

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 24, 2023

National contact: Albert Ruiz
albert.ruiz@usps.gov

Local contact: Xavier Hernandez
xavier.c.hernandez@usps.gov
usps.com/news



U.S. Postal Service Honors Roy Lichtenstein's Pop Art on New Forever Stamps

NEW YORK — The U.S. Postal Service today recognized the centennial of American artist Roy Lichtenstein's birth with the dedication of new stamps in his honor at the [Whitney Museum of American Art](#) in New York.

The Forever stamps feature five of the artist's bold, eye-catching creations and come in panes of 20. News of the stamps is being shared with the hashtag **#RoyLichtensteinStamps**.

"The Postal Service uses its stamp program to raise awareness and celebrate the people who represent the very best of our nation," said Thomas Marshall, general counsel and executive vice president of the Postal Service, who served as the stamps' dedicating official. "Roy Lichtenstein certainly deserves this recognition because of the remarkable creativity and innovation he demonstrated throughout his career."

"Altogether, he created more than 5,000 paintings, prints, drawings, sculptures, murals and other objects that continue to be celebrated for their wit and invention," he said.

"I have always been a fan of the Post Office. I think it's an amazing organization. It gets mail to everywhere, not just in this country, but around the world, said Dorothy Lichtenstein, the artist's widow, and president of the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation. "I think it's an honor and more people will find out about Roy. I think he would have really loved it," she said, referring to the new stamps.

Other participants at the ceremony were Jack Cowart, executive director, Roy Lichtenstein Foundation, Anne Helmreich, director of the Smithsonian's Archives of American Art, and Rachel Rossin, contemporary artist.

Background

Roy Fox Lichtenstein was born on Oct. 27, 1923, in New York City, and grew up on Manhattan's Upper West Side. As a young child, he explored the museums and other wonders the city offered. Art caught his interest early, and at 13 he started watercolor classes at the New York School of Fine and Applied Art (later Parsons School of Design).

The summer after graduating from high school, Lichtenstein studied painting at the Art Students League before enrolling at Ohio State University in 1940 to study art, art history and education. The World War II draft interrupted his junior year, and by 1944 he was serving with an engineer battalion in Europe. While stationed in Paris after the war ended, he took classes and visited art museums. Discharged in early 1946, he returned to Ohio State and completed his master of fine arts degree three years later, while also teaching undergraduates.

Lichtenstein admired early 20th-century European masters such as Pablo Picasso, Paul Klee and Joan Miró, and some of his early work — depicting medieval imagery, fairy tales and historical scenes— reflected their styles. Eager to make it in the booming New York art world, Lichtenstein carted his paintings from gallery to gallery, and in 1951 met a certain amount of success: two solo shows in Manhattan. In addition, the Brooklyn Museum chose one of his woodcuts for its "Fifth National Print Annual Exhibition" and then purchased it for the permanent collection.

In 1957, a new teaching opportunity arose at the State University of New York at Oswego, where he took up abstract expressionism, a style closely associated with New York City. It was at this time that the cartoon characters that became a hallmark of his work started to appear on his canvases.

In 1960, Lichtenstein made what turned out to be a life-changing move: He accepted a teaching post at Douglass College, the women's branch of Rutgers University, in New Brunswick, NJ. The school's art department was aiming to stand out as a hotbed of experimentation, and Lichtenstein thrived there as his new colleagues introduced him to New York's avant-garde artists and gallery owners. Casting about for something new, in 1961 he painted "Look Mickey," featuring Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck, plus a dialogue balloon containing the words "LOOK MICKEY, I'VE HOOKED A BIG ONE!!" (Donald Duck catching his fishing hook on the tail end of his coat). For this startling, large oil painting, Lichtenstein drew heavily from an illustration in a popular 1960 children's book. The painting marked Lichtenstein's first attempt at reproducing the Ben-Day dot printing process then used for comic books and magazines.

Despite misgivings about the subject matter, an influential gallery owner agreed to represent Lichtenstein and display a group of his new paintings depicting cartoon characters and consumer products. Some art connoisseurs found them outrageous, but others saw great meaning in them. Lichtenstein's career quickly took off. In 1962, he had solo shows in New York and on the West Coast. That December, he — along with Andy Warhol, James Rosenquist, Marcel Duchamp and other artists — attended a symposium at New York's Museum of Modern Art, where speakers chose the name "pop art" for this new artistic movement. Pop art featured advertisements, mass-produced objects and cartoon characters, and often was seen as parodying its subjects or poking fun at consumerism. It contrasted strongly with the abstract expressionism of the late 1940s and 1950s, which emphasized emotion and the act of painting while avoiding the depiction of any recognizable subject.

In late 1962, Lichtenstein was invited to create a mural for the 1964 World's Fair in Queens, NY, and during 1963, he continued to show throughout the United States and enjoyed his first solo exhibition in Europe. He resigned his teaching post in 1964 to make art full-time, experimenting in several fields including printmaking and sculpture. He began a series of landscapes, explored the works of modern masters such as Paul Cézanne, Piet Mondrian and Claude Monet, and continued his series of women pulled from romance comics. The emotional female stereotypes depicted in mass culture fascinated him, as did the male stereotypes — and explosions — he lifted from war comics.

Inevitably, Lichtenstein faced accusations of appropriating other artists' work, but many critics defended the practice. He viewed it as examining the earlier work or genre and borrowing elements from it, then recomposing them into a wholly new work. Over the years, he would explore any number of artists, motifs and styles. He even borrowed from his own earlier work.

Lichtenstein's first "Brushstroke" paintings, which appeared in 1965, referenced a science fiction comic strip but also the abstract expressionist style he had formerly embraced. The modern architecture and design of the 1920s and 1930s also caught his imagination around this time. The decade ended on a high note when the prestigious Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum held Lichtenstein's first retrospective. This exhibition, which included paintings and sculptures, also traveled to four other venues.

In the 1970s, Lichtenstein moved with his second wife to Southampton, NY, a Long Island town popular with artists. In this calmer place, he painted images of artists' studios and dozens of still lifes, often borrowing from Henri Matisse. At the same time, he explored such styles as Cubism, Purism and Futurism. A chance meeting with a collector of German Expressionist art, in 1978, led him to delve deeply into that genre, too. The decade saw him receive commissions as varied as a mural for the University of Düsseldorf, Germany; an exterior design for a race car; and his first public outdoor sculpture, for the Miami Beach Theatre for the Performing Arts. His works figured prominently in the Whitney Museum of American Art's 1978 "Art About Art" exhibition, and in 1979 he was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters, just one in a string of honors he would receive over his lifetime.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Lichtenstein remained as active as ever, traveling and creating several series of works, including geometric abstractions, nudes and Chinese landscapes. Big commissions continued to roll in from around the world, and in 1995 President Bill Clinton awarded him the National Medal of Arts. Lichtenstein had shown no signs of slowing down when he fell ill with pneumonia at age 73; he died on Sept. 29, 1997.

One of his last big commissions became a posthumous gift to his beloved New York City: a 53-foot-long mural for the New York Metropolitan Transit Authority's Times Square subway station. Completed in 1994 and installed in 2002, the artwork depicts a futuristic city while referencing historic subway architecture and innovations presented at two New York World's Fairs.

Stamp Artwork

These eye-catching new stamps honor Roy Lichtenstein (1923–1997), the iconic American artist of the mid-20th-century pop art movement, which looked to popular culture for its aesthetic. Each of the five designs in the pane of 20 features one work of art by Lichtenstein.

"Standing Explosion (Red)" (1965) is a porcelain enamel on steel work that is part of the collection of the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, AR.

"Modern Painting I" (1966) is an acrylic, oil and graphite pencil on canvas painting that is part of the collection of the Frederick R. Weisman Art Foundation in Los Angeles.

"Still Life With Crystal Bowl" (1972) is an acrylic, oil and graphite pencil on canvas painting that is part of the collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City.

"Still Life With Goldfish" (1972) is an acrylic, oil and graphite pencil on canvas painting that is owned by a private collector.

"Portrait of a Woman" (1979) is an acrylic, oil and graphite pencil on canvas painting that is owned by a private collector.

In the left third of the pane is a photograph by Bob Adelman of Lichtenstein standing in front of one of his dot-pattern paintings. His face is framed by a model of his 1983 sculpture *Brushstrokes in Flight*.

Derry Noyes, an art director for USPS, designed the stamps.

Postal Products

Customers may purchase stamps and other philatelic products through the [Postal Store](#) at usps.com/shopstamps, by calling 844-737-7826, by mail through [USA Philatelic](#) or at Post Office locations nationwide.

#

The United States Postal Service is an independent federal establishment, mandated to be self-financing and to serve every American community through the affordable, reliable and secure delivery of mail and packages to nearly 165 million addresses six and often seven days a week. Overseen by a bipartisan Board of Governors, the Postal Service is implementing a 10-year transformation plan, [Delivering for America](#), to modernize the postal network, restore long-term financial sustainability, dramatically improve service across all mail and shipping categories, and maintain the organization as one of America's most valued and trusted brands.

The Postal Service generally receives no tax dollars for operating expenses and relies on the sale of postage, products and services to fund its operations.

For USPS media resources, including broadcast-quality video and audio and photo stills, visit the [USPS Newsroom](#). Follow us on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [Pinterest](#) and [LinkedIn](#). Subscribe to the [USPS YouTube channel](#), like us on [Facebook](#) and enjoy our [Postal Posts blog](#). For more information about the Postal Service, visit usps.com and facts.usps.com.