Andy Warhol And Roy Lichtenstein As The Most Influential Figures Of Pop Art Movement

Pop Art was an influential movement in the 20th century. There was an idea within the modern movement, that one had to respond to one's own time. Pop Art was a reaction to the post-war period of mass production and advertisement imagery. The movement of Pop Art produced a group of artists who worked with similar ideas and the subject matter of time along with the diverse response to their era. It was created as a rejection of the ideas behind culture and art and the expectation of what art is assumed to be. Pop Art was the beginning to postmodernism and how one could view newer areas to explore and discuss. Artists used the visual effects of hard edges along with unique shapes and colours to create a different form of art that wasn't personal but rather a reflection of popular culture (Tate 2019). The following essay will breakdown the significant ways in which artists such as Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein reflected their society, the rejection of the traditional ways of art and the idea around originality.

Andy Warhol was an iconic painter who used media and mass production as a source of his inspiration. His works were a reflection of the celebrity, advertising and the movements of the 1960s. Warhol's career began when he pursued a successful career in commercial illustration. Creating new opportunities Warhol was able to exhibit his work in galleries creating himself a name as a controversial artist and providing new inspiration for the art world. This aided him in creating a studio by the name of "The Factory", which was a hotspot for celebrities, the wealthy and the intellectual (Tate n.d.). This mass flow of culture created the ideas behind his works reflecting celebrity fixation and the ways society idolised fame. Using unique styles such as the blotted line technique (which is the repetition of inking a plate and mass-producing work) and the use of rubber stamps, this enabled Warhol to create fast work and replicate the ideas behind mass production, the ideas of media and the celebrity (Biography.com 2017).

Andy Warhol had a fixation with the idolisation of celebrity status. His works were a celebration of the post-war consumerism and a representation of the society he lived in. He criticised the modern culture and the ways they obsessed over money and icon significance although he idolised these too (Catawiki 2019). Through his art studio "The Factory", Warhol created a space in which he could observe celebrities through parties he hosted. He enjoyed viewing the stylish representation of celebrities and the ways they acted (Magill 2016). Warhol quoted "I've always been fascinated by the assumptions that rich kids make, a lot of them thinks it's normal, the way they live because it's all they've ever know. I love to watch their minds operate" (Magill 2016). Through these ideas, Warhol was able to paint and capture the recognisable faces of celebrities who were just as recognisable as the mass-produced products of the time (Angie Kordic 2017). He featured famous faces such as Mick Jagger, Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe all of which were famous figures at the time and contributed to his fascination with the glamourous, provocative lifestyles. "Everyone will be famous in 15 minutes," Warhol said, showing the true concept of the way society viewed fame (Magill 2016).

Eight Elvise's (1963), part of a series called "Elvis" is a painting created by Andy Warhol using the silk-screening process (Totally History n.d.). It features eight reproduced images of Elvis Presley lined up next to each other creating a moving effect. Elvis is seen dressed up in a cowboy outfit and is shown through a black and white image on a silver strip (Revolver Gallery

2019). Silver was a significant colour to Warhol as his studio “The Factory” and various pieces of artwork featured this colour. “It was the perfect time to think silver. Silver was the future. . . The astronauts wore silver suits. And silver was also the past—the silver screen “said Warhol. The “Elvis” series was a refinement process which enables Warhol took the image still from a movie by the name of Flaming Star (1960) and provided his work with the idea of a fast-paced, assembly line outcome (Australia 2014). Warhol wanted to represent Presley as

One of Warhol’s most popular and unique pieces of work comes by the name of Marilyn (1967) depicting Marilyn Monroe, which he created just after her death in 1962. Marilyn (1967) was a set of screen print image created from five screens, one being the picture itself and the other four providing colour and texture (MoMa 2019). Based on the picture originally taken by Gene Korman for the film Niagara (1953), Marilyn (1967) is a studio portrait that was created in a set of ten (Artetrama 2019). The ten images brought clashing and bright colours creating an image that was unique to view and appeared unusual. Bringing together Korman’s image and the unique colour combinations Marilyn (1967) was a two-sided story representing the troubled life of Monroe along with the conflicting celebrity persona she lived (Tate n.d.).

Warhol’s artwork was a representation of how images were viewed in and around society (Whitney Museum of American Art 2018). It was a way in which society could appreciate the mass pieces of information being filtered through culture (Whitney Museum of American Art 2018). The ways he carried a tape recorder and a camera on him always was a clue in to the idea that society has become comfortable with media being a part of everyday life (Whitney Museum of American Art 2018). He was able to represent the good and bad times of society and the idea of what it is to be human, understanding the societal longing to be surrounded by ideas that are easily consumed (Whitney Museum of American Art 2018).

Roy Lichtenstein was a leading figure in the pop art movement. Inspired by the comic strip and media advertising Lichtenstein was able to parody the original messages of the art in a humorous way (Tate n.d.). He used the common technique found within newspapers and comic strips by the name of the Ben-day dots method (the process of smalls overlapping dots that create bright colours and optical effects) replicating the machine process of printing as this became his signature trademark (Artnet 2019). Stationed in France during the war Lichtenstein was exposed to European art and after it ended picked up a European Modernist style though focusing on the American westernised world (Artnet 2019). In the 1960s Lichtenstein began focusing on his comic strip artwork. His idea was that his art was to be something that people didn’t go looking for as commercial art was considered undesirable and meaningless (Roy Lichtenstein Foundation 2019). Lichtenstein quoted “I'm not really sure what social message my art carries, if any. And I don't really want it to carry one. I'm not interested in the subject matter to try to teach society anything, or to try to better our world in any way”, interpreting images that were unpopular was the main theme through Lichtenstein’s work (Art Quotes n.d.).

Drowning Girl (1963) was a select scene found from the comic titled “Run for Love” (1962) (MoMa Learning 2019). It was an oil painting constructed as a highly cropped image depicting the image of a drowning lady (MoMa Learning 2019). Removing the details from the background and shortening the images text to “I don’t care! I’d rather sink --- than call Brad for help!”, Lichtenstein was able to create a “detached, impersonal interpretation of love, hate, war etc” (MoMa Learning 2019). Through the editing of the original speech bubble he created new meaning open for personal interpretation. Copying the image from the original source, Lichtenstein traced then projected onto a backdrop (MoMa Learning 2019). Working by hand he

moved and edited the shape and formation of his image to suit his needs (MoMa Learning 2019). Through unique images like this, Lichtenstein was able to tell stories that not only embraced the comic but helped bring pop art to a place where it had to be taken seriously with a deeper meaning (Kristy Puchko 2019).

Whaam! (1963) depicted the image of two fighter jets attacking each other and was a diptych being able to be closed like a comic book (Tate n.d.). Originally drawn by Irv Novick and taken from DC Comic's All-American Men of War (1962), Whaam! was a contradicting image viewing the serious subject matter of war with the light-hearted style of Pop Art (Tate n.d.). Showing the separation line down the middle Lichtenstein kept the subject plane to the left and the explosion to the right (Tate n.d.). This image was an insight into the post-war environment society had adapted to. He used different colours than originally found on the comic and enlarged and traced the image (Tate n.d.). He created the Ben-day dots by using mesh and forcing paint through the holes with a brush (Tate n.d.). Lichtenstein admitted to the idea of transformation as his work was not an original idea but instead was an adjustment providing new meaning (Tate n.d.). It was his aim to build images that weren't full of intended painting styles but rather were easily viewed and absorbed (Tate n.d.).

Roy Lichtenstein challenged what art was supposed to be and the intentional meanings behind it (Catherine Spencer 2017). He created a machine-like inking process that through bright colouring and vibrant text and created a new tension between the high and low art styles of the time (Catherine Spencer 2017). He enabled art not only to be meaningful but encouraged it to be created from simple, commonly found ideas and objects (Catherine Spencer 2017).

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