



PARRISH ART MUSEUM

***Roy Lichtenstein: History in the Making, 1948–1960***

Parrish Art Museum  
August 1–October 24, 2021



Roy Lichtenstein (American, 1923–1997), *Self-Portrait at an Easel*, ca. 1951–52. Oil on canvas, 34 1/16 x 30 1/8 inches. Private collection.

279 Montauk Highway, Water Mill, NY 11976



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Roy Lichtenstein, *Pilot*, ca. 1948. Pastel, graphite pencil on colored paper, 10 1/2 x 13 3/4 inches. Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. The Roy Lichtenstein Study Collection; gift of the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation, 2019.43.



Roy Lichtenstein, *Mechanism, Cross Section*, ca. 1954. Oil with sgraffito on canvas, 40 x 54 inches. Collection of the Flint Institute of Arts, Michigan. Gift of Messrs. Samuel N. Tomkin and Sidney Freedman, FIA 1956.2.

Premiering at the Parrish Art Museum and traveling to the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University and the Colby College Museum of Art, *Roy Lichtenstein: History in the Making, 1948–1960* will be the first major museum exhibition to investigate the early work of one of the most celebrated American artists of the 20th century.

“The Parrish is thrilled to be hosting this extraordinary survey of work from the artist’s fruitful formative years and privileged to be the premier public venue for the exhibition. Roy Lichtenstein’s long history with the East End of Long Island and his deep affection for the region make this a singular occasion to celebrate his legacy as we welcome visitors from far and wide.”

—Alicia G. Longwell, Ph.D., Lewis B. and Dorothy Cullman Chief Curator, Art and Education

### Landmark Exhibition of Formative Work

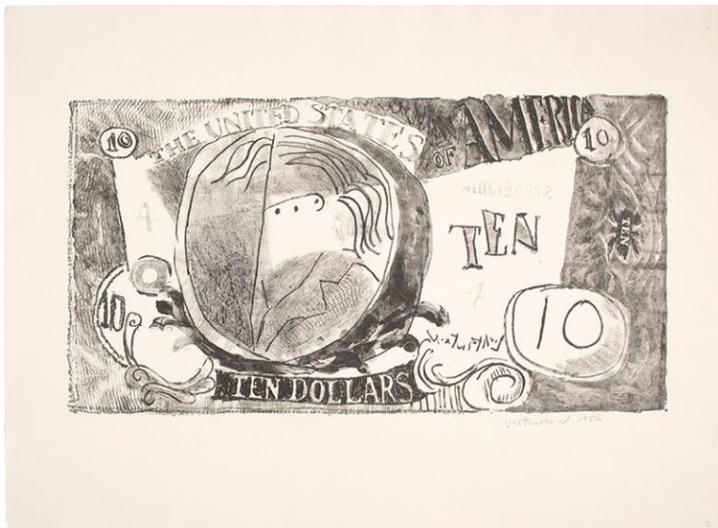
Providing an illuminating prologue to the artist’s well-known comics-inspired imagery, *History in the Making* tells the largely overlooked story of Lichtenstein’s early career, when formal experimentation and a keen eye for irony irrevocably defined his art. Organized with the authorization of the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation, and featuring loans from museum and private collections nationally, this landmark exhibition will present approximately 80 works from the artist’s fruitful formative years, including paintings, drawings, sculptures, and prints, many never before seen by the public. *Roy Lichtenstein: History in the Making* will establish a new understanding of this period in 20th-century American



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Roy Lichtenstein, *Untitled*, ca. 1955. Painted canvas, painted scrap wood, wood batters, bolts, screws, string, 26 3/4 x 13 9/16 x 3 13/16 inches. Private Collection.



Roy Lichtenstein, *Ten Dollar Bill [Ten Dollars]*, 1956. Lithograph on wove paper, edition 4/25, 16 7/8 x 22 5/8 inches. Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. The Roy Lichtenstein Study Collection; gift of the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation, 2019.92.

art through a focused and in-depth consideration of one of its most influential figures. The exhibition is co-organized by the Colby College Museum of Art and the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University.

### "Before the Dot"

*Roy Lichtenstein: History in the Making* examines the period before the dot—that is, the artist's signature use of Benday dots in his Pop paintings. The exhibition reveals how Pop art emerged in dialogue with European modernism, American history painting, and a diversity of vernacular sources.

The exhibition will also tell the story of Lichtenstein's brief but instrumental flirtation with abstraction in 1959 and 1960. Coinciding with the mainstreaming of Abstract Expressionism, these paintings illustrate how the artist was inspired to engage with the movement's pervasive influence, but not without inserting his characteristic humor and wit.

Born in New York City, Lichtenstein enrolled in Ohio State University in Columbus, where the progressive curriculum and a focus on visual perception influenced his irreverent response to American history and culture. The artist's studies were interrupted when he served in the Army during World War II, allowing him to see some of the great European masterpieces in person. After he returned to Ohio, Lichtenstein quickly synthesized modern art styles to create an innovative and personalized body of work. By the early 1950s he was



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Roy Lichtenstein, *Mickey Mouse I*, ca. 1958. Pastel, charcoal, brush and India ink on paper, 19 1/16 x 25 inches. The Morgan Library & Museum, New York. Gift of the Roy and Dorothy Lichtenstein Collection, 2014.38.



Roy Lichtenstein, *Variations No. 7*, 1959. Oil on canvas, 48 x 60 inches. Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. The Roy Lichtenstein Study Collection; gift of the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation, 2019.277.

All works © Estate of Roy Lichtenstein

exhibiting regularly in New York and receiving some critical attention.

Before 1960, Lichtenstein's art was filled with characteristic humor and evoked many of the themes that would become synonymous with his later career. He appropriated from earlier art and showed an avid interest in popular culture—important harbingers of his better-known work in the following decades. He was inspired by fairy tales, caricature, folk and children's art. He drew on various forms of Americana, including representations of cowboys and Native Americans encountered in 19th-century paintings of the Great Plains, and the Disney cartoon characters Bugs Bunny, Donald Duck, and Mickey Mouse. These and other vernacular inspirations are the essential but little-known precursors to the artist's appropriations of popular culture and his famous sourcing of comic books, advertisements, and newspapers later on.

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*Roy Lichtenstein: History in the Making, 1948–1960* introduces a revisionist starting point for a new understanding of Lichtenstein's work and establishes a new context for this period in 20th-century modern American art.