

What is significant about the process Warhol used to make this work?

Andy Warhol, *Liz*, 1964. Silkscreen, 23 1/8 x 29 1/8 in. (58.7 x 59.7 cm). Metropolitan Museum of Art/John B. Turner Fund, 1986, New York, NY. 65.725.3. Image: ©The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Art Resource, NY.



# Art Goes Pop

These artists had big ideas about contemporary culture

**N**ovember 1, 1962, New York City. It's a cool fall day, but the doors to Sidney Janis's art gallery are wide open. Janis wants to make sure people come to the opening of his latest exhibition, *New Realists*. The artworks are completely different from the expressive, **abstract** paintings that have been popular with art critics and collectors for more than a decade. Instead, the bright, bold works in the show, featuring household appliances and food, look like they belong in the pages of a magazine or in the aisles of a supermarket. The show is a risk for Janis, a well-respected **gallerist**, but he has a feeling it'll pay off.

In the days after the opening, people mocked the exhibition. A critic for *The New York Times* joked that the artworks are "nothing you wouldn't see if you watched television commercials from 7 a.m. to 3 a.m." Established artists were horrified by the show, and some even left Janis's gallery in protest. Yet despite the early criticism, *New Realists* marked the beginning of a movement, called **Pop Art**, that would soon take the United States by storm.

How does Indiana comment on a culture of mass production?

Robert Indiana (b. 1928), *LOVE*, 1967. Screenprint, 39 15/16 x 39 15/16 in. (101.3 x 101.3 cm). Museum of Modern Art/Riva Castelman Fund, New York. 415.1990. Image: ©Museum of Modern Art/SCALA/Art Resource, NY.



## The American Dream

Pop Art emerged following the end of World War II during a period of prosperity in America. In the 1950s, many middle-class families moved away from big cities to the suburbs. They lived in neighborhoods that represented the American Dream. Each evening people gathered around their televisions—a new luxury—to watch shows like *Leave It to Beaver*, which portrayed wholesome family values.

Companies targeted these families with advertisements for products—from washing machines to shampoo—that promised a better life. Manufacturing companies mass-produced these products in factories to keep up with demand. Americans were inundated with images that urged them to consume and acquire more and more stuff.

## Art Mirrors Life

Many Pop artists, including Andy Warhol, got their start during the 1950s as commercial artists. Warhol eventually used many of the methods he learned designing advertisements in his own artwork in the 1960s. His signature technique was a **printmaking** process. After making a single drawing, he could reproduce the same image multiple times.

Printmaking allowed Warhol to work as quickly as the machines in a factory. He made brightly colored images of consumer products as well as celebrities, like the actress Elizabeth Taylor in his 1964 work *Liz*, top left. Another Pop artist, Robert Indiana, printed **multiples** of his 1967 *LOVE*, below left, in a variety of colors. Through works like these, artists invited viewers to think about how art is made.

## Elevating the Everyday

Pop artists also pushed the boundaries of what art could be about. They explored the mundane aspects of daily life. This made art more accessible, and the public loved it. Inspiration was everywhere—the artists just had to take advantage of it. In his 1966 work *Standard Station*, top right, Ed Ruscha (roo-SHAY) depicts one



of the many gas stations that appeared across the country during the first half of the 20th-century. Roy Lichtenstein (LIK-tuhn-steen) completed his 1964 *Oh, Jeff . . . I Love You, Too . . . But . . .*, below,

In works like these, Pop artists blurred the lines between popular culture and high art. They had big ideas about contemporary life and weren't afraid to be critical. Through the subjects they chose and the methods they used to explore them, Pop artists changed the rules about what art could be.

### How does Ruscha make a statement about contemporary culture?

Edward Ruscha (roo-SHAY), *Standard Station*, 1966. Color screenprint, 19 9/16x26 15/16in. (49.7x93.8cm). Philadelphia Museum of Art/Gift of Audrey Sabot, 1971, Philadelphia.

### How is this painting similar to—and different from—a real comic book?

Roy Lichtenstein (1923-1997), *Oh, Jeff . . . I Love You, Too . . . But . . .*, 1964. Oil and magna on canvas, 48x48in. (121.9x121.9cm). Private collection. Image: Estate of Roy Lichtenstein.

