ARTIST ROOMS
ROY LICHTENSTEIN
RESOURCE PACK

ARTIST
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ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

Roy Lichtenstein was one of the most influential American artists to emerge in the post-war period. ARTIST ROOMS currently holds a collection of late screenprints by Lichtenstein on long-term loan from the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation, while the painting *Reflections: ART*, 1988 is lent by a private collection, courtesy of the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation, 2015. This ARTIST ROOMS collection of works by Roy Lichtenstein has been made possible thanks to the generosity of the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation.

In addition to the works on loan to the ARTIST ROOMS collection, Lichtenstein is a significant artist in both National Galleries of Scotland's and Tate's collections. National Galleries of Scotland holds the important early comic book painting, *In the Car*, 1963 along with two prints, and an example of wallpaper produced by the artist in 1968. Tate holds 35 works by Lichtenstein including the iconic *Whaam!*, 1963, *Wall Explosion II*, 1965 and *Interior with Waterlilies*, 1991.

This resource is designed to aid teachers and students using the ARTIST ROOMS Roy Lichtenstein collection. The resource focuses on specific works and themes and suggests areas of discussion, activities and links to other artists in the collection.

For schools, the work of Roy Lichtenstein presents a good opportunity to explore cross-curricula learning. The themes in Lichtenstein's work can be linked to curricula areas such as English, mathematics, health and wellbeing, social studies, citizenship and science.

A glossary at the back of the resource provides further information on key words, terms and people associated with Lichtenstein and related themes.

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WHAT IS ARTIST ROOMS?

ARTIST ROOMS is a collection of international contemporary art, which has been created through one of the largest and most imaginative gifts of art ever made to museums in Britain. The gift was made by Anthony d'Offay, with the assistance of the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the Art Fund and the Scottish and British Governments in 2008.

ARTIST ROOMS is jointly owned and managed by Tate and National Galleries of Scotland on behalf of the nation and comprises over 1100 artworks. The collection takes the form of major bodies of work by artists including Louise Bourgeois, Anselm Kiefer, Ed Ruscha and Douglas Gordon. The guiding concept of ARTIST ROOMS is to show the work of individual artists in dedicated, monographic displays.

Anthony d'Offay's vision for ARTIST ROOMS is that great works of art should be available to audiences anywhere in the country, and especially for young people. This idea developed from Anthony's own discovery of art as a child in Leicester and as a student at Edinburgh University, experiences which shaped his life.

The collection is available to regional galleries and museums ("Associates") throughout the UK, providing an unprecedented resource with a particular focus on inspiring young audiences.

ROY LICHTENSTEIN

Roy Fox Lichtenstein was born in New York City, USA in 1923 to Jewish German immigrants. As a child he showed an early interest in art, science and music, and in 1936 he enrolled at Franklin School for boys. The school had no art teaching provision and the following year he attended watercolour classes at New York School of Fine and Applied Art where he began to paint still lifes. Meanwhile his musical interests developed through clarinet lessons and by visiting jazz clubs. In 1940 he attended painting classes at the Art Students League in New York, and enrolled as an undergraduate student at Ohio State University (OSU) in the College of Education.

Lichtenstein was inducted into military service in 1943 and while in service, he travelled to London and Paris where he saw works by artists such as Paul Cézanne and Toulouse-Lautrec. After the war he returned to the USA, and completed his degree. He joined the OSU School of Fine and Applied Arts as an instructor. In 1951 he had his first solo exhibition in New York at Carlebach Gallery and later that year moved to Cleveland, Ohio.

In 1957 Lichtenstein and his young family returned to New York where he became assistant professor at State University of New York, Oswego, teaching industrial design. During this period he began to make drawings of cartoon images such as Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck, at first combining them in paintings with Abstract Expressionist brushwork. In 1960 he accepted an assistant professorship of art position at Douglass College, Rutgers, State University of New Jersey, where he got to know Allan Kaprow. Lichtenstein attended several 'happenings' organised by Kaprow, who inspired him to concentrate on his comic book images.

Lichtenstein made his first Pop Art painting, *Look Mickey*, in 1961. That same year the influential art dealer Leo Castelli began to represent Lichtenstein and included one of his paintings in a group exhibition. He used a perforated metal screen for the first time in 1962 to make the Benday dots, he had previously painted by hand.

The following year Lichtenstein was included in the important exhibition, *Six Painters and the Object*, at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, curated by Lawrence Alloway alongside artists such as Andy Warhol, Jim Dine and Jasper Johns.

In 1966 Lichtenstein was one of five artists selected to represent the USA at the Venice Biennale and had his first solo exhibition at Cleveland Museum of Art. In 1967 he had his first European retrospective at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. The exhibition would later travel to three other museums including the Tate Gallery, which famously acquired the painting *Whaam!* 1963 in 1968. Lichtenstein began working on his first series of prints, *Haystacks*, and *Rouen Cathedral*, (both based on the work of Claude Monet) working with Gemini G.E.L. in Los Angeles. He had a retrospective exhibition in New York at the Guggenheim Museum in 1969, which included paintings and sculptures. During the 1970s he continued to make prints and paintings in homage to major movements and figures in modern art.

His print series from the early 1970s includes *Entablatures*, a black and white series referencing neo-classical buildings.

His painting series included *Still Lifes*, many of which made references to Cubist painters and specifically Pablo Picasso. He also made a film and created his first large-scale outdoor sculpture, *Modern Head*, 1974, in Arcadia, California. In 1977 he began a series of paintings based on works by Surrealist artists, including Max Ernst and Salvador Dalí, and Surrealist works by Picasso.

The Museum of Modern Art, New York staged a drawing retrospective in 1987, the first drawings exhibition by a living artist to be held at the museum. The exhibition toured the USA and Europe. In 1988 he began to make the *Reflections* series of paintings in his studio in Southampton, New York, and later went on to work on a series of prints at the Tyler Graphics Inc. In the early 1990s Lichtenstein began his *Interiors* series and in 1996 he presented his *Landscapes in Chinese style* at the Castelli Gallery. He died unexpectedly in New York in 1997.

The Art Institute of Chicago and Tate presented *Lichtenstein: A Retrospective*, his first full-scale retrospective in over twenty years, in 2012-13.

POP

In the late 1950s Roy Lichtenstein made a series of drawings based on iconic Disney characters including Mickey Mouse, Bugs Bunny and Donald Duck. In the first of these drawings Lichtenstein used comic book style rendering amidst expressionistic surfaces. He later dropped the painterly interference and focused on the drawing. These small drawings were the beginning of Lichtenstein's fascination with the graphic images infiltrating American society in the 1960s. Enlarging his comic book style images into oil paintings proved pivotal in the development of his career.

Lichtenstein later concentrated on more banal and anonymous sources such as small advertisements in newspapers, illustrated items in mail order catalogues, or romance and war comic book images, which he scaled up into large format oil paintings. Aesthetically, Lichtenstein admired the strong silhouettes and flattened designs of advertisements and comic books in the way the Cubists admired African art fifty years earlier. Conceptually, he drew attention to the ways they reflected modern American cultural identity – post-war everyday images presented an ideal way of living and comic book excerpts replicated the glamour and artifice of archetypal American society.

In 1961 Lichtenstein joined the Leo Castelli Gallery after meeting the renowned gallerist Leo Castelli, and the gallery director, Ivan Karp. Castelli and Karp readily identified with Lichtenstein's flat, lean approach to painting, which was in stark contrast to the spatial and atmospheric work made by his Abstract Expressionist contemporaries. When the gallery exhibited Lichtenstein's new paintings in 1962, his work prompted a mixed reaction.[1] Despite the mixed public response Lichtenstein's images reflected a surge of interest by artists, including Robert Rauschenburg, Jasper Johns and Andy Warhol, in the messages and products of mass communication.

In the Car, 1963, is one of a number of paintings from the early 1960s featuring women caught up in dramas with alpha male characters. Its source was taken from the September 1961 comic book series *Girls' Romances* #78, published by Signal Publishing Corp. Behind the glassy veneer of the car window the fashionable gender roles of the time are set in contrast – the glamorous yet submissive blonde woman is swept away by the handsome yet devious dark haired man – reinforcing the cultural divide between them. Two version of this painting were produced, the second, larger version of which is now in the National Galleries of Scotland's collection.

Lichtenstein first exhibited *In the Car* in his second solo exhibition at Leo Castelli Gallery from September 28 – October 24 1963.

Roy Lichtenstein *In the Car,* 1963
Magna on canvas

[1] Paul Cummings, *Oral History interview with Ivan C. Karp,* 1969, Mar. 12, Washington, D.C. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution: http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-ivan-c-karp-11717#transcript, Accessed 24 February 2015.

Discussion

Like many Pop artists, Lichtenstein appropriated a wide range of printed sources in his drawings and prints, including comic book captions and graphic designs by other artists. What questions does Lichtenstein raise in his work about the role of authorship in modern and contemporary art?

Activity

Lichtenstein chose memorable, yet small graphic images from the mass media to base his paintings on, which reflected aspects of American identity in the 1960s. Carefully select a small printed image which you feel reflects something about contemporary society to use as a starting point for a large painting, print or drawing project.

Artist Link

Andy Warhol was fascinated by the graphic language of advertising. Find out more about Andy Warhol: www. nationalgalleries.org/artistrooms

Roy Lichtenstein *Drawing for 'Whaam!',* 1963
Graphite pencil on paper

Lichtenstein experimented with a variety of painting techniques as a young artist. In the 1960s, he developed a series of processes for creating artworks that looked machine made, but were in fact carefully designed and rendered by hand. In an interview with John Coplans for *Artforum* in 1967 Lichtenstein said, 'I want to hide the record of my hand.'[2]

To create his designs Lichtenstein developed systems for imitating but not copying his graphic or cartoon sources. First he would sketch the image, making his own changes, then he would trace this drawing onto canvas using an opaque projector, while continuing to recompose the image. Finally he would paint this image using broad areas of flat Magna paint, strong contours and areas filled with Benday dots. This three part process gave Lichtenstein boundaries within which to work, but enough freedom to take ownership over the final design.

In *Drawing for Whaam!* and *Whaam!*, both 1963, we see the strong relationship between the sketch, or study, and the final painting. Close inspection reveals the minor processes of refinement that Lichtenstein has carried out when translating his sketch onto a large canvas, in order to create an image with the most powerful visual impact. The final painting is one of Lichtenstein's most well-known artworks and is part of a body of work based around the theme of war, produced between 1962 and 1964.

Lichtenstein first made use of his trademark Benday dots in 1961.[3] They reinforced the printed nature of his source material and reminded viewers that they were once removed from the subject of the work, as he explained, '...the dots can have a purely decorative meaning, or they can mean an industrial way of extending the colour, or data information, or finally that the image is a fake.'[4]

As well as producing paintings, Lichtenstein also created a number of limited edition prints from the 1960s onward, exploring technical innovations in lithography, screenprinting and woodcutting. He often combined multiple printing techniques in one image, or printed onto unconventional surfaces such as acetate or stainless steel. *Wallpaper*, 1968, was even screenprinted onto fabric backed metallic foil. He worked with a range of master printmaking studios including Gemini G.E.L., Los Angeles; Tyler Graphics, Mount Kisco, New York and Donald Saff at Saff Tech Arts, Oxford, Maryland.

[2] John Coplans, *Roy Lichtenstein: Graphics, Reliefs and Sculptures,* 1969–1970, Exhib. cat., Irvine: University of California, Irvine; Los Angeles: Gemini G.E.L., 1970, p.8.

[3] The use of halftone printing, using black dots on white in varying sizes to produce grey tones can be traced back to printing methods in the 1850s. In 1879 Benjamin Day, Jr., developed a colour printing technique for applying patterned dots to plates prior to printing, hence the origin of the term 'Benday'. From the 1880s onward, both halftone and Benday processes became popular for the printing of newspapers, pictures, book illustrations and comic books.

[4] Graham Bader, ed., *Roy Lichtenstein. October Files 7.,* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2009, p. 36.
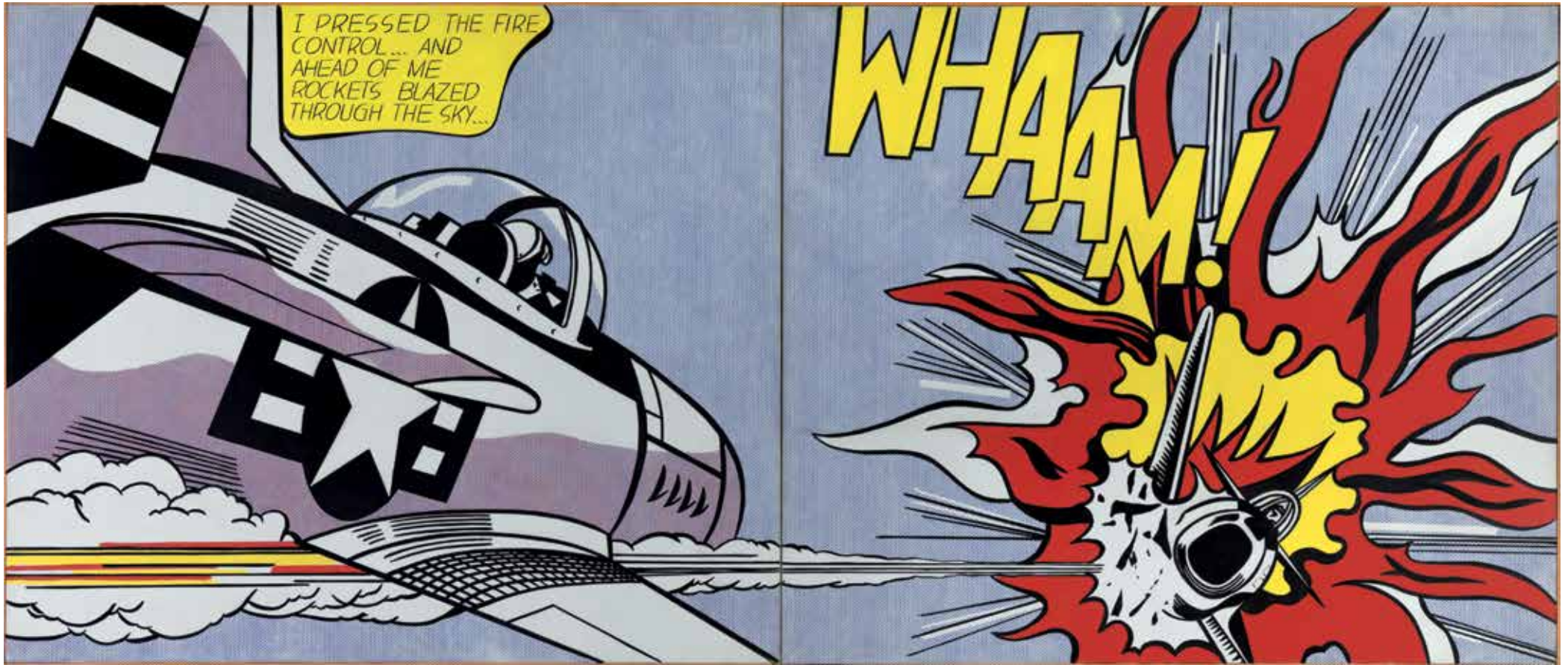
Roy Lichtenstein *Whaam!,* 1963
Magna on canvas

Discussion

Lichtenstein has now become widely recognised for his use of Benday dots and they have influenced many contemporary artists since. How do they effect the interpretation of his subject matter?

Activity

Systems of pattern and design played an important role in Lichtenstein's artworks. Think of the ways you could use elements of repetition, pattern and geometry to create an artwork with a machine-made quality.

Artist Link

The contemporary artist Damien Hirst has frequently made use of systems and patterns in his artworks to distance the traces of his hand in their production. Find out more about Damien Hirst at: www. nationalgalleries.org/artistrooms

Roy Lichtenstein *Reverie (From 11 Pop Artists portolio, volume II),* 1965
Screenprint on smooth, white wove paper

ON ART

Throughout his career Lichtenstein made paintings based on masterpieces by the giants of modern art, including Paul Cézanne, Piet Mondrian, Pablo Picasso and Claude Monet. He drew on the long tradition of appropriation that exists in art history; as he pointed out, 'Artists have often converted the work of other artists into their own style.'[5] Lichtenstein was also well aware that his own appreciation of these masterpieces came from printed reproductions rather than originals, hence the mechanical and pixelated quality in many of his copies.[6]

Water Lilies with Cloud, 1992 is one of six prints Lichtenstein made on stainless steel influenced by Claude Monet's '*Nympheas*' paintings. Lichtenstein made his first works based on Monet's paintings in 1969, with a set of prints based on both his *Cathedral* and *Haystack* series. He was interested in the paradox that surrounded Monet's works, which were on the one hand highly subjective and intuitive, while on the other hand reliant in their repetition. He also shared Monet's fascination with reflective surfaces, which he had explored through painting the surface of water. Yet Lichtenstein's Monet reproductions remain distinctly mechanical, as he explains, 'It's an industrial way of making Impressionism – or something like it – by a machinelike technique.'[7]

Like many young artists in the mid 1960s Lichtenstein offered an alternative to the ideas of pre and post war Modernism. His work demonstrates that the dialogue could be continued in a variety of ways.

The fragmented pictorial language of Picasso's Cubism also featured prominently in Lichtenstein's paintings. *Modern Art I*, 1996, is one of a series of *Modern Art* prints made in 1996, the year before the artist died. Lichtenstein explores the Cubist style, but his comic book imagery and Benday dots allow him to make the image his own. When talking about another similar painting made in 1963 titled *Woman with Flowered Hat*, he said, 'What I am painting is a kind of Picasso done the way a cartoonist might do it… the Picasso is converted to my pseudo-cartoon style and takes on a character of its own.'[8]

Despite the ironic quality in his *Modern Art* paintings, Lichtenstein's own strong contours and flat shapes were inescapably indebted to Picasso, who Lichtenstein had respected throughout his career. One of the first exhibitions he saw as a young man was a Picasso retrospective – Picasso's blue and rose periods subsequently influenced Lichtenstein's early drawings. As an older artist, he often mimicked Picasso's styles and even admitted, 'I don't think there is any question that Picasso is the greatest figure of the twentieth century…'.[9]

[5] Graham Bader, ed., *OCTOBER Files 7: Roy Lichtenstein*, The MIT Press Cambridge, Mass., and London, 2009, p.61.
[6] See Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, translated by J.A. Underwood, Penguin Great Ideas, 2008. Lichtenstein's approach to reproducing artworks is echoed in the German cultural critic Walter Benjamin's essay, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936), which examined the shifting role of art in the face of mass media.

[7] John Coplans ed., *Roy Lichtenstein.*, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972, p.102.
[8] Graham Bader, ed., *OCTOBER Files 7: Roy Lichtenstein*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., and London, 2009, p.61.
[9] Jack Cowart, *Roy Lichtenstein: Beginning to End*, exhibition catalogue for Fundacion Juan March, Madrid, February 2 – May 20, 2007, p.92.

Roy Lichtenstein *Modern Art I,* 1996
Screenprint on Lanaquarelle watercolour paper

Discussion

Lichtenstein made many artworks based on the work of other artists throughout his career and they encourage us to consider the originals in a new light. What do his quotations of both Monet's and Picasso's work tell us about the originals? Can we learn anything new about them through Lichtenstein's copies?

Activity

Copying the work of other artists has been an important lesson for many artists throughout history. Find an artists' work that you admire and explore the ways that you can copy it, whilst bringing something new to your reproduction.

Artist Link

Like Lichtenstein, the American artist Alex Katz was greatly influenced by Claude Monet and made numerous paintings in homage to him.
Find out more about Alex Katz at:
www.nationalgalleries.org/artistrooms

Roy Lichtenstein *Water Lily Pond with Reflections,* 1992
Screenprinted enamel on stainless steel, painted aluminium frame

MUSIC

Lichtenstein was the son of middle-class parents during New York's jazz age in the 1930s and the influence of this era on his creative output stayed with him throughout his career. During his high school years Lichtenstein visited jazz clubs around East 52nd Street, Staples on 57th Street and the Apollo Theatre in Harlem and even formed his own small band with friends, playing the flute, clarinet and piano. This early enthusiasm for music fed into his pre-Pop paintings of the 1930s, some of which depicted renditions of generic jazz musicians. Music remained a great love for Lichtenstein as his career developed and provided the subject for a number of his iconic comic book works, including *Reverie,* 1965, in which one of his archetypal blondes appears to sing an emotional, heartfelt rendition of Hoagy Carmichael's famous 1930s jazz song *Stardust.*

In his later years Lichtenstein began playing the saxophone and claimed in an interview with Richard Cork for *The Independent* in 1997, 'what I really want to do is music, but I won't give up my day job!'[10] His paintings from this period explored the ways music could be translated into art through a variety of techniques.

In some, he experimented with surface pattern, using his signature Benday dots, flat shapes and bold contours to create symphonic patterns of colour and light across large surfaces, as can be seen in many of his late nudes, including the collage *Interior with Painting of Nude (Study),* 1997. He explained the ideas behind his artworks from this period to Michael Kimmelman in an article with *The New York Times* in 1995: 'I'm trying to make paintings like giant musical chords, with a polyphony of colours that is nuts but works. Like [the pianist, Thelonious] Monk or Stravinsky.'[11]

Other artworks took a more literal approach to the representation of music, as can be seen in his Composition screenprints dating from 1996 including *Composition I*, *Composition II*, and *Composition III*. These images respond to the freedom and improvisatory nature of jazz music by allowing the musical staves to curve and loop across the page in energetic waves, setting the notes free from their usual horizontal, linear constraints. These prints allowed Lichtenstein to pay homage to his lifelong passion for music and to explore a new approach to visual composition.

Roy Lichtenstein *Composition I,* 1996
Screenprint on Lanaquarelle watercolour paper

[10] Richard Cork, "Roy Lichtenstein: The Last Interview", in *The Times* (Metro section) (October 4 – October 10, 1997), p. 26.
[11] Michael Kimmelman, "At the Met with: Roy Lichtenstein; Disciple of Colour and Line, Master of Irony," *New York Times,* March 31, 1995, p.27.

Roy Lichtenstein *Nude Reading*, 1996
Relief print on Rives BFK mould-made paper

THE NUDE

Lichtenstein explored the subject of the nude extensively, and made his first major nude painting, *Artist Studio with Model* in 1974. The work was influenced by Matisse's paintings of odalisques and Moorish women from the 1920s, with the model positioned in a classical contrapposto pose. In the early 1990s he picked up the theme again, working on a large series of paintings and prints of nudes which he continued to work on, right up until his death in 1997. Given Lichtenstein's interest in the work of other artists, it is not surprising to see him revisit one of the most dominant themes in art history. His nudes saw a return to the comic book imagery of the early 1960s, particularly paintings such as *Girl with Ball*, 1961. Lichtenstein used many of the same cartoon clippings from his earlier career as a starting point for his nudes, featuring blonde, youthful women from sources such as DC Comics' *Girl's Romances*.

Lichtenstein also revealed a renewed interest in Picasso's later work in the 1990s, which focused predominantly on the female nude. This interest may have been in response to two exhibitions in New York in this decade, the 1994 show, *Picasso and the Weeping Women: Marie-Thérèse Walter and Dora Mar* at the Metropolitan Museum and *Picasso and Portraiture* at the Museum of Modern Art in 1996. Lichtenstein may also have identified himself with the ageing Picasso, and indeed a number of older male artists, who used their later years to focus on the theme of the artist and his muse as a means of exploring aspects of their own identity.

Many of Lichtenstein's nudes were situated in art-filled interiors, suggesting the decadence of the 1980s as documented in magazines such as *Architectural Digest*. His backdrops were idealised homes, with no clutter or signs of daily life. Often his own paintings and prints appeared on the walls, or his own versions of the work of other artists he admired. In the relief print, *Nude with Yellow Pillow*, 1994, the painting in the background behind the model resembles one of his reproductions of Claude Monet's waterlillies, such as *Water Lillies with Japanese Bridge*, 1992. In another relief print, *Roommates*, 1994, Lichtenstein's version of a painting by the Dutch De Stijl artist Theo van Doesburg is just visible on the left.

Nudes were also used by Lichtenstein as a backdrop for creating more complex surface detail, as can be seen in two of his screen printed works, *Nude Reading*, 1994 and *Two Nudes*, 1994. Both are part of a series of nine which demonstrate a more experimental use of Benday dots. To produce these screenprints the artist used hand cut stencils with small irregularities, echoing the less uniform nature of his early work.

He also experimented with ways the dots could produce tone, as he explains, 'It started out as my idea of mixing chiaroscuro – done with dots and shading – with flat areas of color, which is a complete inconsistency.'[12] While the Benday dots do create areas of light and shadow, instead of simply following the surface of the female form they are suggestive of waves of light shimmering across the whole picture surface. It is as if we are observing these women through a lens, reflection or pane of glass, thus emphasising the voyeuristic role of the viewer, who observes women in quiet, intimate scenes. In *Two Nudes* the voyeuristic content is further emphasised by the open window in the background, a recognised symbol for sexual availability. Like many of his late nude works these prints are large in scale – many of his paintings took on cinematic proportions – forcing viewers to see a complex screen of surface pattern before taking in the whole scene.

Discussion

Lichtenstein's paintings and prints which featured nude women were often deceptively simple, opening up a variety of different discussion points. What different art historical themes did he explore in these works? How could we relate these paintings to the representation of women in today's society?

Activity

Think of the ways you could create a drawing based on a nude model, either from life, or copied from another artist's work, such as Matisse or Picasso. Explore the ways you could make this drawing your own, as Lichtenstein did, through line, colour and surface.

Artist Link

The American photographer Francesca Woodman often used her own naked body as a starting point for dramatic, atmospheric images, set in a variety of interiors. Find out more about Francesca Woodman at www.nationalgalleries. org/artistrooms
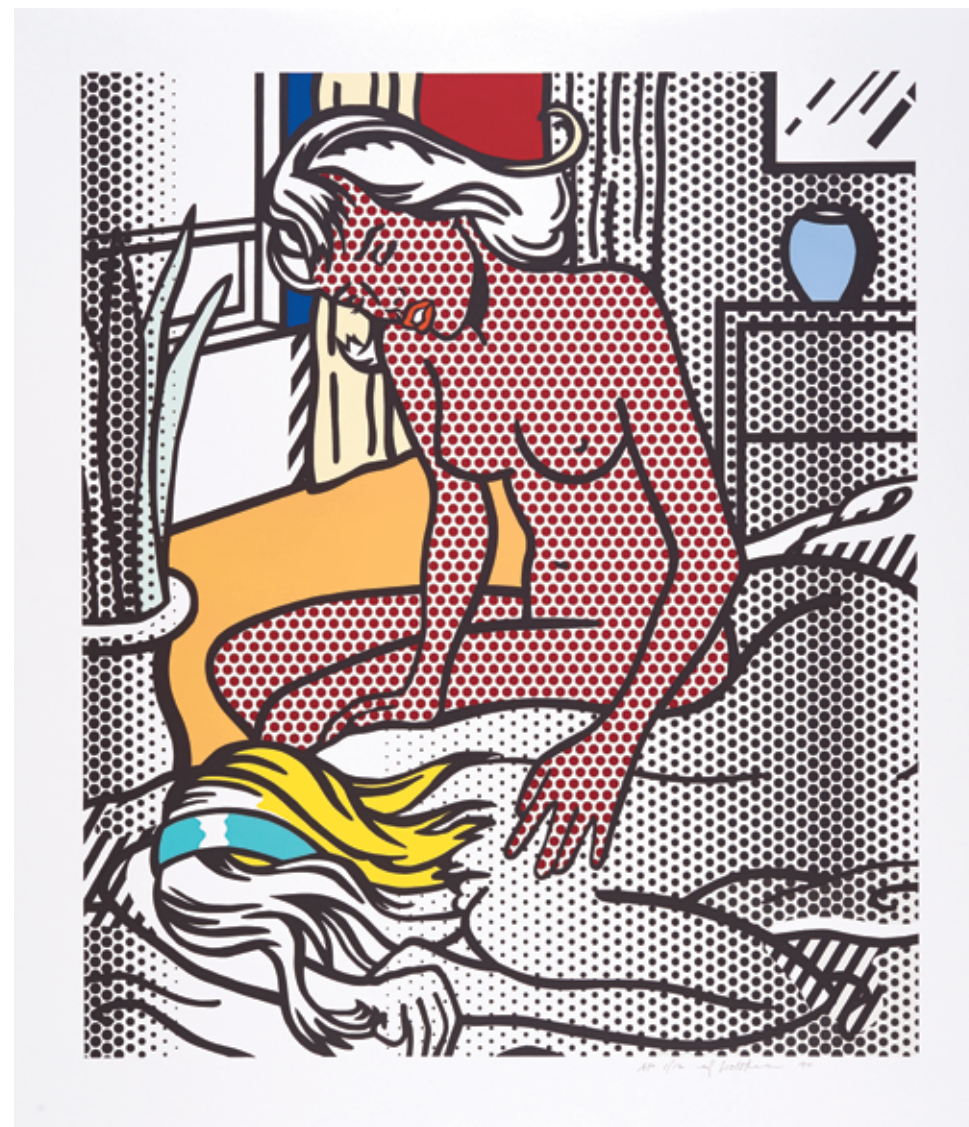
Roy Lichtenstein *Two Nudes,* 1994
12 color relief print Rives BFK mould-made paper

[12] Robert Enright. "Pop Goes the Tradition: An Interview with Roy Lichtenstein." *Border Crossings* (Ontario) 13, no. 3 (August 1994), p.27., Reprinted James Rondeau, and Sheena Wagstaff, *Roy Lichtenstein: A Retrospective,* Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2012, p.98

REFLECTIONS

Lichtenstein was fascinated by reflections and experimented with the ways they could be represented in his paintings and prints from the mid-1960s onwards. One of his earliest examples is the oil painting *In the Car,* 1963, which used reflections on glass as a key component in the composition. They act as a way of creating both distance and connection between the viewer and the subject, of describing speed and movement in the car and represent the psychological relationship between the protagonists, captured in a fleeting moment. The mirror also enabled him to abstract his subject. Lichtenstein also used a mirror while working in his studio as a visual device for detecting any imperfections or flaws in his paintings, picking up on a traditional Renaissance technique.[13]

Between 1969 and 1972 he went one step further, creating close to fifty paintings based on reproductions of mirrors he found in a brochure, such as *Mirror No. 1,* 1969 and *Mirror in Six Panels No. 1,* 1970. He was fascinated by the parallels that could be found between the mirror image and the printed image: both created a distanced version of reality which was one step away from first-hand experience. Similarly, Lichtenstein's mirrors had a cold, steely quality which was in line with his desire to be as emotionless and mechanical as possible. Lichtenstein came as close to

minimalist abstraction as he would in these paintings, but without completely losing a figurative reference, as he explained: 'Of course the reflections are just an excuse to make an abstract work...'.[14]

Between 1988 and 1993 Lichtenstein worked on a large body of paintings, prints and drawings prefixed with the words 'reflections'. *Reflections: Art,* 1988, is a reworking of his painting '*Art,*' originally made in 1962 which simply used the word as a motif. In the more recent painting the word has been partially obscured by bands of white containing Benday dots, as if seen behind a pane of glass. The title invites multiple interpretations – on the one hand the reflections in the work could be taken literally, but they could also be read as contemplations on the meaning of 'art'.

The obscured images he worked on in his Reflections phase were often appropriated from his own past paintings, or new comic book sources. This series could be read as a wry reference to the pop artists who quoted and re-used everyday images, and even an acknowledgement that his own work had now become part of popular culture. The ambiguous quality of the word reflections was also of interest to Lichtenstein and could be understood as references to physical reflections in glass or mirror, or to cognitive reflections in the artist's mind as he revisited his paintings from the past.

Discussion

Lichtenstein made use of reflections in a variety of ways throughout his career. In his later paintings they allowed him to revisit his paintings from the past in a new way. Why do you think he chose to make revised versions of his older paintings? How do the reflections allow us to see them in a new light?

Activity

Reflections have played an important role in artists' work throughout the centuries, from Diego Velazquez's *Las Meninas,* 1656 to Édouard Manet's *Bar at the Folies Bergère,* 1881-2. Consider the ways you could make a drawing or painting that incorporated reflections in some way, in a mirror, a pane of glass or a reflective object.

Artist Link

The German artist Gerhard Richter has often made use of mirrors, reflections and reflective surfaces in his artworks. Find out more about Gerhard Richter at www.nationalgalleries.org/artistrooms
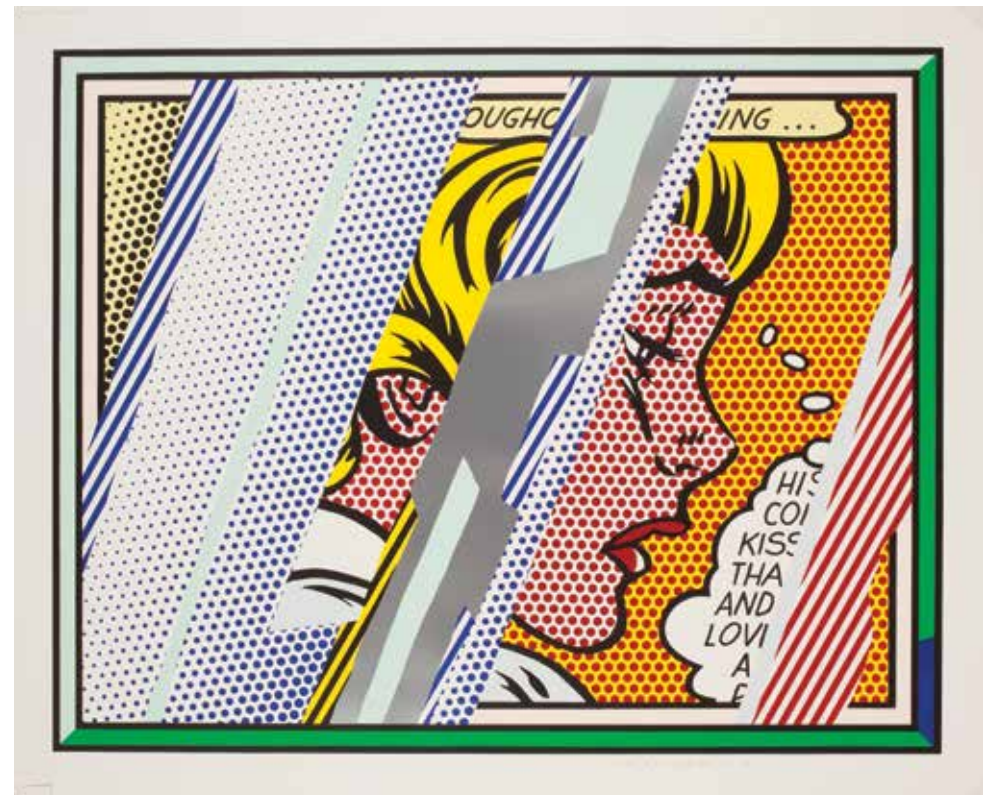
Roy Lichtenstein *Reflections on Girl,* 1996
Lithograph, screenprint, relief, and metalized PVC collage with embossing on mould-made Somerset paper

[13] The modern glass mirror, or looking glass, was hugely popular painting tool during the Italian Renaissance. Convex mirrors were popular for creating a picture within a picture, or for working out how to compress a large space onto a small panel. Artists also frequently used mirrors as a tool for self-judgement, as they provided a new perspective when viewing a mirror image of their own work.
[14] Graham Bader, ed., *OCTOBER Files 7: Roy Lichtenstein*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., and London, 2009, p.69.

TEXT AND ART

Lichtenstein discovered the power of text in visual art in the early 1960s, when he began reproducing comic strip frames into large format oil paintings. He was drawn to the combinations in comic books between verbal and visual language which had rarely been explored by visual artists before the Pop Art era; for Lichtenstein text and image together broke down well established boundaries between high and low art forms.

Some of Lichtenstein's earliest comic book style paintings used balloon text to communicate wry or covert messages, such as *Mr. Bellamy*, 1961. The title made reference to Dick Bellamy, a well-known talent spotter in the New York gallery scene. Lichtenstein's young officer in the painting thinks to himself, 'I am supposed to report to a Mr. Bellamy. I wonder what he's like.' It is as if the painting's hero is one of an army of young artists who hope to be recruited by Mr. Bellamy.

In artworks such as *We Rose up Slowly,* 1964 a split panel composition between text and image is explored to create a shared narrative between two characters. The image reveals two young lovers who are fully absorbed in a romantic, underwater embrace and the full caption reads, 'We rose up slowly…as if we didn't belong to the outside world any longer… Like swimmers in a shadowy dream… who didn't need to breathe…'.

Lichtenstein also used text to describe scenes which extend beyond the edges of the painting. Many of his angst-ridden or love-struck female characters make reference to characters beyond the frame, through thought or speech bubbles, such as *Drowning Girl,* 1963, who thinks to herself, 'I don't care! I'd rather sink than call Brad for help!' and in the painting, *I Can See the Whole Room...and There's Nobody in It!,* 1961, Lichtenstein's male character pushes back the cover of a round peep hole and looks through, as if observing the room the viewer is standing in.

The abbreviated symbols that illustrators used for sensations like touch or sound, or even abstract elements such as excitement became a particular source of fascination for Lichtenstein. Imagery from war comic books provided him with ample source material, containing words such as whaam, blam, varoom, voomp and bratatat. In the painting *Takka Takka*, 1962, the title words themselves imitate the sound of a rapid-fire weapon, but Lichtenstein was also able to use form and colour to add to the brutality of the sound. In *Reflection on Crash*, 1990, the dramatic sound is exaggerated by jagged yellow and red outlines suggesting fire or an explosion, with a man's tense face just visible on the lower left.

Discussion

Lichtenstein frequently made use of comic book style text in his paintings from the 1960s onwards and was one of the first artists to do so. How does it aid our understanding of his artworks? Would they be interpreted differently if the text was not included?

Activity

Think of the ways you could incorporate text into a drawing or painting to communicate a powerful message, which could be a single word or a phrase taken from a book or magazine. Consider how the visual form and colour of the words could aid their meaning, much like the comic book artists who inspired Lichtenstein's own paintings.

Artist Link

American Artist Ed Ruscha has frequently explored language as a means of investigating American culture. Find out more about Ed Ruscha at: www.nationalgalleries.org/artistrooms

Roy Lichtenstein *Reflections on Crash,* 1990
Lithograph, screenprint, relief, and metalized PVC collage with embossing on mould-made Somerset paper

FIND OUT MORE

Websites
http://www.lichtensteinfoundation.org/

ARTIST ROOMS:
http://www.nationalgalleries.org/collection/artist-rooms/

http://www.tate.org.uk/artist-rooms

http://www.artistrooms.org/

ARTIST ROOMS on Tour:
http://www.artfund.org/what-to-see/artistrooms

The National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.
http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection.html

The Art Institute of Chicago
http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/

The National Gallery of Australia
http://nga.gov.au/Collections/

Museum of Modern Art, New York
http://www.moma.org/collection/artist.php?artist_id=3542

Museum Ludwig, Cologne
http://nga.gov.au/Collections/

Digital Resources
Art Lives: Roy Lichtenstein, Illuminations, London, 2008.

Pop Art Icons: Warhol, Oldenburg, Lichtenstein, Arthaus Musik, Halle, 2010.

Roy Lichtenstein: Reflections, Checkerboard Foundation Inc., New York, 1993.

Further Reading
Lawrence Alloway, *Roy Lichtenstein*, Abbeville Press, 1983.

Graham Bader ed., *OCTOBER Files 7: Roy Lichtenstein*, The MIT Press Cambridge, Mass., and London, 2009.

Elizabeth Brown and David Hickey, *Roy Lichtenstein – Prints 1956 – 1997: From the Collection of Jordan D Schnitzer and Family Foundation*, Museum of Art, Washington State University, Washington, 2005.

Mary Lee Corlett, *The Prints of Roy Lichtenstein: A Catalogue Raisonne, 1948 – 1997*, Hudson Hill Press in association with the National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., 2002.

Jurgen Doring and Claus von der Osten, *Lichtenstein Posters*, Prestel, Hamburg, 2008.

Robert Fitzpatrick, Dorothy Lichtenstein, et al, *Roy Lichtenstein Interiors*, Hudson Hill Press, Massachusetts, 2001.

Janis Hendrickson, *Roy Lichtenstein*, Taschen, Berlin, 1988.

Ed. Michael Juul Holm, Poul rik Tojner and Martin Caiger-Smith, *Roy Lichtenstein – All About Art*, exhibition catalogue, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark, 22 August 2003 – 11 January 2004.

Laurie Lambrecht, *Roy Lichtenstein in His Studio*, The Monacelli Press, New York, 2011.

James Rondeau and Sheena Wagstaff, *Roy Lichtenstein: A Retrospective*, Tate Publishing in Association with The Art Institute of Chicago, London, 2012 (exhibition catalogue).

Roy Lichtenstein: Beginning to End, exhibition catalogue for Fundacion Juan March, Madrid, February 2 – May 20, 2007.

GLOSSARY

ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM
An art movement characterised by experimental, non-representational painting originating in the USA in the 1940s, marked by free, gestural technique, a preference for dramatically large canvases, and a desire to give spontaneous expression to the unconscious.

LAWRENCE ALLOWAY
An English art critic and curator, (1929-1990) who worked in the United States from the 1960s. Alloway included Lichtenstein in the important exhibition *Painters and the Object* in 1963 and published his monograph in 1983.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS
Established in 1909, the American Federation of Arts (AFA), is a not-for-profit organisation, which initiates and organizes art exhibitions and provides educational and professional programs in collaboration with the museum community. Lichtenstein's print *Reflections: Art* (1988), was selected as the jubilee print for the American Federation of Arts in 1989.

BENDAY DOTS
The Benday dots printing process, named after illustrator and printer Benjamin Day, is similar to Pointillism. Depending on the effect, colour and optical illusion needed, small coloured dots are closely spaced, widely-spaced or overlapping. Lichtenstein first made use of them in 1961.

LEO CASTELLI
An Italian-American art dealer and gallerist (1907 – 99), who gave Jasper Johns, Frank Stella and Roy Lichtenstein their first major solo exhibitions. The Castelli Gallery opened in 1957 and later became the international epicentre for Pop, Minimal, and Conceptual Art.

PAUL CÉZANNE
French artist (1839-1906) who was associated with the Impressionists, but always had other aims. His work was discovered by the Paris avant-garde during the 1890s and had a significant influence on Picasso and the development of 20th-century art. Cézanne was among one of the many artists Lichtenstein paid homage too through his work,

CHIAROSCURO
Italian term which translates as light-dark, and refers to the balance and pattern of light and shade in a painting or drawing.

CUBISM
An early 20th-century avant-garde art movement developed by Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso that revolutionized European painting and sculpture, and inspired related movements in music, literature and architecture.

DC COMICS

Established in 1935, DC Comics is one of the largest and most successful comic book companies in the world. Its characters include Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman and Green Lantern. Roy Lichtenstein often used DC comic books as source material.

GEMINI G.E.L.

Gemini G.E.L. (Graphic Editions Limited) is an artists' workshop and publisher of limited edition prints and sculptures in Los Angeles. It was founded in 1966 and the workshop has collaborated with artists such as Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, Willem de Kooning, Claes Oldenburg, and Ed Ruscha, among many others, to create editioned multiples in media including lithography, etching, screenprinting, woodcut and a wide variety of sculptural materials.

JASPER JOHNS

American artist (b. 1930), forerunner of Pop Art, who works primarily in painting and printmaking. Both Johns and Lichtenstein had their first solo exhibitions at the Castelli Gallery, New York.

HAPPENINGS

Theatrical events created by artists, initially in America, in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Happenings were the forerunners of performance art and in turn emerged from the theatrical elements of Dada and Surrealism. The name was first used by the American artist Allan Kaprow in 1959.

ALLAN KAPROW

American artist (1927-2006) who was a pivotal figure in the shifting art world of the 1960s. His "happenings," a form of spontaneous, non-linear action, revolutionized the practice of performance art. Kaprow was Lichtenstein's teaching colleague at Douglass College in New Jersey, and influential in his move from an overly painterly style.

IVAN KARP

American art dealer and gallerist (1926-2012) who was instrumental in the emergence of Pop Art. He joined the Leo Castelli Gallery in 1959 as an Associate Director.

MANGA

A brand of acrylic resin paint used by Barnett Newman, Morris Louis and Roy Lichtenstein. It was originally developed in 1947 and the finished effect is glossier than contemporary acrylic paints.

PIET MONDRIAN

Mondrian was the leading artist of the 'De Stijl' ('The Style') movement, a group of Dutch artists who produced strictly geometric, abstract art. Mondrian was among one of the many artists Lichtenstein paid homage to through his work.

CLAUDE MONET

Monet is the most famous of the Impressionist artists. His painting '*Impression, Sunrise*', shown in Paris in 1874, prompted critics to label him and fellow exhibitors as 'Impressionists'. Monet was among one of the many artists Lichtenstein paid homage toev through his work.

PABLO PICASSO

Spanish artist (1881–1973) regarded as one of the greatest and most influential artists of the twentieth century, He developed Cubism along with Georges Braque.

POINTILLISM

An Impressionist painting technique developed by Georges Seurat, based on colour theory and the use of complementary colours in particular. The painting is created using countless tiny dots of pure colour, placed in close proximity to each other. When viewed at a distance, the human eye is meant to fuse the individual dots together into areas of solid colour.

POP ART

An art movement that emerged in the mid-1950s in Britain and in the late 1950s in the USA. Pop Art presented a challenge to the traditions of fine art by including found imagery from popular culture such as advertising, news, etc.

RENAISSANCE

The revival of European art and literature under the influence of classical models in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

ROBERT RAUSCHENBURG

American artist (1925–2008) whose early works anticipated the pop art movement. Rauschenberg is well known for his 'combines' of the 1950s, in which non-traditional materials and objects were employed to make a hybrid of painting and sculpture.

SCREEN PRINTING

A printing process that involves using a meshed stencil to apply ink onto a wide range of objects and materials, such as t-shirts, posters, stickers, vinyl and wood. Warhol produced numerous works using this technique. Both Warhol and Lichtenstein are famous for their work using screen printing techniques as a means of escaping the hand-made aspects of Abstract Expressionism, preferring instead the idea of machine-made and factory production.

TROMPE L'OEIL

French phrase meaning 'deceives the eye' used to describe paintings that create the illusion of a real object or scene.

TYLER GRAPHICS INC.

Printmaking studio established by the masterprinter Kenneth E. Tyler (b. 1931) in Bedford Village, New York in 1973. In 1987 the premises expanded to Mount Kisco, New York.

ANDY WARHOL

American Pop artist (1928-87) who was a contemporary of Lichtenstein. Warhol and Lichtenstein are regarded as the leading artists in the Pop art movement.