

**FAMOUS ARTISTS SERIES: ROY LICHTENSTEIN (1923 - 1997)**

**Presentation Materials Needed:**

**ART BIN:**

- Bundle of Sunday (color) Comics
- Magnifying glasses
- Project samples
- Gummed reinforcement label sheets (to use as stencils for art project)

**CFA CLOSET:**

- White photocopy paper, cut to 6.5" x 8.5", 1 per student
- Black construction paper mats (8.5" x 11") to mount the individual projects

**OTHER:**

- Students will use their own pencils, rulers, colored markers and glue sticks

**Recommended Preparation:**

- Cut white photocopy paper to size (6.5" x 8.5")
- Do the art project and practice using the stencils, so you can demonstrate

**PRESENTATION:**

Roy Lichtenstein (pronounced Lick ten stine) was one of the most famous artists of the 20th century. Comic strips and comic books inspired many of his paintings. Originally an art teacher, he began to copy cartoon characters from comics and candy wrappers to amuse his sons. He created a number of paintings with characters like Popeye and Mickey Mouse.

**Present - [The Engagement Ring, 1961](#):**

- **How did Lichtenstein create the look of the comics? Allow for short discussion.** (Students may comment on the use of bold lines, solid flat color, use of primary colors, background dots...)

Lichtenstein was able to create this "comic strip" look by using *strong black outlines* and *bright, bold colors* and the use of "*Benday dots*" - the dots he applied through screens (very similar to stenciling) to simulate the look of the comics – this was also a recurring element in many of his works.

Benday dots were invented in 1879 by Benjamin Day.

- It was a technique used in comic books and newspaper strips as an inexpensive way of printing color and shades.
- These dots weren't meant to be noticed but Lichtenstein made them an important part of his paintings.

***Pass out magnifying glasses & comic strip clippings: Notice the Benday dots and diagonals that make up the color and shading.***

(Hint: To avoid distraction, ask students to please return comics & magnifying glasses before you continue!)

Let's look at Roy Lichtenstein before he made his impact in the art world: In the 1940's Roy Lichtenstein was a soldier in World War II, where he made sketches of the soldiers and machinery. When his father died in 1946, he was honorably discharged from military service and after that, he held several different jobs including a graphic and engineering draftsman, a window designer, a sheet metal designer and a university art professor. Through the 1950's he began to show his artwork in New York City galleries. Then in 1961 he met someone who changed his career forever:

***Present - [Warhol's Soup Can](#):***

- In 1961, Lichtenstein met Andy Warhol. The artists enjoyed the same aesthetic and Warhol introduced Lichtenstein's paintings into the Castelli gallery in New York City – which began Lichtenstein's rise to recognition and fame.
- Warhol was one of the forerunners of what is now known as the “Pop Art” movement. The word “pop” is an abbreviation for “popular”. “Pop Art” was a term coined by an art critic to describe the style of art that incorporated popular culture and showed popular, everyday things in their work.

Lichtenstein made hundreds of paintings, and like many other artists had phases where he concentrated on particular themes: (Note to volunteer: In the interest of time, you may want to run through the following laminates quickly!)

(Lichtenstein had four major phases:)

1. In the early 1960's, he was inspired by famous artists' works, like Picasso, Mondrian and Matisse.

***Present Picasso's - [Man with Pipe](#):***

***Present - [Woman with Flowered Hat, 1963](#):***

- *Point out similarities in the “cubist” portraits.*

Lichtenstein liked creating paintings that looked mechanical and referred to the benday dots and diagonals as “industrial texture.”

2. During the mid-1960's, he did a series of war comics paintings and isolated words on canvas:

***Present - [Waam!](#):***

- *Ask students to identify the elements and techniques we've already discussed. (dots, diagonals, primary colors, comic style, “Pop” culture)*
- *How do you think Lichtenstein came-up with his subject matters? (remember his time as a soldier in WWII)*

***Present - [Varoom!](#), 1965:***

- *This is quite an exciting example of Lichtenstein's work. Here he chooses to focus on one very powerful element of a comic and enlarges it to over 4-1/2 feet square.*

3. Lichtenstein created works depicting house and art studio interiors:

**Present - [Artist's Studio, Look Mickey, 1973](#):**

- *Notice: On the wall of the room there is a rendition of "Look Mickey" -- his famous 1961 painting where he first showed a cartoon character and a dialogue balloon.*
- *Perhaps this is a picture of his studio?*

4. Later in his career, Lichtenstein applied his artistic vision to larger-scale works including murals and sculpture.

**Present - [Mural with Blue Brushstroke, 1984](#):**

- Lichtenstein worked on a very neatly detailed plan for this large mural. The final painting, which is in the Equitable tower in New York City is 68 feet x 32½ feet!
- It took six weeks to paint this mural. It was a new experience for the artists – he had never painted such large Benday dots, and it was a new challenge to mix the right amount of paints and to apply the paint to the large canvas.

As seen in the mural, one of Lichtenstein's recurring themes in both painting and sculpture was a series of brushstrokes to embody the concept of "art" as a theme.

**Present - [Yellow Brushstroke II, 1965](#):**

**Present - [Brushstroke, 1996](#):**

- *Note how the sculpture duplicates the movement and color of the painting.*
- *These two works were done 30 years apart, yet both exemplify Lichtenstein's signature "look" of cartoon-like simplicity – even without Benday dots!*
- *The 3-story high sculpture is done in painted aluminum. Located in the sculpture garden at the Hirshorn Museum in Washington D.C.*

Summary: Significance of Lichtenstein's Pop Style

Lichtenstein created a distinctive, recognizable style: Many of his paintings look like pictures out of a comic book using very strong, primary colors (red, blue and yellow, from which all other colors are made). Many of his paintings were huge, wall-size versions in which he made the dots larger and more noticeable. Many art critics dismissed Lichtenstein's work, but Lichtenstein proved the critics wrong, and now his art is in many art galleries and museums around the world!

**SUGGESTED PROJECT: (Note to volunteer: Please allow 30 minutes for art project)**

After looking at some comic strips, you will each make your own Lichtenstein-type comic and use the "stencils" provided (gummed reinforcement sheets) to create the look of the Benday dots.

Quickly show samples of the project and the stencils.

(You will provide a demonstration of how to use the stencils)

Help make the connection for the students: different artists working in different media were

influenced by comic books. Comic strips, books, radio dramas, television, feature films, and video games are a few examples of how the original comic books are interpreted.

**Project Steps:**

- Pass out white photocopy paper and one sheet of the gummed reinforcement “stencils”.
- Have students get their pencils, markers, rulers and glue sticks.
- Direct each student to create a single comic strip frame. Fill the space with one large image or word. They may directly copy a frame of a comic strip, imitate one of Lichtenstein’s works, or try to come up with their own picture. Emphasize simple composition, bold outlines, bright primary colors. Combine use of flat color with the stenciled dots.
- Encourage them to think up an unusual phrase or comment like the ones used by Lichtenstein to invite the audience to think about the picture.
- Suggest to students that they may want to do a light sketch in pencil first, then go over it with the markers. Encourage the use of stencils to create the dots.
- Give students a quick demo on how to use the stencils. Show them that the labels should be FACE DOWN on the paper. Also note that using the stencils spaced “as is” will not yield the same spacing as shown on the sample art project. Refer to and show the stencil guide (located in the samples folder) as a how-to.
- Have students glue their finished comic on black construction paper.