"STARS AND STRIPES: A CLOSER LOOK AT THE AMERICAN ICON"

By

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“STARS AND STRIPES: A CLOSER LOOK AT THE AMERICAN ICON”

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at Corcoran College of Art and Design

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I would like to dedicate my thesis to my parents who have always supported my educational goals and helped me reach this landmark.
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I would like to thank first and foremost my professor Philip Brady and my parents. Without their help and support in this process I may not have made it to the finish line. Secondly I would like to thank my classmates, without their support this project would not be what it is today.
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ABSTRACT

STARS AND STRIPES: A CLOSER LOOK AT THE AMERICAN ICON

Hannah Kristin Horrom MA Exhibition Design
Corcoran College of Art + Design, 2013
Thesis Advisor: Mr. Philip Brady

The Stars and Stripes exhibit at the DAR Constitution Hall will take a closer look at the American Flag. The exhibition will include an introductory video, multimedia elements, original artifacts, and large-scale sculpture. The exhibit will teach a history of flag culture, show how the flag was created, and will cover the American flag from the Revolution to the present. Visitors will learn how the flag has been used as a propaganda tool, how it has gone through many changes both in form and cultural use, and how it has been used to represent many agendas throughout American history. The exhibition will also demonstrate many see the flag in their own way.
CHAPTER 1
Mission Statement

This exhibition will encourage visitors to re-examine the flag; the American symbol. The exhibition will explore the evolution of the flag in America from the Revolutionary War to the present, teach that it is viewed differently across peoples and ages and ask visitors if this icon is still important in our culture today.
CHAPTER 2

Teaching Points

The visitor will learn the general history of the American Flag. The visitor will better understand how the flag was blatantly used as a propaganda tool during wars. The visitors will be taught the original purpose of flags. The visitor will see how the Flag went through phases of use in different time periods and why. The visitor will learn the importance of the flag for Americans at creation and how this has changed through time.
CHAPTER 3
Take Away

Each American has different feelings about the flag. The flag has been used to represent many different ideas and agendas throughout American history from the Revolutionary War to the present. After the Vietnam War the flag was flagrantly disrespected up until the events of September 11, 2001 when there was a “revival” of respect, but the flag has yet to be seen in the same light as before Vietnam.
CHAPTER 4

Audience

The primary audience for this exhibit will be the general “American” tourist as this is an exhibit focusing on an American symbol. The secondary audience for this exhibit could be special interest groups such as flag enthusiasts, as well as children/school groups.
CHAPTER 5
Site Analysis

The location of the exhibit will be The Daughters of the American Revolution Museum, Washington, DC, (specifically Constitution Hall). This site was chosen because it is in the District of Columbia which is a top destination for American tourists and the American Flag is the icon of our nation and an exhibit focusing on such an important piece of our culture should be hosted by the nation’s capital. They hold preservation, patriotism, and education at the core of their beliefs. This exhibition will draw a different crowd than the DAR usually sees. People will enter with expectations and leave with new ideas about the American Flag and the DAR. Constitution Hall is a large space that can hold some of the larger artifacts that will be a part of the exhibition as well as a large amount of visitors. The different levels in the space work well with the story (i.e. stage and balcony). As Constitution Hall is normally a concert or venue space and would need some major alterations to make it suitable for an exhibition. The chairs on the floor and in the boxes/balcony would need to be removed; the carpet would need to be replaced as it is quite flashy (blue with silver stars) with some other non-patterned carpet as to keep the noise down as the tall ceiling could create an echo. The lighting would also need to be shifted around as it is so high up.
CHAPTER 6

Visitor Narrative

When the visitor comes to this exhibition at The Daughters of the American Revolution in Constitution Hall, they will most likely be approaching from the National Mall. The exhibition will be accessible through the main entrance of Constitution Hall on 18th Street NW between C and D streets with the handicap access being on D Street. They will enter through the lobby and pass through to the exhibit after paying a small fee for entrance. The first experience of the exhibition will be a short video (5-10 minutes) that will give a brief introduction to why people use flags and how the American Flag came to be. After the video the visitor will experience the rest of the exhibition where there will be three major sections, The Young Nation, The Twentieth Century, and the Third Millennium. Each section will contain multiple sub sections with other topics bridging the gap between the major sections. Each section will contain artifacts such as original flags, war posters, art, photographs, and other flag inspired pieces as well as media and interactives. The exhibition will guide the visitor through the space including a trip up the ramp to the stage and down the other side. The exhibition will finish with a question, “does the flag still hold an important place in our culture today or is it an outdated icon?”
CHAPTER 7
Exhibition Content: Foundation

The exhibition will begin with a short film created specifically for this show which will cover the following content about the origin of flags and the birth of the American flag and will be made up of archival images and interviews with flag historians.

“Symbols have always been a basic tool of civilization. But these are not hidden messages. Rather, they are a language that is more generally understood than words: they are based upon the times and places where they were used; the importance of the subject to daily life; and individual perspective, or learned knowledge.”¹ The flag as a symbol has been in use for centuries around the globe being utilized for a variety purposes and meaning a diverse amount of things for different people:

Every nation uses a special flag to represent its munity and independence. A nation’s flag stands for the gains, hope, and ideals of its people. In its own land a flag carries the honor and love of its citizens; abroad, it is respected as the emblem of a self-governed people. A flag is more than just a brightly colored piece of cloth. It is a symbol or sign that stands for an idea, a cause, or a purpose.

Each country in the world has a flag of its own. Such a flag has a special meaning for the people who live in that country. A country’s flag can stir people to joy and sadness, to courage and sacrifice, according to when and how it is used.2

Flag use for personal, institutional, and national use dates back almost as far as civilization itself.3 Flags were flown by the ancient empires of Egypt, Babylon, Chaldea, and Assyria as they marched into battle behind their kings.4 Each army flew their own banners with symbols that represented their values and beliefs, for example, the Chaldeans characteristic figure was “the dove perched upon a sword,” while “among the Persians…upon their richly ornate battle fabrics were inscribed the representations of the supreme deity, the sun-god Mithras.”5 The Old Testament is full of references to banners and flags being flown by different peoples of the varying tribes, for example, “for each of the four great divisions in Israel there were an emblem. Judah displayed a lion, Reuben a man, Dan an eagle, and Ephraim an ox.”6 Although flag use was prominent in the ancient times, the true “heyday of flag history is the period known as the Medieval Ages.”7

The Medieval Ages were a time when everyone from kings down to the petty squires believed that they needed a flag or banner to represent them.8 These were the great days of chivalry and it is where the “body of principles relating to designs, interpretation, and usage of emblems” began and came to be known as “heraldry”

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forming “the basis of our flag-lore of today”. Although flags were in common use, the idea of a national flag did not arise until the development of the Union Jack of Great Britain which began its existence as the King’s Colors. After Britain, flags for the nation came to be quite commonplace with France and later with United States creating their own ensigns. Flags of this time were used in foreign lands to divulge an extension of the nation’s authority as well as being a rallying point and source of inspiration for the people at home.

**American Flag Origins:**

The American flag, “is one of the oldest national ensigns in the world” being adopted on June 14, 1777. In 1777, “The Continental Congress resolved that the flag of the United States be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white; that the Union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field representing a new constellation.” Each design element in the flag has a history and a purpose for its incorporation in the national symbol except the colors which have gained meaning over the years. As Charles Sumner stated in 1873, “the very colors have a language…white is for purity; red, for valor; blue for justice.” The thirteen stripes “recall the original alliance of the colonies and the struggle for independence.”

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The stripes can be traced back to at least two decades before the American Revolution in the form of “Liberty flags” which were composed of nine vertical red and white stripes.17 This first striped flag created by the Sons of Liberty was just one of the many devised by the American patriots but the first recorded flag with the horizontal stripes “as an emblem of the united colonies is found on the famous Markoe Flag—the regimental flag of the Philadelphia Troop of Light Horse.”18 On January 1, 1776 a flag with horizontal stripes was raised not by one regiment but by the entire army which was assembled in Cambridge, Massachusetts and came to be known “variously as the Grand Union, Great Union, Cambridge, Somerville, or Continental Flag.”19 This flag was composed of “thirteen horizontal red and white stripes displaying in the canton of the British union of crosses, a device combining the English cross of St. George with the cross of St. Andrew for Scotland.”20 This flag, which was used for almost a year and a half, “established the national symbolism of the thirteen horizontal stripes and tipped the scales at the psychological moment in favor of the combination of red and white,” as there were many other color combinations prior to this, i.e. “red and blue, yellow and white, yellow and black, white and blue, red and green, white and green— and even tricolor in “the colors of liberty,” blue, red, and white.”21 Like the stripes, the stars have also gone through a variety of transformations.

The stars have a more questionable history than the stripes and the “earliest mention is found in some curious lines of a poem in the Massachusetts Spy on May 10, 1774 in commemoration of the Boston Massacre four years earlier:

17 Boleslaw D’Otrange Mastai. The Stripes and Stars, 2.
18 Boleslaw D’Otrange Mastai. The Stripes and Stars, 2-3.
19 Boleslaw D’Otrange Mastai. The Stripes and Stars, 3.
20 Boleslaw D’Otrange Mastai. The Stripes and Stars, 3.
21 Boleslaw D’Otrange Mastai. The Stripes and Stars, 3.
A ray of bright glory now beams from afar,

The American ensign now sparkles a star,

Which shall shortly flame through the skies.\textsuperscript{22}

There are a lot of questions surrounding the choice of the star for the American flag; one thought is that “stars might have found a place on the flag because of their ancient meaning as beacons of hope, as well as symbol of man’s highest aspirations.”\textsuperscript{23} The star of this time had a different form than that of the five pointed star, as the originals were solely heraldic stars which never had less than six points.\textsuperscript{24} The “proper appearance” of the star was not made popular until the “charming, if apocryphal, tale of Betsy Ross. The seamstress of Philadelphia, as we all know, reputedly demonstrated to her illustrious visitors that a five-pointed shape would be far easier of execution than the six-pointed shape which had been indicated on the drawing from which she was to work.”\textsuperscript{25}

Although Betsy Ross was a flag-maker at the time and she did make some of the early flags “virtually every historian who has studied the issue believes that Betsy Ross did not sew the first American flag.”\textsuperscript{26} Ross may not have sewn the first flag but she very well could have made the “ingenious suggestion,” about the stars.\textsuperscript{27} The Besty Ross flag has the stars arranged in a circle in the blue canton but this was not the only arrangement that existed. Due to the haste in which the congressional resolution was written, the “graphic elements were open to broad interpretation. Far from being a static symbol, the American

\textsuperscript{22} Boleslaw D’Otrange Mastai. \textit{The Stripes and Stars}, 4.
\textsuperscript{23} Boleslaw D’Otrange Mastai. \textit{The Stripes and Stars}, 4.
\textsuperscript{24} Boleslaw D’Otrange Mastai. \textit{The Stripes and Stars}, 4.
\textsuperscript{25} Boleslaw D’Otrange Mastai. \textit{The Stripes and Stars}, 4.
\textsuperscript{27} Boleslaw D’Otrange Mastai. \textit{The Stripes and Stars}, 4.
flag has been rendered with stars in countless configurations, especially as a new star was added every time a state joined the Union.”

Without guidelines a tradition was established of personalizing the stars and stripes, “letting it speak not just for a nation, but for an ideal, a value, a way of life.” In 1974 the U.S. Supreme Court stated that, “it might be said that we all draw something from our national symbol, for it is capable of conveying simultaneously a spectrum of meanings.” This exhibition will show that the “old Red, White and Blue has been used repeatedly in the visual arts to symbolize loyalty, sacrifice, heroism and other important patriotic sentiments” through the early years up through the 19th and early 20th centuries and that in the middle of the 20th century with the Vietnam War there were new expressions of discontent and sarcasm being incorporated into the visual representations of the flag.

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28 Kit Hinrichs, *100 American Flags*, 1.
29 Kit Hinrichs, *100 American Flags*, 2.
CHAPTER 8
Exhibition Content: Young Nation

Revolutionary War:

During the young years of the nation the flag was constantly changing with new states being added and the stars constantly being arranged in a variety ways. A lot of the artistic works revolving around the flag at this time were actual reinterpretations of the symbol as there were no strict flag rules. As each new state was added, new arrangements of the stars were created. The most known flag of the Revolutionary period was the Betsy Ross flag with the “wreath of 13 stars.”32 There were other popular interpretations such the flag with “a ring of 12 stars with one star at center” which was used by the Third Maryland Regiment or the flag designed by Pierre L’Enfant which has the stars and stripes “set in a graceful oval pattern.”33 The L’Enfant flag was used “in a handsome allegorical vignette which he designed for the first membership certificate of the Society of the Cincinnati,” and the illustration was most likely the inspiration for a beautiful silk flag that duplicated his painting in all details.34 Unfortunately most of the flags that were created during this period have been lost as

32 Boleslaw D’Otrange Mastai. The Stripes and Stars, 6.
33 Boleslaw D’Otrange Mastai. The Stripes and Stars, 6-7.
34 Boleslaw D’Otrange Mastai. The Stripes and Stars, 7.
they were the “victims of their innate fragility and the fortunes of war.”

Many flags from this period are known only through illustrations.

**The War of 1812:**

With the addition of two new states to the Union, the Second Flag Act was instated on May 1, 1795 which “officially established the flag of 15 stars and 15 stripes.” This Flag Act was not favored by all and many thought that the thirteen star and thirteen stripe flag “could symbolize the union of all states regardless of the increased number.” Although there was significant objection to the new flag, the new design was used for six years and inspired one of the most well known songs in American History, the national anthem, “The Star Spangled Banner.” The national anthem was written by Francis Scott Key who was inspired by the 15 star and 15 stripe flag that flew above Fort McHenry in 1814 during a battle in the War of 1812. The flag that flew over the fort is the most famous 15 star and stripe flag and some might even argue that it is the most famous American Flag.

**Rearranging the Stars (1818-1876):**

The Second Flag Act began to cause problems in 1818 when the Union had grown to twenty states and the “problem of increase as reflected in the flag could no longer be ignored.” A new act needed to be created and Congress went to naval officer Captain Samuel G. Reid for the new design. The Captain suggested that to “revert to the flag of 13 stripes while continuing to practice of adding a new star to the canton for each new

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37 Mark Leepson, *Flag*.
Although Reid suggests a couple of options for how the stars should be arranged, the committee in charge of making the final decisions decided that the arrangement of the stars should be left up to personal choice, “whether in the form of one great luminary, or, in the word of the original resolution of 1777 ‘representing a new constellation’”\(^2\)\(^1\). The years following, up until the first centennial, “proved to be the golden age of American flag design.”\(^2\)\(^2\) Rearranging the stars became a real art form with the Great Star being one of the “most beautiful and enduring incarnations of the flag” and was the “first flag of 20 stars to fly over the Capitol.”\(^2\)\(^3\)

**The Civil War:**

The Civil War was a “cataclysmic event in the nation’s young history.”\(^2\)\(^4\) The war, which began in 1861, was centered on the “issue of slavery and the broader issue of states’ rights.”\(^2\)\(^5\) The Civil War marked “a sea of change in the evolution of the cultural importance of the American flag.”\(^2\)\(^6\) At this time, in the North, “Americans from every strata of society…embraced the flag as a symbol of patriotism. In short order the Stars and Stripes became a beloved, cherished icon in the North, a widely held symbol of the Union and the fight to keep it whole.”\(^2\)\(^7\)

The flag design that was prominent for the union during the Civil War was defined as “the phalanx formation, because the stars are superimposed in parallel rows of frankly military order.”\(^2\)\(^8\) Sometimes this flag was arranged with less monotony by using

\(^{44}\) Mark Leepson, *Flag*.
\(^{45}\) Mark Leepson, *Flag*.
\(^{46}\) Mark Leepson, *Flag*.
\(^{47}\) Mark Leepson, *Flag*.
\(^{48}\) Boleslaw D’Otrange Mastai. *The Stripes and Stars*, 11.
a “‘leader’ or ‘followers’ or both: two or even three stars set either in advance or to the rear of their comrades-in-arms.”\textsuperscript{49} Although this was the chief flag used by the Union, regiments had their own banners which frequently had the stars set in circular or oval wreaths, in ogives, arches, or other even more imaginative formations.\textsuperscript{50} During the Civil War the flag began to be used much more for items outside the flag itself, as before people were more focused on designing the actual flag. Now that there was a generally accepted design for a little while the flag became a design element used in homemade items such as, “covers for needle books.”\textsuperscript{51} The war also led to the use of miniature flags that were waved by children but also the creation of mammoth flags “which groups of patriotic women toiled in unison” to create.\textsuperscript{52} The flag was also used in many recruitment posters and handouts in the North.\textsuperscript{53}

The Confederacy after secession “floated three different banners successively.”\textsuperscript{54} The first flag of the Confederacy was known as the “Stars and Bars” and was decided upon in a contest where many different designs were submitted, “most being variations on the theme of the Stars and Stripes\textsuperscript{55} which made is “evident that affect for the Stars and Stripes carried away those who were arrayed against it.”\textsuperscript{56} The design that was adopted by the Confederacy on March 4, 1861 was described as follows:

\begin{quote}
The flag of the Confederate States of America shall consist of a red field, with a white space extending horizontally through the center, and equal in width of the flag; the red spaces above and below to be of the same width as the white. The
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{49} Boleslaw D’Otrange Mastai. \textit{The Stripes and Stars}, 11.
\textsuperscript{50} Boleslaw D’Otrange Mastai. \textit{The Stripes and Stars}, 11.
\textsuperscript{51} Boleslaw D’Otrange Mastai. \textit{The Stripes and Stars}, 11.
\textsuperscript{52} Boleslaw D’Otrange Mastai. \textit{The Stripes and Stars}, 11.
\textsuperscript{54} Harlan Hoyt Horner. \textit{The American Flag}. (Albany: State of New York Education Department, 1910), 61.
\textsuperscript{55} Boleslaw D’Otrange Mastai. \textit{The Stripes and Stars}, 11.
\textsuperscript{56} Harlan Hoyt Horner. \textit{The American Flag}, 61.
union blue, extending down through the white space and stopping at the lower red space; in the center of the union, a circle of white stars corresponding in number (then seven) with the states of the Confederacy. 57

The flaws of this flag became quickly apparent in battle when confusion began to arise as the resemblance to the Stars and Stripes was so pronounced. 58 In the *Richmond Dispatch* on December 7, 1861 it was plainly stated that “the two flags [were] indistinguishable.” 59

The second flag was established by Confederate Congress on May 1, 1863 60 and featured the “Southern Cross,” which had “13 stars in a blue saltire on a red field, and became famed, in one of its forms as the “Battle Flag.” 61 This flag also had objections like the fact that at a distance it resembled the British white ensign, and also that it “had the appearance of a flag of truce.” 62 The third flag was then created on February 4, 1865 and was fashioned by adding a “broad transverse strip of red to the end of the fly of the flag.” 63 This flag was very short-lived as “the Confederacy died at Appomattox, April 9, 1865.” 64 Although some people still wave the flag of the Confederacy, for the most part, “Southern love for the old flag was revived.” 65

**The United States’ Centennial:**

During the United States Centennial of 1876 the flag was present everywhere, from newly created flags for the occasion with either the years 1776 and 1876 or what is known as the global patterned flag to fans and nick knacks with the flag printed upon

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them. By the time of first Centennial the “cult of the flag” had truly begun to shift from the “flag proper to its innumerable reproductions.”66 This was made possible by the “swiftly mushrooming popular press” and through “an enormous variety of graphic media: posters, music sheets, the new-fangled ‘postal cards,’ calendars, advertising, and business cards.”67 All of these things were popularized during the Philadelphia Exposition of 1876, “with its main theme of American industry.”68 A myriad of souvenirs were created for the event in which “the patriotic element was naturally and appropriately stressed.”69 During this time, flag design slowed as “the broad dissemination and easy availability of printed flags, generally of think silk or glazed muslin…erased the need to create personal flags.”70 The rampant use of the American flag in advertising in the decade following the Centennial celebration led to the first laws enacted by Congress and the states in the early 1890’s against flag desecration.71

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66 Boleslaw D’Otrange Mastai. The Stripes and Stars, 14.
67 Boleslaw D’Otrange Mastai. The Stripes and Stars, 14.
68 Boleslaw D’Otrange Mastai. The Stripes and Stars, 14.
69 Boleslaw D’Otrange Mastai. The Stripes and Stars, 14.
70 Boleslaw D’Otrange Mastai. The Stripes and Stars, 14.
71 Mark Leepson, Flag.
CHAPTER 9
Exhibition Content: The Twentieth Century

World War I:

The Nineteenth Century ended with the flag being thought of as the “most revered and celebrated image in the country’s visual arts, both in high culture and the mass cultural industry,” and the Twentieth Century “also began in grand style.”72 The Childe Hassam impressionist paintings of the First World War are one example of the continued infatuation with the flag as he painted the Stars and Stripes bright and cheery in the streets of New York.73 When World War I began in Europe, many Americans wanted nothing to do with the conflict, but when The United States declared war on Germany in April 1917, “public opinion on the conflict underwent a complete reversal, and Americans embraced the war effort with a ferocity that bordered on hysteria.”74 World War I may have been where the change in attitudes toward the flag began as “attitudes toward the American flag became a test of patriotism. The fear of the spread of Communism and anarchism were so great that those who were thought to be disloyal were forced to kiss the flag.”75 The flag was being used blatantly for propaganda and

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72 Arnaldo Testi. Capture the Flag, 119.
73 Arnaldo Testi. Capture the Flag, 119.
was in advertisements across the nation; everywhere Americans went, they were forced into patriotism.\textsuperscript{76}

\textbf{World War II:}

“In the wake of Japan's December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor” America declared war first on Japan followed by a declaration of war on Germany and the country began mobilization for the large scale war that they had just entered.\textsuperscript{77} The flag came to be ever present in WWII as it had decades before in WWI and helped to rally and inspire Americans; “In a variety of forms, on the battlefield and the home front, the flag expressed ideas about what it meant to be American during a time of war. It symbolized the ideals the nation was fighting for, and it called on Americans to support those ideals through service and sacrifice.”\textsuperscript{78} Propaganda use was at an extreme high and was exploited heavily by the newly-established War Production Board which was in the process of converting industries from a commercial to a war effort and conserving scarce materials such as steel.\textsuperscript{79} The Americans public was limited in consumption and asked “to contribute money and goods as War loans and the sale of Liberty Bonds covered half of the cost of the war. A search on bonds yields posters encouraging the purchase of stamps and bonds with slogans such as "He gives 100%, you can lend 10%.""\textsuperscript{80} Many of these posters incorporated the American flag as a symbol of patriotism, some posters

\textsuperscript{76} “Red, White, and Blue.”
\textsuperscript{79} “The Art of War: WWI and WWII Posters.”
\textsuperscript{80} “The Art of War: WWI and WWII Posters.”
called for “specific donations of time and equipment” while others called for people to
“join the civilian defense and for skilled laborers to build boats for the Navy.”

The American Flag was ever present in World War II as Americans
wanted to show their love of their country and their support of the troops, but the years
following World War II would mark a falling out of love with the American icon:

“The flag cult of old came to be replaced by what one might perhaps term a “flag
obsession.” The first inklings of this phenomenon appeared in the works of avant-
garde artists: Johns, Rauschenberg, Rivers and others. The vein was very soon
sensationalized and exploited commercially. Some of these performances were
unobjectionable, others, deeply offensive not only to patriotic sentiments but to
every canon of good taste.”

The American flag changed in high culture as well as in popular culture, “the flag
remained omnipresent, but it became an ambiguous and disputed object, the subject of
tormented love-hate affairs.”

**The Vietnam War:**

The late 1960’s saw the use of the flag by political activists such as Abbie
Hoffman and Jerry Rubin who were “intent on exploiting mass media.” The American
flag during the Vietnam War was used by many protesters as a symbol of their cause.

At one of the first antiwar rallies, “a gathering of some two hundred thousand people on
April 15, 1967, in Central Park in New York City” burnt a flag which led to the

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81 “The Art of War: WWI and WWII Posters.”
82 Boleslaw D’Otrange Mastai. *The Stripes and Stars*, 16.
83 Arnaldo Testi. *Capture the Flag*, 119.
84 Arnaldo Testi. *Capture the Flag*, 122.
85 Mark Leepson, *Flag*, 229.
congressional passing of the nation’s first federal flag desecration law.”86 Abbie Hoffman
was the first person to be arrested for violating the new federal statute when he took part
in a “protest demonstration against a House Committee on Un-American Activities
hearing outside the Cannon House Office Building on Capitol Hill in Washington.”87
Hoffman wore a red, white, and blue American flag shirt for the protest as well as buttons
that read, “Wallace for President: Stand up for America” and Vote Pig in Sixty-Eight,
Yippie.”88 While he was convicted and found guilty, the appeals court overturned the
ruling on March 29, 1971, three years after the conviction.89

In November 1970 Hoffman opened a collective monothematic show on the flag,
entitled “People’s Flag Show. At the event a prior show was discussed where a New
York gallery owner “exhibited works deemed offensive to the flag itself (for example, an
enormous cloth phallus—with the Stars-and-Stripes pattern).”90 The “People’s Flag
Show” had many provocative events and displays, the most provocative event of the
exhibition was “a ritual flag burning, a happening staged by the Guerrilla Act Action
Group,” and the most controversial artwork presented was “an installation in which the
American flag was stuffed in a toilet basin in a wooden cage; and the title was The
American Dream Goes to Pot,” which was created by artist Kate Millett.91 Within a week
of the show being installed it was shut down and three of the organizers were indicted.92
These three people were just a few of the “hundreds of flag desecration prosecutions” that
took place during the Vietnam War, and nearly all of them “were used against ‘peace’

86 Mark Leepson, Flag, 233.
87 Mark Leepson, Flag, 234.
88 Mark Leepson, Flag, 234.
89 Mark Leepson, Flag, 235.
90 Arnaldo Testi. Capture the Flag, 124.
91 Arnaldo Testi. Capture the Flag, 124.
92 Arnaldo Testi. Capture the Flag, 124.
demonstrations.”93 One of the hundred indicted was “the African American artist Faith Ringgold. The image of the flag has also entered the repertoire of the Black Arts Movement, and it remained there.”94

It was later found (fourteen years later) that the flag desecration laws violated the First Amendment and “in a landmark decision, the Supreme Court on June 21, 1989…ruled 5–4 that burning the flag is a form of symbolic speech protected by the First Amendment.”95

**Post Vietnam:**

The American flag would not be the same after the Vietnam War. The flag came to be used for some kind of shock value.

An example of the change is the February 1989 installation by “black student “Dread” Scott Tyler at the Art Institute of Chicago” entitled *What is the Proper Way to Display the U.S. Flag?*96 Tyler’s work:

> “Consisted of a collage of photographs of flag burnings and coffins wrapped in the flag; The collage hung on the wall, and underneath it is a shelf with an exercise book and pencil; visitors are invited to write their answers to the question of the title. A Stars and Stripes serves as a carpet in front of the shelf; in order to write, one is forced to tread on it and therefore desecrate it or to avoid it with some contortions.”97

The work infuriated many people, mostly veterans, and thousands of them demonstrated in front of the museum while others took a more quiet approach by every day entering the

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93 Mark Leepson, *Flag*, 234.
94 Mark Leepson, *Flag*, 234.
95 Mark Leepson, *Flag*, 235.
96 Arnaldo Testi. *Capture the Flag*, 125.
97 Arnaldo Testi. *Capture the Flag*, 125.
museum where they “picked up the flag, folded it ceremoniously, put it back on the shelf; they tidied up where the artist had created disorder and gave a possible answer to his provocative question.” Due to this installation, Congress introduced the Flag Protection Act, a ban on laying the flag on the ground.

Much of the work following the Vietnam War created uproar wherever it was shown. Vietnam and the previous World Wars had “politcized” the flag “in a critical or satirical sense and it is much harder to find “works that dr[aw] on the celebratory nineteenth-century tradition or simply the cheerful and bright tradition of Hassam.”

In the decades following the Vietnam War, the American flag has appeared in culture products and other contexts on more occasions than a person can count. It is truly “undeniable…the tremendous popularity and all pervasiveness of the flag theme.”

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98 Arnaldo Testi. Capture the Flag, 125.
99 Arnaldo Testi. Capture the Flag, 125.
100 Arnaldo Testi. Capture the Flag, 126.
101 Arnaldo Testi. Capture the Flag, 126.
102 Boleslaw D’Otrange Mastai. The Stripes and Stars, 16.
CHAPTER 10
Exhibition Content: The Third Millennium

September 11, 2001 (This section will be heavily supported by artifacts and images with little text):

The events of September 11, 2001 brought Americans together unlike any event since the attacks on Pearl Harbor. Following the tragedy, Americans rallied around the flag, “each time the Stars and Stripes appeared over a firehouse or a fraternity house, on a lighthouse or on a lapel, it was simultaneously a declaration, a kind of self assurance, and something close to a challenge.” The flag once again stood for a proud nation, painted and sewn Stars and Stripes; “we’re here and we’re free,” we proclaimed. “A proud and good nation.”

The American flag after the attacks of September 11 was ever present:

We flew it from every porch and every storefront. From every bridge and building. From every car antenna and mobile home. We wore it on our backs. We painted it on barn roofs and our fingernails.

Everywhere you looked were the colors that never run: Star-Spangled-Banner Red, White and Blue.
From big city to small town, from sea to shining sea, the entire country...look[ed] like a proud mosaic of red, white, and blue. America the beautiful. The message was clear: We may all be different, but we share a love for our country.\textsuperscript{107}

\textbf{The Iraq War:}

Almost immediately following September 11 the flag “once again acquired its multiplicity of meanings.”\textsuperscript{108} During the Iraqi campaign the public was divided and uncertain about the war.\textsuperscript{109} People began to see flying the flag as supporting the war rather than supporting America like it did after the September 11 attacks.\textsuperscript{110} During the Iraq War the flag was burnt, used in protest and covered the face of a soon after destroyed statue of President Saddam Hussein and it slowly slipped back into the role it played in culture during the Vietnam War and the period prior to September 11.

\textbf{The Present:}

With the American flag being used across every medium in every possible way today, does the American flag still hold an important place in our culture today or is it an outdated icon?

\textbf{The Flag of the United States:}

It should be taken as it is, with all its successes and failures, with its sufferings, sacrifices, faith, hope, and purpose, and all the treasured memories that cluster around its rich experience. Only so far as it is true to the nation’s past, can it be meaningful to us; and only so far can it be what we love to call it—the American flag.\textsuperscript{111}

\textsuperscript{107} Don Pogany. \textit{Our Flag was Still There}, xi.
\textsuperscript{108} Arnaldo Testi. \textit{Capture the Flag}, 129.
\textsuperscript{109} Arnaldo Testi. \textit{Capture the Flag}, 134.
\textsuperscript{110} Arnaldo Testi. \textit{Capture the Flag}, 134.
\textsuperscript{111} Robert Phillips, \textit{The American Flag}, 199.
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