

Major donation of art marks American pop art icon Roy Lichtenstein's birth

LONDON, 13 November: A major gift of prints and drawings by American artist Roy Lichtenstein (1923 –1997) has been donated to the British Museum by the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation, marking the centenary of the artist's birth.

The Foundation has gifted the Museum 34 prints covering the span of Lichtenstein's working life alongside seven rare pre-1960s drawings and pastels, and two pen studies from the 1970s. The gift includes prints such as *Storming the Castle* (c. 1950), *Still Life* (1968), *Water Lily* (1993), and examples of his drawing like *Machine* (c. 1948) and *Knight with Lady* (c. 1951).

The British Museum was specially selected in recognition of the Museum's excellent print collection, accessible study room, high standards of conservation and care, and history of print scholarship.

The acquisition significantly enhances the Museum's holdings of work by this important proponent of pop art, which previously comprised only six works including two postcards. The gift provides a comprehensive group of prints and drawings that cover the whole of Lichtenstein's career, from 1948 to 1997, and includes many of his major themes and motifs, including everyday American still lifes, haystacks, water lilies and brushstrokes.

Lichtenstein was an innovative artist who developed his own distinctive pop art style in the 1960s, characterised by bright colours and the use of benday dots, which reference the comic book imagery that also inspired him.

Hugo Chapman, Keeper of Prints and Drawings said: "We are thrilled to have this major gift of works on paper by Roy Lichtenstein as he is one of the most innovative, recognisable, and exciting American post-war artists, and one whose work was so closely linked to his love of graphic art.

"Lichtenstein's art often playfully alludes to paintings by past artists and to well-established artistic genres, such as still life and landscape, so it is particularly fitting that his prints and drawings will now be viewable alongside the British Museum's historical graphic holdings which contain so many examples that resonate with his work."

Mark Jones, Interim Director, British Museum comments: "We are grateful to the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation for this stunning gift, recognising the British Museum's excellent graphic collection and history of print scholarship.

"The gift means that the Museum now can give a more rounded and complete sense of Lichtenstein's artistic progress. And with our commitment to sharing our collection nationally and internationally, as well as online, I am hopeful that people across the globe will be able to share in the appreciation of these fine works."

Dr Jack Cowart, Founding Executive Director of the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation, adds: "We are delighted that the British Museum is joining us in expanding public access to the work of Roy Lichtenstein, especially in this centennial year.

"We hope that students, scholars, and the general public in London will benefit from this increased access to Roy's notable works on paper. We are particularly proud of the group of unique pre-Pop Lichtenstein watercolours, drawings and pastels. We spent years tracking down and reacquiring them

from private collections so we could regift them to a museum collection. We can think of no better repository than the British Museum.”

The British Museum is one of three international institutions that the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation has selected for a significant gift of prints to mark the centennial year of the artist’s birth, the other two being the Kunstmuseum Basel and the Albertina in Vienna.



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