

Artist Resources – Roy Lichtenstein (American, 1923-97)



Lichtenstein at Tate 1968
Photography: Keystone-France

[Roy Lichtenstein Foundation](#)

[Lichtenstein at MoMA](#)

[Lichtenstein at Tate](#)

Artspace returned to a [1963 interview](#) with Lichtenstein in conjunction with the [Tate Modern Liverpool exhibition](#), *Roy Lichtenstein in Focus*. “[Pop Art] is an involvement with what I think to be the most brazen and threatening characteristics of our culture, things we hate, but which are also powerful in their impingement on us,” the artist reflected. “I think art since Cézanne has become extremely romantic and unrealistic, feeding on art; it is utopian...Pop art looks out into the world; it appears to accept its environment, which is not good or bad, but different—another state of mind.”

“I’m interested in portraying a sort of anti-sensibility that pervades the society,” explained Lichtenstein in a [1966 video interview](#) about his style and materials, Warhol, and the Pop Art movement. “A kind of maybe gross oversimplification. I use that more as style than as actuality. I really don’t think that art can be gross and oversimplified and remain art. It must have subtleties and it must yield to an aesthetic unity or else it’s not in the realm of art.”

[BOMB Magazine](#) spoke with Lichtenstein in 1986 about process, politics, and style as he prepared for an exhibition of new work in Boston. The artist reflected, “I think [passion] is in the position of each contrast. It’s where the mark is relative to everything else. It’s in a visual-kinesthetic placement, and in color....it’s a question of emphasis.”

In 1998, David Bowie spoke with Lichtenstein for [Interview Magazine](#) about the artistic intention and reception. “My things seem to be very exacting,” Lichtenstein tells Bowie, “but they’re really not done that way. I allow for a lot of latitude. I want the look very blatant, and to come on in a strong way, but you want to let the painting simply be unresolved in order to do this.”

[The Morgan Library & Museum](#) showcased a series of 55 large-scale drawings from the 1960s, brought together for the first time, to explore the role of drawing in Lichtenstein’s practices.

In 2012-13, the [Tate Modern](#) in partnership with the [Art Institute of Chicago](#) brought together over 120 of Lichtenstein’s paintings and sculptures, drawings, and collages in the largest retrospective to date. [A Tate film](#) brought together archival footage of the artist at work, interviews, and remembrances from friends. “I think people mistake the character of line for the character of art.” Lichtenstein reflects in the film. “But it’s really the position of the line that’s important. The position of anything, any contrast. No the character of it.”

Roy Lichtenstein: History in the Making, 1948-1960 will tour nationally through 2023. Produced by the [Colby College Museum of Art](#) and Duke University’s [Nasher Museum of Art](#), the show is the first to exclusively explore the artist’s early work, before he found his iconic aesthetic using Benday dots, through 90 paintings, prints, drawings, and sculptures, many of which have never been on view for public audiences.



Lichtenstein, 1990
Photograph: Jim McHugh

Roy Lichtenstein (American, 1923-1997)

Kiss II, 1963

Graphite pencil, pochoir, and lithographic rubbing crayon on paper

Private Collection; L2022:75.4

Roy Lichtenstein was a leading member of the American Pop Art movement in the 1960s. His iconic prints, drawings, and paintings toe the line between conceptions of “high” and “low” artistic expression; the works are often inspired by advertisements, comic books, and other mass media. **Kiss II** is an early example of Lichtenstein’s Pop Art paintings on the theme of the passionate kiss. Though the gray-scale color scheme and Ben-Day dots are reminiscent of newspaper prints and mechanical printing processes, the work was done by hand. Lichtenstein later reflected: “At that time, I was interested in anything I could use as a subject that was emotionally strong – usually love, war, or something that was highly charged and emotional...to be opposite to the removed and deliberate painting techniques [favored at the time].”

On view November 9, 2022 – February 12, 2023





Roy Lichtenstein (American, 1923-1997)

Brushstroke (Tuten 23), 1982

Painted and patinated bronze sculpture; Edition 4 of 6

Private Collection; L2021:28.1

In 1960, Roy Lichtenstein was hired to teach at Rutgers University and began creating his iconic Pop Art works. The brushstroke emerged as a theme alongside cartoons, comics, commercial advertising, and other images of “low” culture that inspired the artist. Lichtenstein’s bold, whimsical brushstrokes parody Abstract Expressionism’s obsession with the artist’s hand, yet Lichtenstein makes his strokes seem banal, everyday, and mass produced. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Lichtenstein’s brushstrokes broke free of two-dimensional canvases and transformed into sculptural works. The precarious stack in **Brushstroke (Tuten 23)** playfully questions the brushstroke’s artistic function as a building block. Do brushstrokes make a work of “fine art”?

On view July 7 – October 10, 2021

Roy Lichtenstein (American, 1923-1997)
Brushstroke Sculpture (Study), 1981
Graphite pencil and colored pencil on paper

Private Collection; L2021:28.3

On view July 7 – October 10, 2021





Roy Lichtenstein (American, 1923-1997)
Brushstroke Chair and Ottoman, 1986-1988
Bronze sculpture in two parts; Edition of 5

Private Collection; L2021:28.2

“You think it’s a picture of a brushstroke. And that’s kind of an absurd thing to do. It has that built-in absurdity, and that’s the reason I like it.” After decades of exploring the brushstroke motif in painting, prints, and sculpture, Roy Lichtenstein took it to the next level. In **Brushstroke Chair and Ottoman**, the artist creates a tongue-in-cheek variation of his brushstroke theme. Thick black outlines of blue brushstrokes become the support for functional furniture, parodying the woodgrain curves of mid-century design. The bronze-casted sculpture is an oversized expression of the artist’s hand – but in contrast to handcrafted furniture, Lichtenstein’s has the cool air of mass production.

On view July 7 – October 10, 2021

Roy Lichtenstein (American, 1923-1997)

Red Barn I, 1969

Oil and Magna on canvas

Private Collection; L2020:127.3

Roy Lichtenstein's 1969 *Red Barn* series marks the innovative Pop artist's turn toward landscape, which he utilized to honor the formal potential of line, pattern, plane, and color, each distilled to their essential elements. This effort, also shown to great success in Lichtenstein's adaptations of comic book panel imagery, was heavily influenced by a professor from the Art Students League, which Lichtenstein attended in 1939. Hoyt Sherman, a drawing and painting teacher, espoused narrative expression with the representation of familiar objects depicted through visual qualities. Structure thus becomes the dominant factor, eschewing decoration and extraneous associations to deliver a deceptively simple scene that is immediately recognizable yet novel in its approach. Lichtenstein sourced the composition of **Red Barn I** from another Art Students League professor, transforming the familiar barn from Henry Gasser's 1955 educational book *How to Draw and Paint* into a dimensional playground of visual contrasts. Matte black facades on the barn and grain silo convey shadow, as white sunlight glimmers off the roof and clouds, and a golden ground path meanders through the verdant countryside.



On view March 10 – June 13, 2021



Roy Lichtenstein (American, 1923-1997)

Modern Painting with Red Slant, 1967

Oil and Magna on canvas

Private Collection; L2020:118.2

The groundbreaking visual exploits of Roy Lichtenstein were rooted in a youth attending museums in New York, where he was inspired by such artists as Rembrandt, Daumier, and Picasso. Lichtenstein elaborated on his natural skill in drawing, painting, and sculpting at the Art Students League beginning in 1940, then attending Ohio State University before he was drafted in 1943. Returning to the U.S. in 1946, the printmaker and painter finished his education and embarked on a teaching career as he developed the style that would define him as a leader of American Pop Art. With an eye for conceptual wit and arresting compositions, he appropriated the “low” art of comic books, complete with vivid colors, two-dimensional figures, and assertive black outlines. In the late 1960s, Lichtenstein ventured deeper into explorations of medium and leaned increasingly toward abstraction, depicting brushstrokes, mechanical motifs, and geometric landscapes such as **Modern Painting with Red Slant**. His characteristic use of Ben-Day dots, appropriated from commercial engraving techniques, creates shading and depth while enhancing a nuanced investigation of the boundary between abstraction and representation.

On view January 20 – April 25, 2021

Roy Lichtenstein (American, 1923-1997)

Modern Room (Study), 1990

Acrylic, printed paper collage, graphite, ink and tape on paperboard

On loan from Collection of Dominic Ng; L2019:143.1

As an outstanding example of Pop artist Roy Lichtenstein's *Interior* series, **Modern Room (Study)** takes inspiration from the idealized domestic environments of billboard and phonebook advertisements. The series, painted during the final years of his life, represents a culmination of Lichtenstein's lifelong fascination with popular culture and the divide between "high" and "low" art. This monumental vision of a generic, middle-class living room features the artist's distinctive use of primary colors, thick black outlines, and Ben-Day dots – a commercial printing technique prevalent in comic books during the 1950s and 1960s that employs small, colored dots to create dimension and shading. Lichtenstein conflates the visual methods and conventions of "low" artistic mediums such as comic illustration and commercial advertisements with the "high" art of painting, using the motif of a modern domestic interior to comment on the consumerist quest for happiness through the purchase of mass-produced goods. The artist offers an additional, possibly ironic critique of capitalist culture by decorating the room with one of fellow Pop artist Andy Warhol's iconic, and endlessly reproduced, portraits of Chinese communist leader Mao Zedong.



On view January 8 – April 12, 2020