

Art in America

Robert Indiana A Man for All Seasons

By [David Ebony](#)
January 26, 2011

Reclusive pop art legend **Robert Indiana** ventured to New York City from his home in Vinalhaven, Maine, in mid January. The purpose was to unveil his latest monumental project, “The **Four Seasons of Hope**,” an installation of paintings at the Four Seasons. The landmark restaurant in the Seagram’s Building invited the dapper 83-year-old to create a series of new works for the back wall of the storied Pool Room balcony.

The exhibition has special resonance for Indiana because in 1962 the Seagram Building’s designer, the late Philip Johnson, commissioned the artist’s celebrated light-box sculpture *Eat* for the exterior of the Johnson-designed New York State Pavilion at the 1963-64 World’s Fair. That piece was permanently unplugged soon after the opening because too many visitors came looking for a restaurant. After all these years, Indiana finally gets to show in a Philip Johnson-designed restaurant.

Each of the four 8-foot-square silkscreen-on-canvas compositions represents a season, and each features Indiana’s rendering of the word “HOPE”—a variation on his iconic **LOVE**—with the “O” on its side. While the “HOPE” series is most closely associated with Barack **Obama**’s 2008 presidential campaign, these examples, ensconced in the hushed atmosphere of the elegant restaurant setting, have a more relaxed feel as they trade a political bite for a gourmet nosh. The panels appear pastoral and serene, with subtle gradations of color to suggest the seasons: a touch of lavender for *Spring*, green for *Summer*, bright orange for *Fall*, and blue for *Winter*.

On view through March, “The Four Seasons of Hope” is being offered for sale. While enjoying a dish of warm sea-urchin ravioli one can contemplate taking home Indiana’s “Seasons” for \$1.6 million.

The installation was organized by John Woodward, a chef at the Four Seasons from 1986–93. He’s now director of Woodward Gallery on the Lower East Side, where he hosted a show of Indiana’s prints earlier this year. Woodward also recently mounted exhibitions of 22 works from Andy Warhol’s 1979 diamond dust “Shadows” series for private dining rooms at the restaurant.

The Four Seasons has no regular exhibition program, but with his appointment last year, Woodward follows an illustrious line of periodic guest curators that includes Leo Castelli and Pace’s Arne Glimcher. Indiana is among only a handful of living artists ever invited to show at the restaurant, including James Rosenquist and Frank Stella.

“HOPE” IS ON VIEW THROUGH MARCH. [READ DAVID EBONY’S 2008 FEATURE ON ROBERT INDIANA.](#)