewriter, inserts ampersands, so composing an uninterrupted poetic collage. The result hardly satisfies him and six years later he goes back to it, influenced by Michel Butor's *Mobile*, a semantic journey through America, a «torch-book» with historical and especially geographical dimension. He also finds in the theory of the prime numbers of Kurt Gödel (system in which a sequence of these numbers would never come back on another sequence) the scale of classification which allows him to reorganize the literary matter. Meanwhile the sources grew richer. From now on it includes three sections, resulting from excerpts of various texts. To each section corresponds a color of the American flag.

So we have, in order :

#### **Red cut**

All words phrases and sentences in this cut are taken from *Indian History and Genealogy pertaining to the good Sachem Massasoit of the Wampanoag Tribe and his Descendants* by Ebenezer W Pierce published by Zerviah Gould Mitchell at North Abington Massachusetts in 1878.

#### **White cut**

All words phrases and sentences in this cut are taken from *Indian History and Genealogy from Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson 1820 to 1824 and 1838 to 1841* edited by Edward Waldo Emerson and Waldo Emerson Forbes published by Houghton Mifflin Company at Bos-

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ton, Massachusetts in 1909 and from *Incident at Harper's Ferry* edited by Edward Stone published by Prentice Hall inc at Englewood Cliffs New Jersey in 1956.

### **Blue cut**

All words and phrases in this cut are taken from *We* by Charles A Lindbergh published by G P Putnam's Sons at New York, New York in 1927 and from *The Hero Charles A Lindbergh and the American Dream* by Kenneth S. Davis published by Doubleday and Company INC at Garden City New York in 1959.

### **Conclusion**

*He had come along way to this blue lawn and his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it he did not know that it was already behind him somewhere in that vast obscurity beyond the city where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night.*

The artist considers *America Drill* as «a long poem the subject of which is three racial tragedies – the tragedy of territory as property – the tragedy of person as property – the tragedy of everything as property.»

The significance of the term «drill» refers to the act of tracing a way in a station of sorting, of connecting two coaches of train between them. Basically it refers to the link between two elements.

These texts were typed by Carl Andre, who afterwards made them cut out in strips, and resticked on another sheet of the same paper. The artist inserted the strips according to the Gödel code. Therefore, at the beginning of the book, the reading of one of the paragraphs is carried out line after line. After that, every two lines, and then, every three lines.

*Red Cut, White Cut, Blue Cut.* The text doesn't present any punctuation. The typographical choice of certain excerpts varies from lower case to upper case. It must be considered that important intervals between the words give rhythm to the page and that the caesura of the words is subjected to the limit of the framework in which the text is made up. From a merely plastic point of view, the work of the adhesive shows through the strips, leaving today trails of color, as if time had still a word to add through the materiality of the work. As epilogue, we find an extract from *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald. Once more transcribed without punctuation, with the same space between each letter, and the same interval between each word. So the reading becomes a deciphering, by the effort to cut out each word correctly, from these sentences very moving indeed : «He had come a long way to this blue lawn, and his dream must have seemed so close that he could hardly fail to grasp it. He did not know that it was already behind him somewhere in the vast obscurity beyond the city where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night.»

A disconcerting fact is that at the time when the book is published, *America Drill* perpetuates its own dialogue with the history. We are in March 2003, just before the attack of Baghdad by the American government, the day before the bombing of a civil population. This dark coincidence encouraged the artist to read again, to redefine his work, constantly moving. From the end of the fifties until now, the conscience of the past has been fading. According to the artist Carl Andre, a will to retain and to remember has been dissolved. And from his intention of building an «epic poem» on America, a true cry of despair emerges, engaged in the flow of history, engaged in the destruction.

*«I intended America Seed-planting drill to Be year epic poem illuminating the history of America. It certainly fails At that. To my horror I feel America Drill may Be becoming has prophecy of America's, and the world's future»*

Vera Kotaji pp. Michèle Didier

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# Carl Andre

## *America Drill*

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### **Specifications**

- Each book measures 39,4 cm x 29,4 cm
  - Contains 13 printed 8-page signatures, a total of 104 pages
  - Paper: 160 g Conqueror Connoisseur, ivory, cotton 100%
  - The signatures are double-stitched with linen thread
  - The end papers are 160 g Conqueror Connoisseur paper
  - The binding cloth is linen Brillianta Calandré
  - Front cover, back cover and spine : embossed gilding and foil-blocking in gold (numbered, signed and stamped copies), in bronze (numbered copies)
  - Ivory headband
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- Printing by Arte-Print, Brussels
  - Binding by Delabie, Kortrijk
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### **Production**

- Limited edition of 600 numbered copies  
The copies with the numbers 001 - 100 are numbered, signed and stamped  
The copies with the numbers 101 - 500 are numbered  
The copies with the numbers 501 - 600 are A.P.
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