



ROY LICHTENSTEIN: INTIMATE SCULPTURES

Exhibition Dates: June 26, 2014 – January 31, 2015

Opening Reception: Thursday, June 26th, 6-8pm

Lichtenstein is an artist who makes barely thick works, highly intellectualized, contextually odd, infinitely nuanced and shaped, which are curious open screens of polychrome imagery. Their physical elements make real shadows but their cartoon sentiments cast strong intuitive ones"

-Jack Cowart, *Pop Up [Art]: Lichtenstein Sculpture*, 1992

Following the success of *Roy Lichtenstein: Nudes and Interiors*, curated by artists Hilary Harkness and Ewan Gibbs, **The FLAG Art Foundation** is pleased to present ***Roy Lichtenstein: Intimate Sculptures***, an exhibition of fourteen sculptures, organized in collaboration with the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation, on view on FLAG's 10th floor from **June 26, 2014 –January, 31, 2015**. This exhibition marks a yearlong engagement with the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation, allowing FLAG the honor of presenting two rarely-seen bodies of work by one of the twentieth century's most influential artists.

Roy Lichtenstein: Intimate Sculptures presents a selection of the artist's sculptures and maquettes, works that playfully and pointedly blur the boundaries of drawing, sculpture, and painting. Comprised of everyday and mass-produced objects – a mirror, water glass, and coffee cup – as well as the artist's signature brushstrokes, the works highlight Lichtenstein's ability to elevate the everyday to the iconic. Presented in a gallery space populated with furniture, the exhibition encourages engagement, inviting audiences to view historic works in an intimate setting. *Maquette for House I* (1996) inspired the domestic context for this environment, a later work wherein Lichtenstein reduces the structure of a cookie cutter suburban house to black outlines and primary colors – yellow siding, a blue roof, and red to accent the shutters and chimney.

Often overlooked but routinely used, commercial subjects become monuments in the artist's hand, wherein shadow, contour, and highlight are rendered in patinated bronze. In *Mirror II* (1977), Lichtenstein transforms a vanity mirror into a static, unchanging reflection – focusing on the form of the object while negating its intended function. *Mobile III* (1990) directly references Alexander Calder's archetypal mobiles, "freezing"¹ an item whose sole purpose is to respond to movement. Rather than condense volume and function into a linear still life, these sculptures become intimate metaphors for the disposable society in which they exist.

Nodding to the physicality of the Abstract Expressionist movement and its influence on Western art, Lichtenstein's brushstroke sculptures democratize mark-making and painterly authority through isolation and reproduction. Lichtenstein describes his desire to separate the brushstroke from the canvas and distill it to its purist form: "...my latest interest is probably in some way a reaction to the turn of contemporary painting back toward an expressionist path, toward the revealing of the brushstroke in the surface of the painting. Still, I am doing it my own way."² Lichtenstein's modern approach to the brushstroke continued to

¹ Cowart, Jack. 1992. "Pop Up [Art]: Lichtenstein Sculpture." *Roy Lichtenstein: Three Decades of Sculpture*. Guild Hall Museum (proof citation)

² Cullen, Arthur Barrett. *Roy Lichtenstein*. November 1984. P. 49.

incorporate his signature Ben-Day dots in new and substantial forms, most evident in the figurative works *Maquette for Brushstroke Head Red and Yellow* (1992) and *Maquette for Brushstroke Nude* (1992). Lichtenstein's brushstroke sculptures are emblematic of his lifelong exploration of representation and abstraction, form and function, and high and low culture, and continue to pose the question "what constitutes art?"

Concurrent with the exhibition at FLAG, Lichtenstein's monumental sculpture, *Tokyo Brushstroke I & II* (1994) is on view as a long term loan by the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation at the Parrish Art Museum, Southampton, NY, made possible by The Fuhrman Family Foundation.

A leading figure in twentieth-century American art, **Roy Lichtenstein** was born in New York City in 1923. He studied at New York's Art Students League in the summer of 1940 before enrolling at Ohio State University where he received his B.F.A. in 1946 and his M.F.A. in 1949. There, Lichtenstein began his career-long intrigues with ideas about visual perception, the odd signs and symbols of our modern culture and an overarching desire to achieve compositional unity. In 1951, Lichtenstein had his first one-person show in New York. In 1962 he had his first solo show with the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York and soon became an internationally recognized leader of American Pop art with paintings using dramatically isolated images selected from serial war and romance comics and generic products, all depicted in primary colors and Ben Day dots, techniques and subjects borrowed from mass media. In the succeeding decade, he moved to Southampton, New York and expanded his use of reproductions beyond advertising, postcard clichés and comic books to 1980s, Lichtenstein returned to work in the city part-time bringing with him an emphasis on expressive brushstrokes and artistic introspection. The decade also witnessed his completion of a number of public and private large-scale sculptural and painting projects. Lichtenstein's investigations of illusionism, abstraction, serialization, stylization and appropriation continued in every media in the 1990s. As a distinguished painter, sculptor and printmaker he received numerous honorary degrees and international prizes. He was awarded the National Medal of Arts in 1995. At age 73, he was investigating another new fabricated reality, so called "virtual paintings." About to embark on a series of works based on Cézanne's bathers, the artist's explorations were cut short by his death from pneumonia in 1997. Two years later, the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation was established to advance the scholarship on his work.

Beginning operation in 1999 in accordance with the wishes of the artist and his immediate family, the **Roy Lichtenstein Foundation's** mission is to encourage and support a broader understanding and experience of the art of Roy Lichtenstein (1923-1997) and of the contemporary art and artists of his time. The Foundation aspires to carry forward the artist's interests and legacy to many subsequent generations of art audiences and the general public. The Foundation focuses not only on expanding the roles and development of artist-endowed foundations but also on the broader implications of Lichtenstein's art with its global relations to historical process, critical fortune, museums, galleries, collectors, critics and students, young and old.

The FLAG Art Foundation is an exhibition space for contemporary art. The program includes four to six professionally-curated shows per year featuring works by established and emerging international artists. We are on the 9th and 10th floors of the Chelsea Arts Tower, located in the heart of New York's art district on 25th Street between 10th and 11th Avenues.

Our objective is to encourage the appreciation of contemporary art among a diverse audience. FLAG provides a unique educational environment in which visitors can view, contemplate, and engage in active dialogue with the artworks. Curators select and borrow from a variety of sources to include a wide range of work in each exhibition. FLAG is also a resource that facilitates loans of contemporary artworks to museums around the world. An extensive database of available works is maintained and made available to curators via info@flagartfoundation.org.