

# ROY LICHTENSTEIN

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TRANSLATION BY NORMAN CHAN

ROY FOX LICHTENSTEIN WAS

BORN ON OCTOBER 27, 1923 IN NEW YORK CITY. HIS FATHER,

MILTON, WAS A REAL ESTATE

BROKER SPECIALIZING

IN PARKING LOTS,

AND HIS MOTHER,

BEATRICE, A HOMEMAKER. FROM AN EARLY AGE,

HE WAS INTERESTED IN DRAWING AND SCIENCE

AND WAS A FREQUENT VISITOR TO THE

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY.



AROUND 4 YEARS OLD



HE BECAME INFATUATED WITH MODEL AIRPLANES WHILE IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.

FROM THE EIGHTH GRADE, HE ATTENDED

THE FRANKLIN SCHOOL FOR BOYS, A PRIVATE

SCHOOL WHERE HE STUDIED FRENCH AND

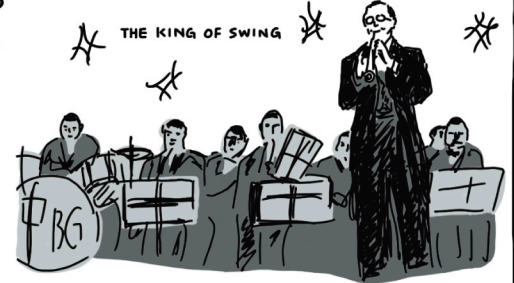
LATIN. OUTSIDE, HE WAS INTERESTED IN

ART AND TOOK CLARINET LESSONS.

ON SATURDAYS, HE TOOK WATERCOLOR LESSONS AT THE NEW YORK SCHOOL OF FINE AND APPLIED ART (NOW PARSONS SCHOOL OF DESIGN).



HE FORMED A BAND.



AS A JAZZ FAN, HE FREQUENTED JAZZ CLUBS WITH FRIENDS AND PLAYED IT HIMSELF.

IN 1938, HE ATTENDED A HISTORIC EVENT:

THE CLARINETIST BENNY GOODMAN PLAYING

THE FIRST JAZZ CONCERT AT THE BASTION OF

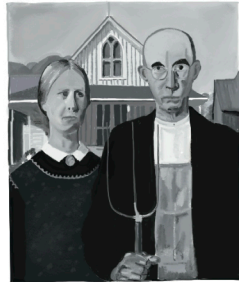
CLASSICAL MUSIC, CARNEGIE HALL.

GRADUATING FROM HIGH SCHOOL IN 1940, HE TOOK A SUMMER COURSE AT THE ART STUDENTS LEAGUE OF NEW YORK WHERE HE STUDIED TRADITIONAL PAINTING TECHNIQUES UNDER THE AMERICAN PAINTER REGINALD MARSH (1898 - 1954).

HE PAINTED MODERN DAILY LIFE IN NEW YORK USING RENAISSANCE TECHNIQUES.



Reginald Marsh, *In Fourteenth Street*, 1934



Grant Wood, *American Gothic*, 1930



Thomas Hart Benton, *Autumn*, 1940-1941

JACKSON POLLOCK WAS ONE OF BENTON'S STUDENTS.

AMERICAN ART AT THAT TIME WAS DOMINATED BY REGIONALISM, A MOVEMENT THAT ROSE IN RESPONSE TO THE GREAT DEPRESSION OF THE 1930s, WHICH DEPICTED SCENES OF THE RURAL MIDWEST AND ITS WORKERS. NEW YORK WAS NO EXCEPTION.

THAT FALL, HE ENROLLED AT OHIO UNIVERSITY, ONE OF THE FEW SCHOOLS THAT OFFERED A DEGREE IN ART.

I WANT TO SEE MORE OF AMERICA, NOT JUST NEW YORK.

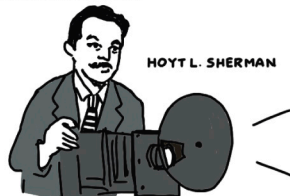


NEW YORK AT THE TIME WAS NOT YET THE CENTER OF ART.

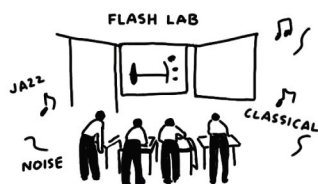
AT COLLEGE, LICHTENSTEIN STUDIED WIDELY, NOT ONLY IN THE AREAS OF ART AND DESIGN.

HE WAS PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN THE IDEAS ABOUT PERCEPTION OF HOYT L. SHERMAN (1903 - 1981) WHICH WOULD HAVE A PROFOUND INFLUENCE ON HIS LATER ARTISTIC OUTLOOK.

TO LOOK AT THINGS AS A WHOLE WITH AN EQUAL FOCUS ON THE OBJECTS AND THE SPACE BETWEEN THEM.



HOYT L. SHERMAN



AN IMAGE IS PROJECTED ON A SCREEN FOR 0.1 SECONDS AND STUDENTS DRAW WHAT THEY SAW IN ABOUT 10 SECONDS. BASICALLY AN AFTERIMAGE...

IN 1945, SHERMAN DEVELOPED THE "FLASH LAB," AN EXPERIMENTAL FORM OF PERCEPTUAL TRAINING. STUDENTS WERE ASKED TO DRAW PICTURES THAT WERE PROJECTED ON A SCREEN FOR A SPLIT SECOND IN THE DARK AS AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO CULTIVATE THE ABILITY TO QUICKLY GRASP OVERALL SHAPES.

WHILE AT COLLEGE, LICHTENSTEIN DID NOT HAVE ACCESS TO SHERMAN'S FLASH LAB, BUT LATER AS AN ART TEACHER, HE CONTINUED TEACHING SHERMAN'S THEORIES USING HIS OWN SELF-MADE STROBE PROJECTOR.

HE SAW *GUERNICA* (1937) BY PABLO PICASSO (1881-1973), ONE OF LICHTENSTEIN'S IDOLS.



HE IS THOUGHT TO HAVE SEEN *GUERNICA* AT A PICASSO RETROSPECTIVE HELD AT THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART FROM NOVEMBER TO DECEMBER IN 1940.



Charles Batterman, 1942



Pablo Picasso, *Gertrude Stein* 1905-1906

HE PAINTED A PORTRAIT OF A CLASSMATE IN THE STYLE OF PICASSO'S *GERTRUDE STEIN*. BATTERMAN WAS A COMPETITIVE DIVER AND LICHTENSTEIN'S APARTMENT MATE.



IN FEBRUARY, 1943, HE WAS DRAFTED INTO THE ARMY. HE TRAINED IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE COUNTRY BEFORE BEING STATIONED IN EUROPE IN DECEMBER THE FOLLOWING YEAR. HE MAINLY WORKED AS A DRAFTSPERSON PRODUCING MAPS.

HE WAS ALSO TASKED BY HIS COMMANDING OFFICER TO COPY AND ENLARGE BILL MAULDIN (1921-2003) CARTOONS FROM THE ARMY NEWSPAPER STARS AND STRIPES.



AFTER HIS DISCHARGE IN 1946, HE RETURNED TO OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY WHERE HE GOT A BACHELOR'S DEGREE. HE CONTINUED HIS STUDIES THERE WHILE WORKING AS A LECTURER, OBTAINING HIS MASTER'S DEGREE IN 1949. HE TAUGHT DRAWING AND DESIGN CLASSES HE LOST HIS JOB IN 1951 WHEN STUDENT ENROLLMENT DROPPED AFTER THE PERIOD OF RAPID INCREASE CAUSED BY RETURNING SOLDIERS TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE GI BILL.

IN 1949, HE MARRIED ISABEL WILSON (DIVORCED IN 1965). IN 1951, HE MOVED TO CLEVELAND WHERE HE TOOK ON DRAFTING AND OTHER JOBS AND BEGAN TAKING HIS WORK TO GALLERIES.

HE DREW PEOPLE, FAIRY TALES, PLANTS, ETC. WAS IT IN THE STYLE OF PAUL KLEE? JOAN MIRO?



Beauty and the Beast I, 1949

FROM THE 1940S AND INTO THE 1950S, HE PAINTED IN A EUROPEAN MODERNISTS STYLE THEMES THAT INCLUDED IMAGES OF KNIGHTS, AMERICAN HISTORY AND THE WILD WEST.



Charging the Castle (Study), 1950

PHOTO OF A CASTLE.

HIS WORK WAS COMPARED TO THE SCRIBBLES OF A FIVE-YEAR-OLD.



The Explorer, c.1952



HE USED ADS IN LIFE MAGAZINE FOR HIS MOTIFS.

CUBIST STYLE

LITHOGRAPH OF A 10-DOLLAR BILL.



Ten Dollar Bill (Ten Dollars), 1956



Washington Crossing the Delaware I, c.1951

AN INTERPRETATION OF WASHINGTON CROSSING THE DELAWARE (1851) BY EMANUEL LEUTZE (1816-1868)

DURING THIS PERIOD, HIS WORK SHOWED THE INFLUENCE OF STUART DAVIS (1892-1964), AN ARTIST CONSIDERED ONE OF THE PIONEERS OF POP ART WHO INCORPORATED BILLBOARDS, NEON SIGNS AND OTHER MODERN OBJECTS IN CUBIST-INSPIRED PAINTINGS.

IN ART, ORGANIZED PERCEPTION IS EVERYTHING.



FROM AROUND 1950, HE BEGAN USING A ROTATING EASEL THAT ALLOWED HIM TO PAINT UPSIDE DOWN AND SIDWAYS. HE WOULD FURTHER USE A MIRROR TO INVERT THE IMAGE OF THE CANVAS IN ORDER TO DISTANCE HIMSELF FROM THE ACT OF PAINTING ITSELF AND FROM THE ORIGINAL IMAGE IN ORDER TO FOCUS ON THE COMPOSITION AS A WHOLE AND THE SUBJECT AS A SIMPLE ABSTRACTED FORM.

RIBBON-LIKE



Untitled, 1959-60



Bugs Bunny, 1958



Donald Duck, 1958

IN 1957, HE GOT A JOB AT THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT OSWEGO TEACHING INDUSTRIAL DESIGN (UNTIL 1960). FROM THIS POINT ON, HE BEGAN DOING ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONIST PAINTINGS. HE BEGAN EMBEDDING CARTOON CHARACTERS SUCH AS DONALD DUCK AND MICKEY MOUSE FROM BUBBLE GUM WRAPPERS INTO HIS PAINTINGS, BUT HE FOUND THEM UNSATISFACTORY AND NEVER EXHIBITED THEM. SEVERAL DRAWINGS FROM THIS TIME REMAIN.

AT FIRST, HE SAID, HIS DRAWINGS OF MICKEY MOUSE AND OTHER CHARACTERS WERE FOR HIS CHILDREN.



HIS ELDEST SON, DAVID HOYT, WAS BORN IN 1954, AND HIS SECOND SON, MITCHELL WILSON, IN 1956.



FROM 1960 TO 1964, HE WAS AN ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ART AT DOUGLASS COLLEGE OF RUTGERS UNIVERSITY, THROUGH HIS COLLEAGUES ALLAN KAPROW AND ROBERT WATTS, HIS CIRCLE OF FRIENDS WIDENED. HE ATTENDED HAPPENINGS BY KAPROW, CLAES OLDENBURG, ROBERT WHITMAN AND JIM DINE (1935-) AND BEGAN SENSING A MOVEMENT AWAY FROM ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM TOWARDS A NEW KIND OF ART.



ALLAN KAPROW, Yard, 1961  
READY-MADE PRODUCTS AND EVERYDAY ITEMS WERE OFTEN USED IN HAPPENINGS.

RUTGERS AT THE TIME WAS A HOT BED OF ARTISTS DOING PIONEERING WORK IN VARIOUS FIELDS. THEY INCLUDED JOHN CAGE (1912-1992), DAVID TUDOR (1926-1996) MERCE CUNNINGHAM (1919-2009) AND ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG (1925-2008).



## KAPROW AND LICHTENSTEIN DISCUSSED HOW BEST TO TEACH STUDENTS ABOUT COLOR.

JANUARY 1961



IT WAS SAID TO BE A LARGE ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONIST-STYLE PAINTING OF DONALD DUCK.

**LOOK MICKEY**, AN ENLARGED VERSION OF A CARTOON ON A BUBBLE GUM WRAPPER, WAS CREATED BY IMITATING THE PRINTING TECHNIQUE OF THE ORIGINAL WRAPPER, RATHER THAN THE TECHNIQUES USED BY THE ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISTS. THE TINY PRINTED DOTS (BEN-DAY DOTS) WERE CREATED BY DIPPING A DOG-GROOMING BRUSH INTO PAINT AND PRESSING IT ONTO THE CANVAS. THE USE OF DOTS WAS A SIGN THAT THE WORK WAS BASED ON A PRINTED COPY AND NOT THE ORIGINAL.

DRAWN WITH OUTLINES.  
COLORS EVENLY APPLIED.

USED BASIC COLORS:  
RED, YELLOW, BLUE,  
WHITE AND BLACK.



MICKEY MOUSE'S FACE AND DONALD DUCK'S EYES ARE FILLED IN WITH TINY, UNEVEN DOTS AND THERE ARE STILL TRACES OF MANUAL WORK.

*Look Mickey, 1961*

**BEN-DAY DOTS**: A CHEAP, MECHANICAL PRINTING METHOD DEVELOPED IN THE LATE 19TH CENTURY AND NAMED AFTER ITS INVENTOR, BENJAMIN HENRY DAY JR. TINY COLORED DOTS (CYAN, MAGENTA, YELLOW, BLACK) ARE LAID DOWN IN DIFFERENT DENSITIES AND COMBINATIONS TO CREATE SHADES AND COLORS.

LICHTENSTEIN CONTINUED TO SEEK BETTER WAYS TO REPRODUCE THE INDUSTRIAL QUALITY OF PRINTED MATTER. HE STARTED USING A PROJECTOR AND AUGMENTED OIL PAINTS WITH MAGNA ACRYLIC PAINTS WHICH FACILITATED CORRECTIONS. HE ALSO TRIED VARIOUS WAYS TO MAKE HIS BEN-DAY DOTS MORE UNIFORM, SUCH AS FABRICATING METAL MOLDS WITH HOLES OR HIRING ASSISTANTS WHO PAINTED DOTS. A METHOD HE LATER ADOPTED WAS GLUING PAPER WITH HOLES ONTO THE CANVAS AND BRUSHING PAINT ON TOP.

### MECHANICAL REPRODUCTION AND MANUAL PRODUCTION PROCESSES

**MECHANICAL REPRODUCTION**: HE REFERENCED PRINTED MATTER SUCH AS COMICS AND ADVERTISEMENTS. IN THE CASE OF COMICS, SINGLING OUT ONE LONE PANEL.



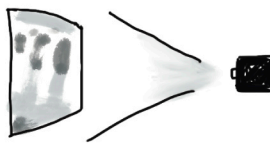
The comic book, *All American Men of War*, No. 90, April, 1962

**MANUAL WORK**: HE DREW A PICTURE SMALL ENOUGH TO FIT IN A PROJECTOR. THIS WAS FOLLOWED BY COLLAGES AS WELL.



*As I Opened Fire... (Study), 1964*

**MECHANICAL REPRODUCTION**: HE PROJECTED THE DRAWING ONTO A CANVAS WITH A PROJECTOR.



**MANUAL WORK**: HE CREATED THE IMAGE USING PENCILS AND THEN PAINT.



*As I Opened Fire... (Study), 1964*  
ONE OF A TRIPTYCH

USING SIMILAR METHODS, HE PAINTED ABOUT 10 PIECES ON THEMES OF WAR, ROMANCE COMICS, ADVERTISEMENTS AND EVERYDAY OBJECTS. WITH KAPROW'S HELP, HE TOOK HIS WORKS TO LEO CASTELLI GALLERY AND ENDED UP WITH A CONTRACT. LICHTENSTEIN'S POP ART WORK *GIRL WITH A BALL* MADE ITS FIRST APPEARANCE AT THE GALLERY. AFTER HIS FIRST SOLO EXHIBITION THERE IN FEBRUARY 1962, HE WAS IN THE *NEW REALISTS* EXHIBITION AT THE SYDNEY JANIS GALLERY AND LATER THE *SIX PAINTERS AND OBJECTS* EXHIBITION AT THE GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, BOTH SEMINAL SHOWS THAT HERALDED THE RISE OF POP ART.

BASED ON AD FOR A RESORT. PURCHASED BY THE ARCHITECT PHILIP JOHNSON. CURRENTLY IN THE COLLECTION OF THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK.



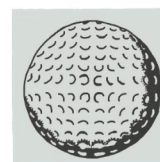
*Girl with Ball, 1961*

HE DEPICTED SUCH EMOTION-LADEN THEMES AS WAR AND LOVE IN A STERILE WAY. DONALD JUDD PRAISED THE COMPOSITION AS BEING CLASSICAL AND MASTERFUL.



*The Kiss, 1961*

SYMBOLIC MARKS INTERLINK TO FORM A GOLF BALL. IT IS REMINISCENT OF PIET MONDRIAN'S INTERLINKING HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL LINES TO FORM PLUS-MINUSES.



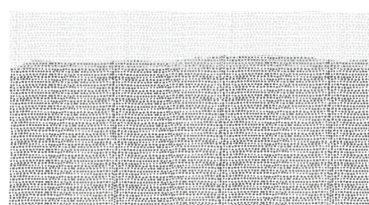
*Golf Ball, 1962*

IN 1988, HE ALSO CREATED WORKS ON THE THEME OF PLUS-MINUS.



*Piet Mondrian, Composition 10 in Black and White, 1915*

IN 1964, HE LEFT HIS TEACHING POSITION AT RUTGERS TO FOCUS ON HIS OWN WORK, TACKLING NEW SUBJECTS SUCH AS LANDSCAPES CONSISTING OF BACKGROUNDS IN COMIC STRIPS.



*Littoral, 1964*

NO AREAS ARE PAINTED WITH FLAT COLORS. THE ENTIRE LANDSCAPE IS PAINTED WITH DOTS.

THE LARGER THE WORK, THE LARGER THE DOTS.

HE CREATED CERAMIC HEADS, CUPS AND SAUCERS WITH THE HELP OF A FORMER COLLEAGUE AT RUTGERS, CERAMICIST HUI KA-KWONG (1922-2003). DOTS USED TO EXPRESS SHADOWS AND REFLECTIONS IN TWO-DIMENSIONAL PRINTED MATTER WERE PAINTED ONTO THREE-DIMENSIONAL SCULPTURES.



*Ceramic Sculpture, 1965*

THE SAME MATERIAL AND SIZE AS ACTUAL CUPS.

ARE THE SHADOWS AND REFLECTIONS REAL OR AN ILLUSION?

WHAT IS STANDARD BEAUTY?

I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO MAKE UP SOMEONE AS A CARTOON.



*Blonde, 1965*



IN THE LATE 1960S, HIS THEMES GRADUALLY SHIFTED FROM CARTOONS AND EVERYDAY OBJECTS TO FINE ART. THESE INCLUDED PAST AND CONTEMPORARY ART TRENDS, AS WELL AS WORKS BY OTHER ARTISTS, WHICH HE RESTATED IN HIS OWN STYLE, VERNACULARIZING THEM BASED ON THE PRINTED IMAGE.

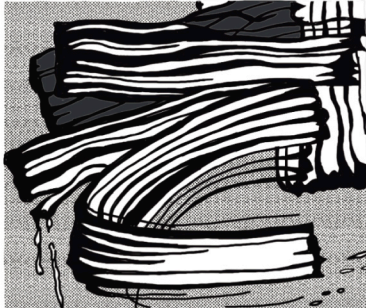


Modern Painting with Classic Head, 1967

THIS WAS A SERIES OF MODERN PAINTINGS WHOSE THEME WAS ART DÉCO, A STYLE FROM THE 1920S AND 30S THAT WAS POPULAR WHEN HE WAS A CHILD. THE GEOMETRIC AND DECORATIVE MOTIFS USED IN ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN WERE RECONSTITUTED AS PAINTINGS AND SCULPTURES.



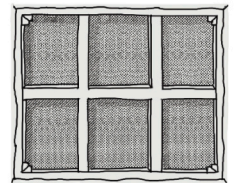
Modern Head, 1974 (fabricated in c. 1989)



Little Big Painting, 1965

FROM 1965, IMAGES OF BRUSHSTROKES REMINISCENT OF ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM BECAME A RECURRING THEME. IT STARTED WITH AN ENLARGED CARTOON PANEL SHOWING A HAND HOLDING A PAINTBRUSH, BUT THE FOCUS LATER TURNED TO THE BRUSH-STROKE ALONE. WHAT SEEMED AT FIRST GLANCE TO BE A SWEEPING GESTURE WAS ACTUALLY PAINSTAKINGLY DRAWN. SCULPTURAL PIECES WERE ALSO MADE.

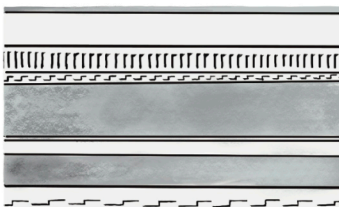
IN HIS COMPOSITION SERIES (1964 TO 1965) WHICH DEPICTED THE COVERS OF COMPOSITION NOTEBOOKS, AND *STRETCHER FRAME* AND *MIRROR* SERIES, THE SHAPE OF THE CANVAS WAS MATCHED TO THE SHAPE OF THE SUBJECT. BY MAKING THE PAINTING A PHYSICAL OBJECT, HE BLURRED THE BOUNDARY BETWEEN PAINTING AND SCULPTURE. THIS APPROACH CAN ALSO BE SEEN IN THE SHAPED CANVASES (DEFORMED RATHER THAN RECTANGULAR) OF FRANK STELLA (1936-2024). IN *STRETCHER FRAME*, HE DEPICTED THE REAR OF THE CANVAS WITH ITS WOODEN STRETCHER BARS USING A TROMPE L'OEIL TECHNIQUE. HE DID IT IN A CARTOONISH AND NOT REALISTIC WAY, SO THE VIEWER IS NOT TRICKED INTO THINKING IT IS THE REAL THING. IN *MIRROR*, THE ENTIRE CANVAS TAKES THE FORM OF A MIRROR WHICH HE DEPICTS IN ITS ACTUAL SIZE. HE USED AS REFERENCES PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN OF ABSTRACT SHADOWS AND FORMS VIEWED THROUGH A MAGNIFYING GLASS. HE ALSO USED DOT GRADATION FOR THE FIRST TIME.



Stretcher Frame With Cross Bars IV, 1968



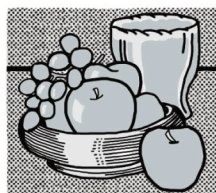
Mirror #1 (Oval 60"x 98"), 1969



Entablature, 1974

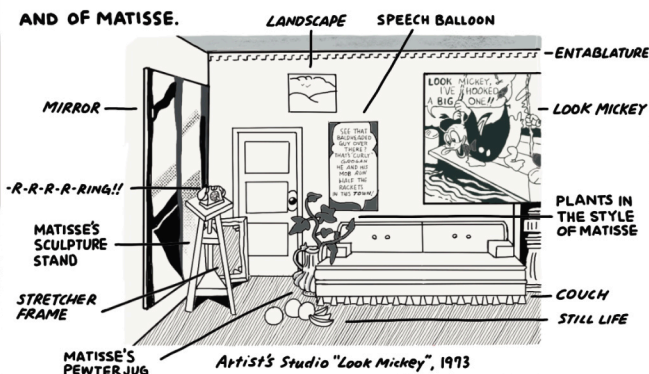
THIS SERIES WAS BASED ON PHOTOGRAPHS THAT HE TOOK OF THE HORIZONTAL ELEMENT AT THE TOP OF COLUMNS (THE "ENTABLATURE") OF NEOCLASSICAL BUILDINGS IN AND AROUND WALL STREET IN NEW YORK. HE USED PHOTOGRAPHS MERELY AS A REFERENCE TO CREATE FORMS WIDELY RECOGNIZED AS BEING CLASSICAL IN STYLE. HE ALSO BROKE AWAY FROM HIS PREVIOUS USE OF COLOR, USING METALLIC PAINT AND SAND TO EMPHASIZE TEXTURE. THE REPEATING PATTERNS AND COLOR BANDS SUGGEST A CONNECTION TO MINIMAL ART AND COLOR FIELD PAINTING.

UNLIKE HIS WORKS DEPICTING EVERYDAY OBJECTS IN THE 1960S, HIS STILL LIVES IN THE 1970S BROUGHT TOGETHER TRADITIONAL STILL LIFE SUBJECTS SUCH AS FRUIT AND TABLEWARE. THE COMPOSITIONS WERE BORROWED FROM CATALOGS AND ADVERTISEMENTS, WHILE HIGHLIGHTS AND LINES WERE USED TO REPRESENT REFLECTIONS ON THE FRUIT AND TABLEWARE IN AN EXAGGERATED WAY.

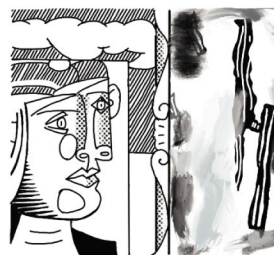


Still Life with Scalloped Bowl, 1972

INSPIRED BY THE STUDIO PAINTINGS OF HENRI MATISSE (1869-1954), HIS ARTIST'S STUDIO SERIES INCORPORATED PAST WORKS OF HIS OWN AND OF MATISSE.



THIS SERIES OF PAINTINGS COMBINED STYLISTICALLY DIFFERENT PAINTINGS. HERE, THE LEFT IMAGE IS BASED ON A PICASSO DRAWING AND THE RIGHT AN ABSTRACT PAINTING MADE UP OF REAL AND CARTOONISH BRUSHSTROKES.



Paintings: Picasso Head, 1984



Refractions: Art, 1988

THIS SERIES DEPICTING LIGHT REFLECTING OFF GLASS IN PICTURE FRAMES HAD ITS START FROM A FRUSTRATED ATTEMPT TO TAKE A DECENT PHOTO OF A FRAMED RAUSCHENBERG PRINT DUE TO LIGHT REFLECTIONS. INSIDE THE FRAME, HE QUOTES WORKS OF HIS OWN OR OTHERS. IN THIS CASE, IT IS ART FROM 1962.

HE DIED ON SEPTEMBER 29, 1997 IN NEW YORK AT THE AGE OF 74. HE CONTINUED TO SHOW NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN HIS ART UNTIL THE END.



House 1, 1997 (fabricated in 1998)