heavy, textured paper (typically 80-pound stock) before using a pin to prick each point of the design. He then cuts from pinprick to pinprick with an X-Acto knife, producing one tier of a work that he may build up to have four or five layers. Next, he rotates each layer slightly and separates them with surgically placed, adhesive foam spacers (tweezers come into play here). When viewed head-on, the spacers are virtually invisible, creating a vortex-like, three-dimensional effect that pulls the viewer in for a closer look. Some works are monochromatic; others add a second or third color as a compositional element (see www.rpillsburycutpaperartist.com).

“The order and craftsmanship of the forms are important to me,” says Pillsbury, whose work has been featured in a number of juried shows in the past few years. “I enjoy the physical construction of the pieces—it goes back to my early years as an architect. One of my first projects was building a model of the new Boston City Hall.” Although his primary medium is paper, he has also experimented with thin strips of wood veneer to good effect and is intrigued by the semi-translucent potential of polypropylene.

Pillsbury is interested in moving into larger-scale commissions in mediums other than paper, although he enjoys the (relatively) immediate gratification and independence of his current work when compared to the years-long timeline for industrial projects involving numerous parties. “I should be good for a while,” he says, “as long as my eyesight holds out.”

~ JULIA HANNA

For the most part, what brought him together with these individuals were his political beliefs. The abiding theme of his correspondence over a 60-year period is his preoccupation with liberalism and its prospects. He was always in some way promoting and advancing the liberal agenda; it was his mission, purpose, and justification.

What did the liberal credo mean to Schlesinger? As he wrote in his much acclaimed book, The Vital Center, published in 1949: “The job of liberalism [is] to devote itself to the maintenance of individual liberties and to the democratic control of economic life—and to brook no compromise, at home or abroad, on either of these two central tenets.” For him, liberalism was “a fighting faith.” In The Cycles of American History (1986) he noted that liberals do not see the unfettered marketplace as an “infinitely sensitive, frictionless, impartial, self-equilibrating mechanism.” Instead, he wrote, “The liberal believes that the mitigation of [economic] problems will require a renewal of affirmative government to redress the market’s distortion and compensate for its failures—but affirmative government chastened and reformed, one must hope, by stringent review of the excesses and errors of [past] centuries.”

On September 14, 1960, Senator John F. Kennedy, accepting the New York Liberal Party’s presidential nomination, proclaimed his liberalism in words Schlesinger helped craft, saying: “If, by a ‘Liberal’ they mean someone who looks ahead and not behind, someone who welcomes new ideas without rigid reactions, someone who cares about the welfare of the people—their health, their housing, their schools, their jobs, their civil rights, and their civil liberties—someone who believes we can break through the stalemate and suspicions that grip us in our policies abroad, if that is what they mean by a ‘Liberal,’ then I am proud to say I’m a ‘Liberal.’”

This is what liberalism meant to Schlesinger.