SCHOLASTIC ART

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FORMERLY ART & MAN

ROY LICHTENSTEIN

Working with Pop Art

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SCHOLASTIC

COVER: Roy Lichtenstein (1923-1997). *Oh, Jeff . . . I Love You, Too . . . But . . .*, 1964. Oil. 48" x 48". Private Collection. © Estate of Roy Lichtenstein

SCHOLASTIC ART

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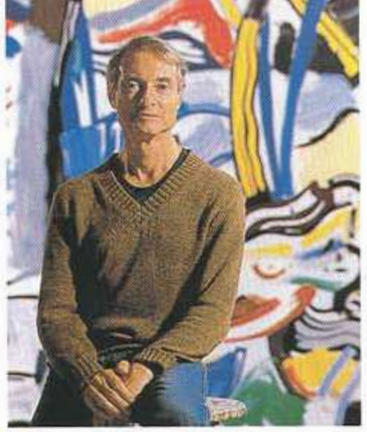


Roy Lichtenstein: "THE WORST ARTIST IN AMERICA"

"I want to make art so awful no one will hang it." —Roy Lichtenstein

In 1962, *Life* magazine published an article about an artist whose work was just becoming popular: It was titled *Roy Lichtenstein: Is He the Worst Artist in America?* One art critic wrote, "Roy Lichtenstein makes sows' ears out of sows' ears."* Another said, "I go to art galleries to escape supermarkets and comic strips. I don't go there to repeat the experience."** Why were these critics so outraged?

Today, these comic strip paintings are regarded as classic examples of *Pop Art*. But there was a time when they were not considered art at all. During the 1940s and '50s, advertisements, billboards, and cartoons were part of American life. But they weren't thought to be a fit subject for art. Most artists worked abstractly. Their thickly painted canvases and expressive brushstrokes represented fine art. So in the 1960s, when Andy Warhol's images of soup cans, Claes Oldenburg's hamburger sculptures, and Roy Lichtenstein's comic-strip paintings appeared in art galleries, critics were furious.

The creators of Pop Art believed that *Abstract Expressionism*, the non-representational art that had dominated museums for years, had become tired and empty. They felt this type of art had nothing to do with real life. Pop artists admired the energy and simplicity of the commercial images around them. They isolated and enlarged these images to comment on the media's growing influence on American life. By transforming objects from popular culture, Roy Lichtenstein and the other Pop artists were able to revitalize modern art. They helped us see the world around us with fresh eyes.

Born in 1923, Lichtenstein was the son of a New York City real estate agent. While growing up, the artist remembered listening to radio serials and reading comic books. He began studying art at 16. After high school, he went to Ohio State University. In the 1950s, the artist taught while painting and showing his work in New York City.

Early in 1962, Lichtenstein exhibited his comic-strip paintings for the first time. Many of the works in that show have since become some of the most important images in 20th-century art. Lichtenstein did many paintings, sculptures, ceramics, and murals, all inventive variations inspired by his early comic-strip style. The artist died in 1997.

* Brian O'Dougherty, *New York Times*, 1962.
** Barbara Rose, 1963.

Lichtenstein's comic-strip paintings featured two kinds of subjects: scenes of violent action (below) or sentimental romance (right).

RIGHT: *Drowning Girl*, 1963. Oil. 67 5/8" x 66 3/4". Museum of Modern Art, N.Y., N.Y. Philip Johnson Fund and gift of Mr. and Mrs. Bagley Wright. © Estate of Roy Lichtenstein.
BELOW: *Flatten Sand Fleas*, 1962. Oil. 34" x 47". © Estate of Roy Lichtenstein

COMICS into Art

"Stereotypes must be rearranged so the image is brought to the highest visual intensity without losing the stereotype itself."
—Roy Lichtenstein

Roy Lichtenstein's interest in using comic book imagery began in the 1950s as "I was drawing little Mickey Mouses for my children, working from bubble-gum wrappers. I thought I'd do one of the comics as is, large, just to see what it would look like." He began to realize that exaggerating the techniques used to print the comics and including text balloons strengthened the images.

When Lichtenstein began to create his giant comic-book paintings, he was not criticizing popular culture. But he knew that by showing consumer culture the way it was, it would end up parodying itself. Comics represented fantasies popular in the 1950s after the end of World War II. The heroine would find everlasting love with her hero. When the war was over, America would be safe forever for the perfect couple and their ideal American family. The women are based on two stereotypes; the "housewife" and the "girl" in distress. The men are all heroic. By taking a comic panel **out of its original setting, enlarging it,** and **putting it into a new context,** the artist was able to question these stereotypes.

When you compare the original comic strip (above) with Lichtenstein's painting *Takka Takka* (right), do the two look very different? The artist has changed only a few things, but the alterations are vital. Mainly he has **exaggerated** what is already there. By making the printing process part of his composition, Lichtenstein reminds us that much of our experience is secondhand and based on reproductions. He **parodies the "Benday" screen printing process** that breaks images down into dots. He uses **basic shapes, thick contour lines, text balloons,** and **primary colors**—red, yellow, blue—to create powerful designs.

The composition of *Takka Takka* has been **simplified** and **abstracted.** The type block takes up more of the picture than it does in the original. This **condenses** the visual below the type so the scene appears to be bursting out of its frame. The weapon has been made **horizontal.** It has been **simplified** to look more machinelike. The human hand has been taken out; the frame is filled with weapons that appear to be operating by themselves. The letters are **enlarged** and seem to resemble machine-gun sounds. **Jagged, repeated diagonal lines** and **explosion shapes** suggest the noise, smoke, light, impact, and smell of war.

The work on pages 8-9 was also taken directly from a comic strip about war. To create *Whaam*, the artist has used a **balanced symmetrical composition.** The two panels are linked together by the **narrow, horizontal** line of fire. To heighten its dynamic feeling, the work is presented as two parts of a sequence—an action and the result of that action.

"A minor purpose of my war paintings is to put military aggressiveness in an absurd light." —Roy Lichtenstein

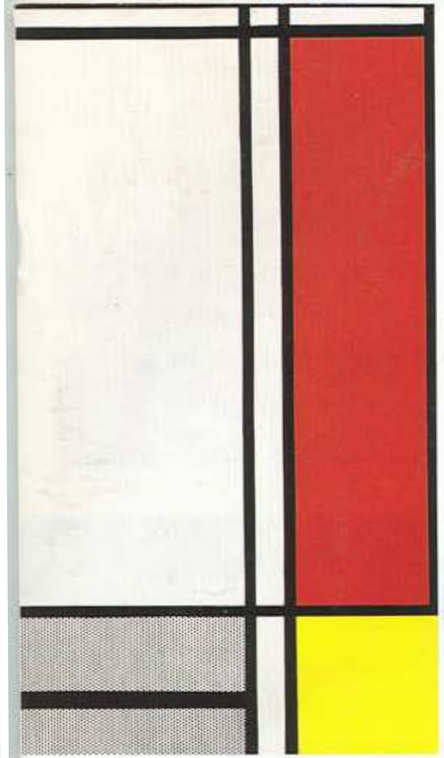
Takka, Takka, 1962. Oil. 56" x 68". Museum Ludwig, Cologne. © Estate of Roy Lichtenstein

LEFT: Roy Lichtenstein. *Woman with Flowered Hat*, 1963. Oil, 50"x40". Private Collection.

BELOW: Pablo Picasso (1881-1973). *Woman with Flowered Hat*, 1939-40. 28"x23". Private Collection.

ABOVE: Piet Mondrian (1872-1944). *Composition (Blue, Red, Yellow)*, 1930. Sidney Janis Gallery, NY.

RIGHT: Roy Lichtenstein. *Non-objective I*, 1964. Oil, 56"x48". Collection Eli and Edythe Broad.



RIGHT: Roy Lichtenstein, *Still Life with Goldfish Bowl*, 1972. 52" x 42". Private collection.

BELOW: Henri Matisse (1869-1954). *Goldfish*, 1912. Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow.

Later in his career, Roy Lichtenstein began turning other artists' works into Lichtensteins. Through these "takeoffs," the artist comments on the values of today's consumer society. Most of us know great paintings mainly through reproductions. And these copies of great masterpieces have been further commercialized. They appear on shopping bags, T-shirts, jewelry, and greeting cards.

In the works shown here, Lichtenstein has reduced the styles of a number of famous artists to comiclike images. The artist's personal life is as much Lichtenstein's subject as the painting. The distinct style for which each artist is famous has become a brand name or a standardized pattern of reproduction techniques.

▲A Picasso Parody

All throughout most of the 20th century, Pablo Picasso was known as the most famous artist in the world. His colorful life, his many wives, his great wealth were as well-known to most people as his art. Even the smallest scribble by the artist was considered a great masterpiece. Picasso was known especially for his distorted portraits of women. Lichtenstein said, "One has the feeling there should be a reproduction of Picasso in every home." So he created his version (above left) of a cheap reproduction of a Picasso. Lichtenstein translated Picasso's slashing brushstrokes into **lines, Benday dots,** and **flat, primary colors.**

▲Reproducing Mondrian

Twentieth-century Dutch artist Piet (Peet) Mondrian was known for his minimal abstractions. In his paintings, Mondrian used only straight black lines and flat red, yellow, or blue rectangles on a white background. Since Lichtenstein felt that an original Mondrian was almost identical to a reproduction, he has merely added his own **screen dot motif** to an exact replica of one of Mondrian's paintings.

▲Imitating Matisse

Modern French artist Henri Matisse painted richly colored scenes of the people and objects surrounding him. The goldfish bowl (above left) appeared in many of his works. Matisse's lush color and loose brushstrokes are warm and intimate. Lichtenstein's exaggerated reproduction techniques purposely make the same subject seem **flat, distant,** and **impersonal.** Matisse sometimes featured his own works in many of his paintings. So Lichtenstein has also included one of his own paintings, *Golf Ball*.

"I want to create a new work of art which

Masterpiece

has qualities different from the original."—Roy Lichtenstein

TRANSFORMED

SCHOLASTIC ART

Roy Lichtenstein (1923-1997). *Whaam!*, 1963. Oil, two panels, 68" x 83" each. Tate Gallery, London. Purchase, 1966. © Estate of Roy Lichtenstein

SCHOLASTIC ART 8 & 9

WHAAM!

"My work is unlike the original comic strip in that every mark is in a different place. The difference may not be great, but it is crucial."

—Roy Lichtenstein

by Roy Lichtenstein

ART SPOTLIGHT

Art About Art

Each of these artists was inspired by the work of another famous artist.

Reworking a Unique Style

Contemporary American painter Miriam Schapiro has always been interested in incorporating images associated with women into her work. Her mixed-media collages are filled with the simplified, abstracted, repeat patterns associated with sewing, embroidering, and quilt making. In her works, the artist includes the richly patterned fabrics traditionally associated with women. In many of her pieces she includes references to important female artists of the past.

Schapiro created a series of paintings called *Frida and Me*. These works were focused around the image and subject matter used by early 20th-century Mexican artist Frida Kahlo (left). Schapiro's collage *Conservatory—Portrait of Frida Kahlo* (right) reflects Kahlo's powerful self-portraits as well as her manner of dressing in bright, patterned, traditional Mexican costumes. In this work, Schapiro also uses bits of fabric and swirls of paint to suggest the sculpture, tiled architecture, tropical flowers and plants of Mexico.

Miriam Schapiro, b. 1923. *Conservatory—Portrait of Frida Kahlo* (detail), 1988. Miami University Art Museum, Oxford, Ohio.

"My paintings are filled with the needlework of departed and forgotten women." —Miriam Schapiro

Repainting a Famous Image

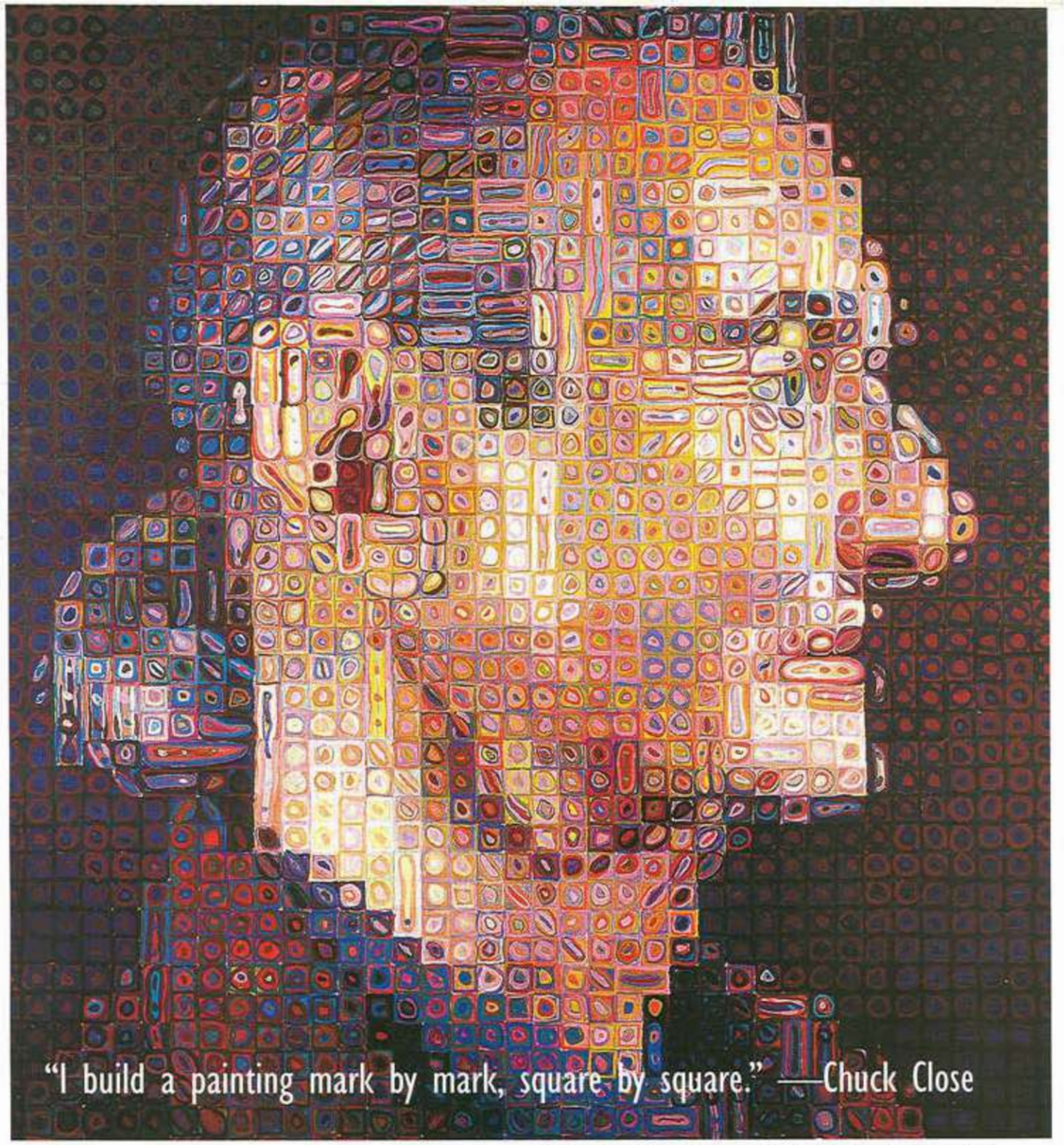
Fernando Botero, b. 1932. *Mona Lisa*, 1978. Oil, 73 1/2" x 65 1/2". Private Collection.

Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519). *Mona Lisa*, 1503. Louvre, Paris.

Contemporary South American artist Fernando Botero says, "I want to take well-known images that have become part of popular culture and do something different with them." Botero has taken Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* (left) and turned her into a chubby little girl (far left), with tiny features in the center of her face.

Botero is known for his heavy, rosy-cheeked figures. The artist says, "Renaissance painters depict figures of a certain fullness. In Spanish-speaking countries, beauty is associated with a handsome, well-nourished person. The idea of extreme thinness is very modern and very Western." By changing one of the most famous faces in art into an oversize child, Botero may be making a comment about the restrictions tradition places on both fashion and art.

"You can take the same subject and create a totally different painting." —Fernando Botero



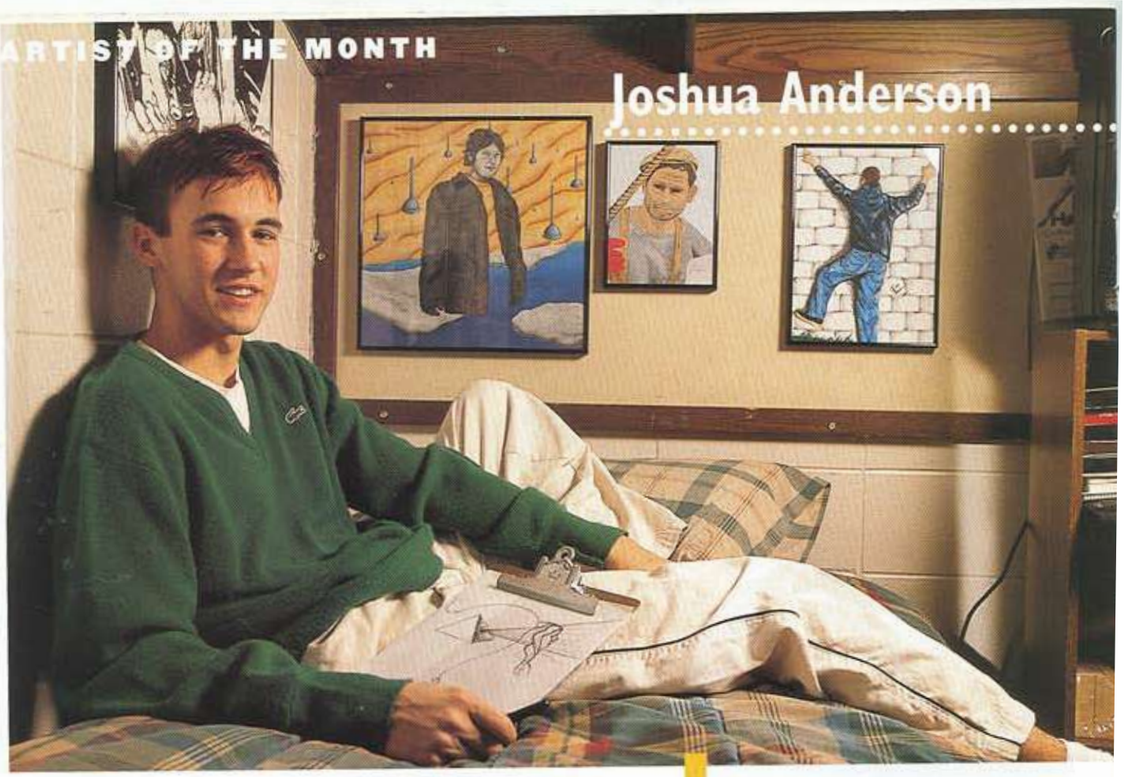
Chuck Close, b. 1940. *Roy*, 1994. Oil, 102" x 84". Pace-Wildenstein Gallery, NY, NY.

The Artist as Art

American painter Chuck Close has spent the past 35 years painting heads. At the beginning of his career, Close was sometimes considered a Pop artist. His huge, highly detailed, tightly cropped faces pointed out contemporary society's reliance on secondhand visual experiences. His images, made up of repeated marks, suggest computer scans, printed reproductions, or television images. Close paints heads because "heads matter to everybody."

Close describes the people he paints as a kind of extended family. He has known his subjects for years. Most are established artists like Elizabeth Murray, Robert Rauschenberg, or Roy Lichtenstein (above). Working from a photo, Close uses a grid to enlarge it to the size of his canvas. He then builds the image block by block. Seen up close, each of the marks he uses looks like a separate little abstract painting. Close's painting technique is his own, but the small strokes he uses in *Roy* could also be seen as a reference to Lichtenstein's famous Benday dots.

ARTIST OF THE MONTH



Joshua Anderson

A Borrowed Image

The award-winning construction (below right), built by 18-year-old Joshua Anderson, was inspired by a still life (above right) done by 20th-century French artist Fernand Léger (le-JAY). Joshua wanted to do his own three-dimensional version of the flat, painted shapes used by Léger.

Joshua did this work in his junior year at Western High School in Roussianville, Indiana. Currently a freshman at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana, Joshua is majoring in environmental architecture. He describes making art as, "A strictly personal process. Art is not something I want to do for money or attention. For me, it's a release. If an issue bothers me, I can use that as the basis for creating a satirical work of art."

For how long have you made art?
For as long as I can remember, but I took my first art class in eighth grade. That's where I learned about different artists I admire, like M. C. Escher and René Magritte. After that I started painting. I basically just took my cues from these famous artists' styles. I try to keep it simple, without really thinking about it. I like to let my art flow.

How did you come to create this work? Was it an assignment?
Yes. We were to take a famous or semi-famous art piece of the past and visually react to it in some way.

Where did you get the idea?
I was flipping through a book on Cubism and I saw a really colorful and vibrant piece by Fernand Léger. Léger's work is flat, two-dimensional, and the geometry is skewed. I wanted to make his piece look three-dimensional and "real"; to render his work with depth and volume. I wanted to make it look like French artist Fernand Léger made his painting from my three-dimensional still life.

How did you begin?
First, I built a big box out of foam board so I could construct the piece inside it. Foam board has some firmness to it, so it wouldn't fall apart when I used Exacto knives, glue, and paint. First I'd paint the separate pieces, then I'd put them all together inside the box. I cut pieces of board and painted them in black, red, yellow, and blue, before gluing them to the background. I wanted to create a geometric feeling in back that looked like the tile you'd find in a kitchen.

Photo © Shawn Spencer/Saba

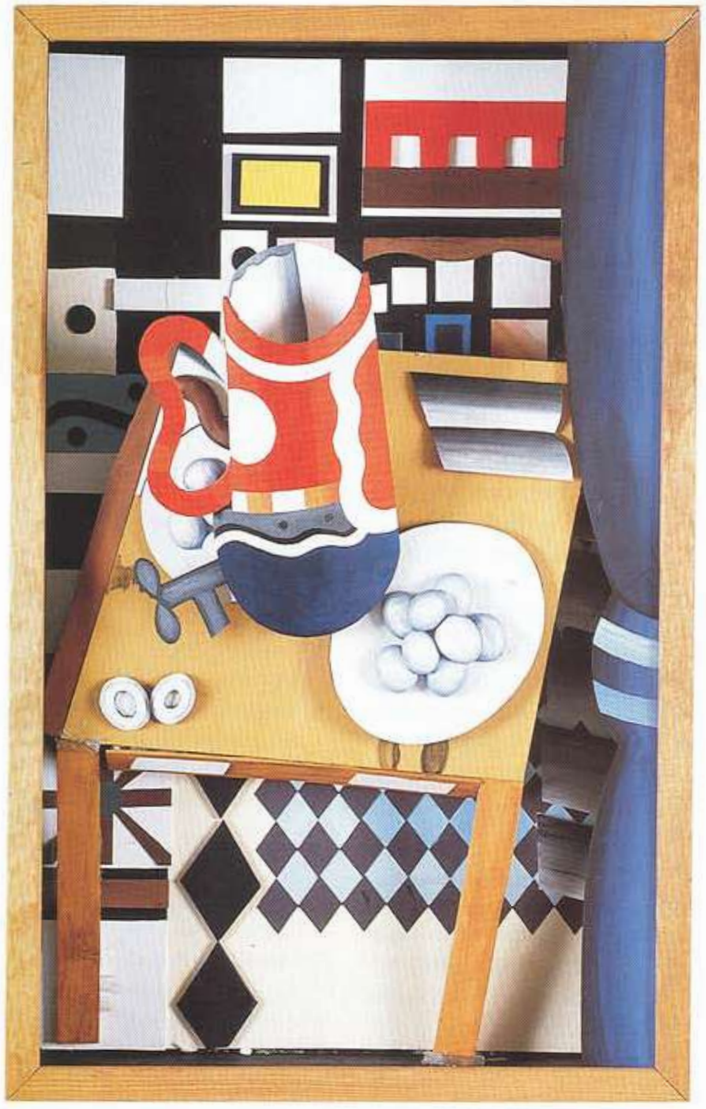
Then what did you do?
To make the table look like it was floating, I put it together, then glued it so it projected out of the box. I cut out the things to go on top—plates, a book, a beer mug, some circular shapes. The mug in Léger's piece looks like it's floating in front, but it's very flat. I wanted my mug to look three-dimensional. So I tried to bend it. But that didn't work, so I scored vertical lines down the back. Then I was able to bend sections of the mug so it looked curved.

How did you finish your piece?
I wanted to frame it and I needed to add the curtain. So I painted the outside of my box black. Then I got strips of wood and glued them to the rim in front. Finally, I glued a piece of painted foam "curtain" to the inside of the frame.

What advice do you have for aspiring artists like yourself?
I'd say first of all, don't worry about your art. Don't let it frustrate you by trying to impress people with it. And don't make it into a job. When I create art, I try not to force anything. I want to allow whatever creativity I have to come out naturally. There's a line from a song that I like that goes, "the more you change, the less you feel." You're born naturally the person you are. The way that can change is when you allow things to influence you from the outside. Trying to create art this way, from inside, is very hard, very idealistic. But that's what art is about to me.

"I wanted to make it look as if the French artist Fernand Léger made his painting from my three-dimensional still life."

ABOVE: Fernand Léger (1881-1955). *Still Life with a Beer Mug.* 1921-22. Tate Gallery, London.



We select our Artist of the Month from among thousands of young art-award winners. To enter, ask your teacher to write to The Alliance for Young Artists and Writers, 555 Broadway, New York, NY 10012-3999 for entry deadlines and rules books.

Designing Art Parodies

Create a new work of art from an old one.

Roy Lichtenstein used comic strips to create a new form of art. By enlarging their images and exaggerating their unique qualities, he forced people to see these "real life" objects in a completely new way.

Before Lichtenstein presented them, comics were not thought to be a fit subject for art. Yet copies of masterpieces by artists like Picasso and Matisse were being reproduced on T-shirts, shopping bags, and greeting cards. To point out the irony of this situation, Lichtenstein made parodies of famous pieces of art.

In this workshop, you'll create your own humorous version of a well-known work of art.

Prepared by Ned J. Nesti, Jr., Art Instructor, Morrison (IL) High School. Assisted by Tina M. Bastiani, Northern Illinois University. Photos by Larry Gregory. Paintings by: (Left to right) Nicholas R. Bonnuer; Elizabeth A. Tegeler; Allyson A. West; Katheryn J. Beveroth; Joshua C. Gunderlock.

Materials

- 18" x 24" 80-lb. white sulfite paper
- Drawing board
- Masking tape
- Primary, secondary, black/white tempera or acrylic paint
- Paint containers (cupcake tins with paper liners) or margarine containers
- Variety of round and flat paint brushes
- Container for water
- Palette (old dinner plates or flat surface that can be covered)
- Plastic wrap to cover palette
- No. 2 school pencil
- Paper towels
- Art-history books with examples of famous paintings
- Ruler, template, compass

Step 1

Look through art-history books for reproductions of famous works of art that appeal to you. Choose a piece that is easily identifiable or a stereotypical work by the artist you picked. Selecting identifiable subjects and shapes will help with this assignment.

Step 2

Reduce the shapes in the work almost to the point of abstraction. Consider focusing on a section or an object that gives a visual clue of the original. Keep images flat and two-dimensional. Focus on silhouettes. When you are satisfied with your composition, enlarge it on a copy machine or the square grid system. Transfer to 18" x 24" sulfite paper.

Step 3

Think about how to treat negative and positive space. Determine your color scheme; colors will determine painting's mood. Limit colors to primary, secondary, black and white. Use areas of solid color or repeat simple bold geometric patterns. You may use circles, curves, squares, line or dot patterns. Black contour lines can be used to unify the composition and define forms. Mix enough color to cover required areas. Apply paint smoothly and evenly; eliminate brushstrokes so surface looks mechanically applied. Do not shade or model. Colors should be flat.

Some Solutions

Can you identify the art masterpiece on which each of the parodies above is based? Which parody is based on the **entire work**; which is based on a **detail**? Have any of these artists **reversed the positive and negative spaces** in the original? Did anyone use the **original colors**? Are any of the **original colors reversed?** Which artist used **curved** lines and shapes; which are **angular?** How many **geometric patterns** can you find? There are large and small **dots** in **overall** or **varied, repeat patterns.** There are **horizontal, vertical,** and **diagonal** line patterns of **varied widths** and/or **spaces between.** Renoir and the Impressionists used small brushstrokes of paint. These small dots of paint could be "updated" by a Benday dot pattern. Can you find any other parodies that seem **appropriate** to the original work's painting style?

1. Édouard Manet (1832-83). *The Railroad* (detail), 1873. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
2. Michelangelo (1475-1564). *The Creation of Man* (detail), 1508-12. Vatican, Sistine Chapel ceiling.
3. Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849). *The Great Wave at Kanagawa*, 1829.
4. Pierre Auguste Renoir (1841-1919). *Girl with a Watering Can*, 1876. Washington, D.C.
5. Grant Wood (1891-1942). *American Gothic*, 1930. The Art Institute of Chicago.

CRITICS CORNER

COMIC Techniques

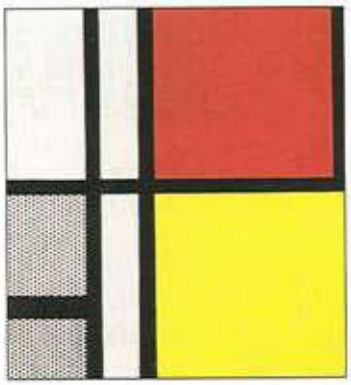
As you've seen in this issue, a work by Roy Lichtenstein has a very distinctive look. Can you identify some of his methods?

After he created his comic-strip paintings, Pop artist Roy Lichtenstein continued to work in the style made famous by those works. When you look at these details taken from the artist's paintings included in this issue, can you identify some of the Pop Art techniques he used?

Each work contains at least three of the features listed below. On the line under each of the details, write the letters of all the techniques or subjects that apply.

A. Text balloons
B. Every primary color
C. Benday screens
D. Thick contour lines
E. Mondrian reproduced
F. Matisse imitated
G. Reverse Benday screens
H. Picasso parody
I. Type that reflects sounds
J. Stereotypes
K. Exaggerated reproduction techniques

1. _____



2. _____

3. _____

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