

POLIS #5: A Newsletter of Art Museums & Politics

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REFLECTION ON WAR & PEACE at the de Young Museum [Vietnam War & Kent State] Curator: FLG, 1970

Part One

THE BROADSIDE

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Part Two

PUBLICITY

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NOTE:

The My Lai Massacre was a horrific event.

But for many Americans, the Kent State Massacre of May 4, 1970 was even more horrible in some ways because it was Americans killing Americans.

Like so many, I was outraged by Kent State and Nixon's invasion of Cambodia. But what could I do as a curator?

I took up my new position as Chief Curator of the de Young Museum & the Legion of Honor that May.

My first program decision was to present an exhibition called "REFLECTION." I commissioned a pyramid painted with clouds of a sky-blue field. It stood at the center of a darkened room lit by a single bulb.

On each side were benches.

The artist, Gary Molitor, chose to remain anonymous, saying: "This project is more important than I am."

This exhibition was something other than an anti-war statement.

It was a meditation chamber in which people could *REFLECT* on War & Peace. Those who supported the War were not happy. But in a city that largely opposed the War this exhibition was considered a "reasonable response," and was featured on the cover of the SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER magazine.

FLG

1970