Roy Lichtenstein:
Pop Art
Comic Book Style Self-Portraits

ELEMENTARY VISUAL ARTS
Park City Education Foundation • Kimball Art Center

• **How does a cartoon express a self portrait?**
• **How does the dramatic and colorful nature of pop art express emotion?**

LESSON OVERVIEW/OBJECTIVES

Students will learn about the artist and work of Roy Lichtenstein. Lichtenstein (1923-1997) was an American painter who is well known for his pop art depictions of everyday objects. His paintings are instantly recognizable as he often simulated the Ben-Day dot patterns present in the commercial printing of comic books, newspapers, and other mainstream media. Many find his art to be exciting and approachable because of the minimal primary palette, and the comic inspired subject matter. After learning about comics and cartoon faces, in the style of Lichtenstein, students will create a comic self portrait.

KEY IDEAS THAT CONNECT TO VISUAL ARTS CORE CURRICULUM:

Based on Utah State Visual Arts Core Curriculum Requirements (3rd Grade)

Strand: CREATE (3.V.CR.) Students will generate artistic work by conceptualizing, organizing, and completing their artistic ideas. They will refine original work through persistence, reflection, and evaluation.

Standard 3.V.CR.1: Elaborate on an imaginative idea and apply knowledge of available resources, tools, and technologies to investigate personal ideas through the art-making process.

Standard 3.V.CR.2: Create a personally satisfying artwork using a variety of artistic processes and materials.

Standard 3.V.CR.3: Demonstrate an understanding of the safe and proficient use of materials, tools and equipment for a variety of artistic processes.

Standard 3.V.CR.5: Elaborate visual information by adding details in an artwork to enahnce meaning.

Strand: RESPOND (3.V.R.) Students will understand, evaluate, and articulate how works of art convey meaning for the observer as well as the creator.

Standard 3.V.R.1: Contemplate about the processes an artist uses to create a work of art, and determine messages communicated by an image.

Standard 3.V.R.2: Analyze use of media to create subject matter, characteristics of form and mood.

Standard 3.V.R.3: Evaluate an artwork based on given criteria.

Strand: CONNECT (3.V.CO.) Students will relate artistic skills, ideas and work with personal meaning and external context.

Standard 3.V.C0.2: Recognize that responses to art change, depending on knowledge of the time and place in which it was made.

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES:

Students will:
- Learn about the artist Roy Lichtenstein, his work, and his mature art style that was inspired by comic strips.
- Learn about cartoon portrait drawing.
- Understand facial proportions and create a comic self portrait in the style of Lichtenstein.
- Learn about Lichtenstein's emphasis on methods of mechanical reproduction - particularly through his signature use of Ben-Day dots.

SUPPLIES

- Images and art samples of the work of Roy Lichtenstein.
- Images and samples of comic books and cartoon faces.
- Art pencils and markers (red, black, yellow, blue).
- White paper to sketch out ideas.
- Dotted paper and/or dot stamping pens.

VOCABULARY

Benday Dots - Technique. The Ben-Day Dots printing process, named after illustrator and printer Benjamin Day, is similar to Pointillism. Depending on the effect, color and optical illusion needed, small colored dots are closely-spaced, widely-spaced or overlapping.

Abstract - Art that does not attempt to represent external reality, but seeks to achieve its effect using shapes, forms, colors, and textures.

Abstract Expressionism - A development of abstract art that originated in New York in the 1940s and 1950s and aimed at subjective emotional expression with particular emphasis on the creative spontaneous act (e.g., action painting). Leading figures were Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning.

Pop Art - Art based on modern popular culture and the mass media, especially as a critical or ironic comment on traditional fine art values.

Dramatic - Arresting or forceful in appearance or effect.

Expressionism - A style of painting, music, or drama in which the artist or writer seeks to express emotional experience rather than impressions of the external world.

Comics is a medium used to express ideas by images, often combined with text or other visual information.

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

Introduction

Before beginning the lesson, introduce students to the idea of cartoon portraits and comic strips. Talk about how facial proportions are represented but may be abstracted to create a comic book look while still representing the intended figure or image. Ask students what is similar and different to realistic portraiture.

Then move to the work of Roy Lichtenstein and introduce it by showing images of his varied artwork including the Girl with Hair Ribbon, Look Mickey, Drowning Girl amongst others. Highlight the subject matter, size and style of the works. Give them a few minutes to respond to the images. Encourage comparisons and contrasting statements as well as descriptions of what they see.

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN CONTINUED

Introduce your students to the idea of how Lichtenstein's most famous work was inspired by comics. With Lichtenstein's work, he used methods of mechanical reproduction, manipulating images and hand drawing to make his creations. Show students photgraphic images of faces and ask them how they might manipulate them to make it more of a comic rendition in the style of Lichtenstein. Tell students that you will be discussing Roy Lichtenstein, his artwork, his inspiration for his art and his methods of creating his art. They will be creating their own cartoon self portrait in the style of Lichtenstein.

About the Artist

Roy Lichtenstein (1923-1997) was a American painter who is well known for his pop art depictions of everyday objects. His paintings are instantly recognizable as he often simulated the Ben-Day dot patterns present in the commercial printing of comic books, newspapers, and other mainstream media. Many find his art to be exciting and approachable because of the minimal primary palette, and the comic inspired subject matter.

Roy Lichtenstein was one of the first American Pop artists to achieve widespread renown, and he became a lightning rod for criticism of the movement. His early work ranged widely in style and subject matter, and displayed considerable understanding of modernist painting: Lichtenstein would often maintain that he was as interested in the abstract qualities of his images as he was in their subject matter. However, the mature Pop style he arrived at in 1961, which was inspired by comic strips, was greeted by accusations of banality, lack of originality, and, later, even copying. His high-impact, iconic images have since become synonymous with Pop art, and his method of creating images, which blended aspects of mechanical reproduction and drawing by hand, has become central to critics' understanding of the significance of the movement.

Lichtenstein's emphasis on methods of mechanical reproduction - particularly through his signature use of Ben-Day dots - highlighted one of the central lessons of Pop art, that all forms of communication, all messages, are filtered through codes or languages. Arguably, he learned his appreciation of the value of codes from his early work, which drew on an eclectic range of modern painting. This appreciation may also have later encouraged him to make work inspired by masterpieces of modern art; in these works he argued that high art and popular art were no different: both rely on code.

In the early 1960s, Lichtenstein gained renown as a leading Pop artist for paintings sourced from comic books, specifically DC Comics. Although artists such as Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns had previously integrated popular imagery into their works, no one hitherto had focused on cartoon imagery as exclusively as Lichtenstein. His work, along with that of Andy Warhol, heralded the beginning of the Pop art movement, and, essentially, the end of Abstract Expressionism as the dominant style. Lichtenstein did not simply copy comic pages directly, he employed a complex technique that involved cropping images to create entirely new, dramatic compositions, as in Drowning Girl, whose source image included the woman's boyfriend standing on a boat above her. Lichtenstein also condensed the text of the comic book panels, locating language as another, crucial visual element; re-appropriating this emblematic aspect of commercial art for his paintings further challenged existing views about definitions of "high" art.

Specifically, in 1961, Lichtenstein created Look Mickey, his first cartoon work using Ben-Day dots, a commercial printing style for comic books or illustrations where small, closely spaced, colored dots are combined to create contrasting colors. He later exaggerated these dots in his paintings, a technique that came to define his style. The technique he developed at this time blended aspects of hand-drawing and mechanical reproduction; by 1963 he had settled on a procedure by which he first reproduced the chosen panel from a cartoon by hand, then projected the drawing using an opaque projector, traced it onto a canvas, then filled in the image with bold colors and stenciled Ben-Day dots.

By embracing "low" art such as comic books and popular illustration, Lichtenstein became one of the most important figures in the Pop art movement. While his paintings of cartoons and comics are his most recognizable work, he had a prolific and somewhat eclectic career that drew from Cubism, Surrealism, and Expressionism. But it is his re-imagining of popular culture through the lens of traditional art history that has remained a considerable influence to later generations of artists, as Pop art went on to significantly inform Postmodernism.
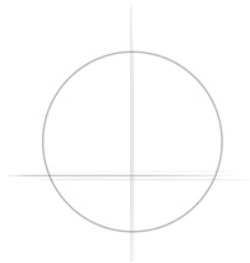
INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN CONTINUED

Lesson:

Create: Your own comic self portrait in the style of Roy Lichtenstein

1. To understand a comic self portrait, first discuss comics and a cartoonist. A good cartoonist is one who can extract the main details of an object or a human being and simplify it in shapes so that one can recognize and be attracted to what they're looking at. Masters like Walt Disney, Hanna & Barbera, Chuck Jones, Jim Henson, Walter Lantz and many others have enchanted the world with its magical and eternal cartoon/comic characters. Have some Disney cartoon images available, particularly ones that highlight the face.

2. Looking at cartoon faces you can talk about how all the parts of a human face are included, recognizable, and manipulated into a comic face.

3. Now look at Lichtenstein's artwork, show them image samples of an array of works such as Look Mickey, Drowning Girl and the Girl with a Hair Ribbon. These are samples of his art that are inspired by comics and cartoons (see included images and descriptions). Look closely at his work to notice the detail that goes into representing the face. Also notice the strong emotional and expressive nature of his images. Draw attention to how these cartoon inspired faces can tell a story and reveal an emotional state of the character.

4. Review features of the face and talk about where they are located in relation to each other, i.e. eyes in relation to nose, etc. Have students draw a basic face on sketch paper to practice.

5. Now lead students through a step by step drawing of a self portrait cartoon face as described below.

6. Cartoon face:

  A. The basic cartoon shape is a circle. Circle Is All You Need (besides Love, of course). It's from the circle that you define the basic proportions of your character's head.
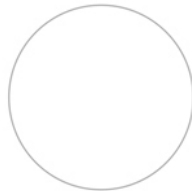

  B. Once the circle is ready, it's time to trace the face axis. Draw a vertical and horizontal line intersecting at the center, like in the image below:

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN CONTINUED

      C. To make the eyes, draw an oval shape with a slight tilt to the side at the top. Repeat on opposite side. It is important to leave a gap between them of approximately the same size as an eye. As we are in the drafting phase, you can draw another eye in the center to serve as a measure.
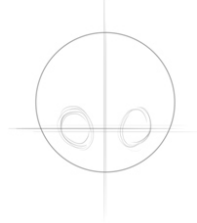
      D. At the top of the circle, slightly thicken the trait that will be the eyelashes of our character. Place the eyebrows a bit above the eyelashes to spend a sort of a surprise expression. The eyebrow form is free and with practice you will adjust to your own style.

Draw both pupils directed to the center (this is a very effective tactic used by major cartoonists whose sole purpose is to make our characters look cuter).

Tip: To give more life and "realism" in our eyes you can draw a small line below them to simulate a kind of wrinkle. This is another very interesting tactic that adds a special touch to our facial expressions.


      E. In cartoon style designs, the main structure of a face is the skull and the eyes of the character. It is at that stage where it is already clear to people that you're drawing a character.

Now that we come to the jaw, we will decide if we want a fat character or a thin one. Could be old, young and so on. This character will be a young one. So, let's design a proper jaw for him.

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN CONTINUED

   F. When designing a nose being seen from the front, it is common not to use many details. If you draw only its tip, it is likely that already achieves a convincing effect. It is also very common detailing to draw only one side of the nose, from the idea that this is the opposite side of light. Let's put the correct nose on our character.
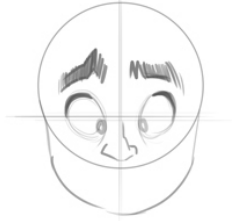
   G. As our character is a child, we will make a cartoon mouth: something simple just to represent an expression of innocence.

Notice that when drawing a little child's mouth, the lips shouldn't be drawn! In cartoon style, children, regardless of gender, have quite simple mouths. A good and expressive trace already does the job.

   H. The ears are seen from the front side view (because our character is facing the camera), so that the internal cavities will not appear. Then we will do just a simple shape using some basic perspective (more on that later).

   I. The shape of our skull is already defined by the circle we did at the beginning. So we just need a very simple and childish haircut to give life to our boy. Let's do it now.

Nobody needs to be stylist or fashion designer to make the perfect hair. There isn't a right way to draw hair, so you'll need to try until you create the ideal haircut you want. Just remember that the hair is responsible for defining the personality of our characters. Hair can express age, rebellion, conservatism, etc.

An accurate and fast way to drawing cartoon hair is to seek photo references on the web! Grab a fashion magazine or try a Google search. After finding the ideal style, put the image as a reference next to your drawing board (or tablet) and start making a cartoon and simplified version of it.

   https://design.tutsplus.com/articles/cartoon-fundamentals-how-to-draw-a-cartoon-face-correctly--vector-15792

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN CONTINUED

7. Now, in the style of Roy Lichtenstein, have students fill in the comic self portrait using Lichtenstein's palette of red, white, blue, black, yellow and ben day dots. Encourage students to incorporate open (uncolored) areas as well as areas of solid color, patterns of lines, bold lines, and dots.

8. Encourage students to color in their backgrounds as well unless they are already working on patterned paper.

9. Have students share their comic self-portraits and ask them to talk about the characteristics of the cartoon that reflect their personality.
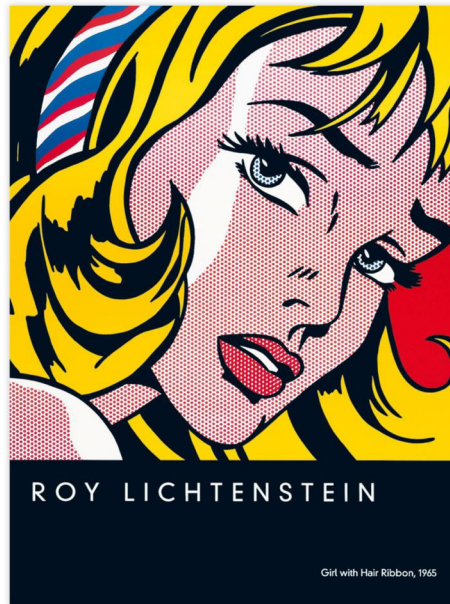
Additional Resources:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6jowA-pH-Y8

http://aschukei.blogspot.co.nz/2014/05/6th-grade-roy-lichtenstein-self.html?m=1

http://www.thesmartteacher.com/exchange/resource/684/Lichtenstein-Self-Portraits

http://artroom104.blogspot.com/2013/02/4th-grade-lichtenstein-pop-art-portraits.html

http://www.theartstory.org/artist-lichtenstein-roy.htm

http://www.arthistorykids.com/blog/2015/8/12/no-prep-lichtenstein-project-with-a-free-printable

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5329b201e4b09fd47861cac1/t/55cb889ce4b00ab2850f3547/1439402140141/
Girl+with+Hair+Ribbon.pdf

GIRL WITH HAIR RIBBON, 1965

Within Lichtenstein's comics period, there was a period where he exclusively painted close-ups of women. In Girl, as with everything from that sub-period, the highly stylized beauty of the woman's face makes for an overpowering pure femininity in the painting. Even though taken out of context, the image still retains some of the narrative qualities of the comic it was taken from. The woman is looking out towards the viewer, with an expression that hints at longing, pensiveness, or perhaps even fear. We the viewers are left with a tiny fragment of a story.

DROWNING GIRL 1963

(also known as Secret Hearts or I Don't Care! I'd Rather Sink) is a painting in oil and synthetic polymer paint on canvas by Roy Lichtenstein. Using the conventions of comic book art, a thought bubble conveys the thoughts of the figure, while Ben-Day dots echo the effect of the mechanized printing process. Drowning Girl has been described as a "masterpiece of melodrama", and is one of the artist's earliest images depicting women in tragic situations, a theme to which he often returned in the mid-1960s.The painting shows a teary-eyed woman on a turbulent sea. She is emotionally distressed, seemingly from a romance. A thought bubble reads: "I Don't Care! I'd Rather Sink — Than Call Brad For Help!" The work is derived from a 1962 DC Comics panel, while also borrowing from Hokusai's The Great Wave off Kanagawa and from elements of modernist artists Jean Arp and Joan Miró. It is one of several Lichtenstein works that mention a character named Brad who is absent from the picture. Both the graphical and narrative elements of the work are cropped from the source image.
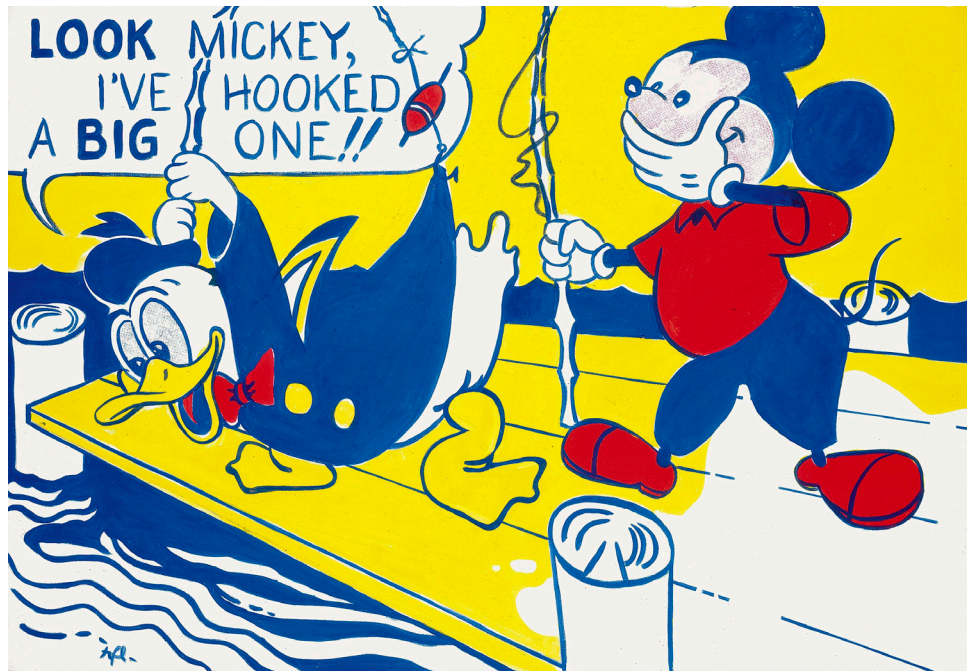
LOOK MICKEY

Look Mickey (also known as Look Mickey!) is a 1961 oil on canvas painting by Roy Lichtenstein. Widely regarded as the bridge between his abstract expressionism and pop art works, it is notable for its ironic humor and aesthetic value as well as being the first example of the artist's employment of Ben-Day dots, speech balloons and comic imagery as a source for a painting. The painting was bequeathed to the Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art upon Lichtenstein's death.