



This was the first time I decided to make a painting really look like commercial art. The approach turned out to be so interesting that eventually it became impossible to do any other kind of painting. [Roy Lichtenstein](#)

Roy Lichtenstein, *Look Mickey* (detail), 1961, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Dorothy and Roy Lichtenstein, Gift of the Artist, in Honor of the 50th Anniversary of the National Gallery of Art

who? what? how?

Lichtenstein kept this painting, one with personal significance, in his possession until he and his wife gave it to the National Gallery.

right: Roy Lichtenstein, *Look Mickey*, 1961, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Dorothy and Roy Lichtenstein, Gift of the Artist, in Honor of the 50th Anniversary of the National Gallery of Art

below: Photo of American artist Roy Lichtenstein (1923–1997)
© Christopher Felver / Corbis



1 Pop!

In the 1950s and 1960s, young British and American artists made popular culture their subject matter. By incorporating logos, brand names, television and cartoon characters, and other consumer products into their work, these artists tested the boundaries between art and everyday life.

Roy Lichtenstein was one of the originators of this new pop movement. Fascinated by printed mass media—particularly newspaper advertising and cartoon or comic book illustration—Lichtenstein developed a style characterized by bold lines, bright colors, dot patterns, and sometimes words.

The art of today is all around us. [Roy Lichtenstein](#)



2 Roy

Born and raised in New York City, Lichtenstein began to draw and paint when he was a teenager. He went to Ohio State University to study fine arts, but his studies were interrupted when he was drafted into the army and sent to Europe during World War II. After returning to Ohio State and completing his degrees, Lichtenstein worked as a graphic designer and taught art at several universities. With the success he had in the 1960s, he was able to dedicate himself full time to making art.

Lichtenstein's turning point came in 1961 when he painted *Look Mickey*, which numbers among his earliest paintings to co-opt the conventions of comic strips.

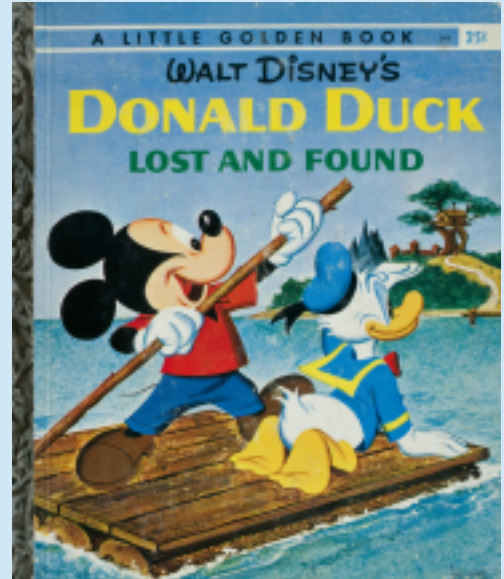
3

A Big One

Look Mickey depicts the famous Disney cartoon characters Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck standing on a fishing pier. Grasping a fishing pole over above his head and peering down at the water, Donald thinks he has snared a fish. He exclaims, “LOOK MICKEY, I’VE HOOKED A **BIG ONE!**!” Mickey stifles a laugh and smiles in amusement as he realizes that Donald has in fact hooked his own coattail!

Lichtenstein used the design conventions of the comic strip: its speech bubble, flat primary colors, and ink-dot patterns (such as those in Donald’s eyes and Mickey’s face that mimic the commercial printing process). Although Lichtenstein imitated the look of the mechanical printing process, he carefully painted *Look Mickey* by hand. You can even see traces of his sketched pencil marks on the canvas.

It’s a matter of re-seeing it your own way. Roy Lichtenstein



4

Look!

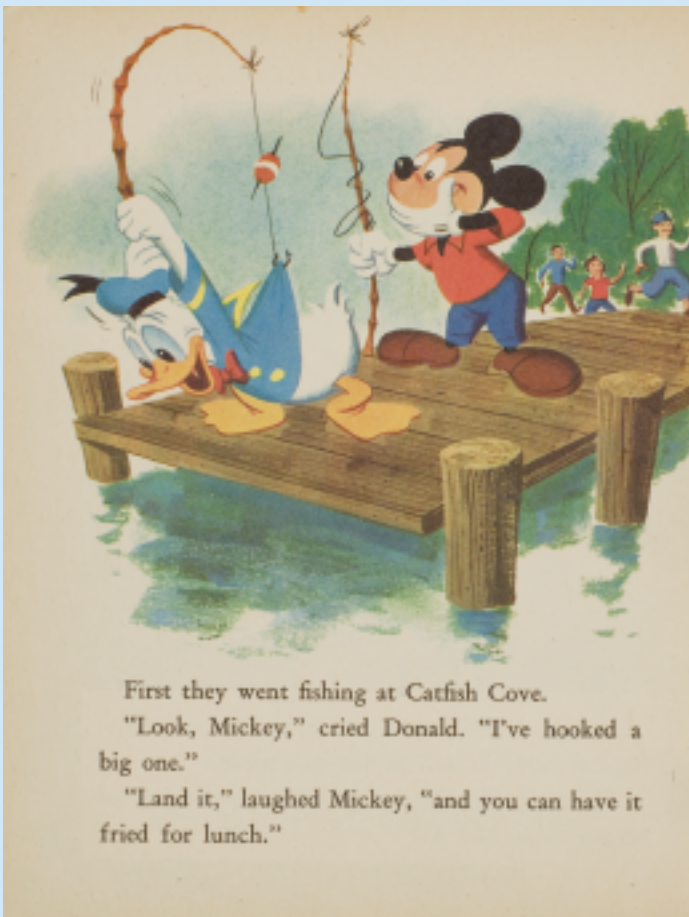
Lichtenstein often took images he found and enlarged, simplified, and reworked them. *Look Mickey* adapted a scene from the 1960 children’s book *Donald Duck: Lost and Found*.

Compare the storybook illustration to Lichtenstein’s painting. What elements are similar? What differences can you find?

Examine the changes the artist made:

- simplifying the background by removing three people
- rotating the direction of the dock
- adding the word bubble, which makes the text part of the picture
- transposing the illustration into an image in primary colors—red, blue, and yellow on a white ground

By making paintings look like blown-up comic strips, Lichtenstein surprised and shocked many viewers. Why? He made people think about how images are made and where they come from.



First they went fishing at Catfish Cove.
“Look, Mickey,” cried Donald. “I’ve hooked a big one.”
“Land it,” laughed Mickey, “and you can have it fried for lunch.”

Illustration by Bob Grant and Bob Totten from Carl Buettner, *Donald Duck: Lost and Found*, 1960. © Disney Enterprises, Inc.

booknook

These books about Roy Lichtenstein and pop art can be found at your local library or bookstore.

Roy Lichtenstein's ABC

By Bob Adelman | ages 3 and up

Lichtenstein's work serves as inspiration for each letter of this alphabet book.

Roy Lichtenstein (Getting to Know the World's Greatest Artists)

By Mike Venezia | ages 5 and up

This humorous, illustrated overview of Lichtenstein's career also serves as an introduction to the pop art movement.

Art Ed Books and Kit: Roy Lichtenstein

By Janet Boris | ages 7 and up

Providing a biography of the artist, with full-color art reproductions and photographs of the artist in the studio, this volume is accompanied by an activity book and art materials with easy-to-follow instructions to help children create art.

Make It Pop! Activities and Adventure in Pop Art

By Joyce Raimondo | ages 7 and up

Introducing the work of six pop artists, including Lichtenstein, this book provides step-by-step, hands-on art activities for kids to learn more about artists' techniques, subjects, and media.



Roy Lichtenstein, *House I*, model 1996, fabricated 1998, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation

try this!

activity

Pop Outside

Roy Lichtenstein also made sculptures—visit the National Gallery's Sculpture Garden to see one. *House I* creates an optical illusion. It appears to project outward toward you, but it really recedes! Walk along the garden path and examine the sculpture from different angles to get this visual joke.

Word Game: Fun House

This word game is designed for two people. One player prompts the other for a list of words to substitute for blanks in a story. The story below was inspired by Lichtenstein's *House I*.

Ask a friend or family member to be your partner. Without showing your partner the story, ask him/her to provide you with the following: the name of a famous person, a noun, a color, an animal, a number, a verb ending in *-ing*, a favorite flower, a sport, an adjective, an object, a type of food, a verb, a place, and a favorite song. Insert these words in the corresponding space. After you have filled in each blank, read the story aloud.

You've always been curious about what's inside this house, so one day you decide to stop for a visit.

When you go inside, you see many _____ .
(noun, plural)

There are _____ rooms to explore,
(number, plural)

all with _____ carpet and
(color)

_____ on the walls. In one of the
(favorite flower, plural)

closets, you find _____ ,
(famous person)

who invites you to play _____ in the
(sport)

basement. After winning, you rest on a
_____ sofa and watch the _____ .
(adjective) (object)

Your favorite snack, peanut butter and
_____ , is _____ on the table.
(food) (verb ending in -ing)

You have to watch out for the _____ ,
(animal)

who likes to _____ in the kitchen.
(verb)

When the telephone rings, you answer singing
_____ , which wakes up
(favorite song)

the owner who promptly puts you on a plane to
_____ .
(place)