

= Torpedo ... Los ! =

Torpedo ... Los ! ( sometimes Torpedo ... LOS ! ) is a 1963 pop art oil on canvas painting by Roy Lichtenstein . When it was last sold in 1989 , The New York Times described the work as " a comic @-@ strip image of sea warfare " . It formerly held the record for the highest auction price for a Lichtenstein work . Its 1989 sale helped finance the construction of the current home of the Museum of Contemporary Art , Chicago in 1991 .

Like many of Lichtenstein 's works its title comes from the speech balloon in the painting . The work was included in Lichtenstein 's second solo exhibition . The source of the image is a comic book from DC Comics . Lichtenstein has made significant alterations to the original image to change the focus and perspective in addition to significant alteration of the narrative element of the work . The work plays on the background @-@ foreground relationship and the theme of vision that appears in many of Lichtenstein 's works .

= = Background = =

The source of the image is " Battle of the Ghost Ships ? " in DC Comics ' Our Fighting Forces ( October 1962 ) , although the content of the speech balloon is different ( this is edition number 72 according to some sources and 71 ( a ) according to others ) . According to the Lichtenstein Foundation website , Torpedo ... Los ! was part of Lichtenstein 's second solo exhibition at Leo Castelli Gallery of September 28 ? October 24 , 1963 , that included Drowning Girl , Baseball Manager , In the Car , Conversation , and Whaam ! . Marketing materials for the show included the lithograph artwork , Crak ! .

On November 7 , 1989 , Torpedo ... Los ! sold at Christie 's for \$ 5 @. @ 5 million ( US \$ 10 @. @ 5 million in 2016 dollars ) to Zurich dealer Thomas Ammann , which was a record for a work of art by Lichtenstein . The sale was described as the " highpoint " of a night in which Christie 's achieved more than double the total sales prices of any other contemporary art auction up to that date . The seller of the work was Beatrice C. Mayer , the widow of Museum of Contemporary Art , Chicago founder and board member Robert B. Mayer as well as daughter of Sara Lee Corporation founder Nathan Cummings . Prior to the sale the work was part of the Robert B. Mayer Memorial Loan Program and was exhibited at colleges and museums . Torpedo ... Los ! was expected to sell for \$ 3 to 4 million at the time . In 1991 , Mayer became one of the key benefactors of the new Museum of Contemporary Art Building .

= = Description = =

Measuring 68 by 80 inches ( 172 @. @ 7 cm × 203 @. @ 2 cm ) , Torpedo ... Los ! is an oil on canvas painting . By enlarging the face of the captain relative to the entire field , Lichtenstein makes him more prominent than in the source . He retained the source 's " clumsiness " in how the secondary figure is presented and replaced the dialogue with a much shorter " cryptic command " . The original source had dialog related to the repeated torpedoing of the same ship , but Lichtenstein cut the entire speech balloon down to two words . He moved the captain 's scar from his nose to his cheek and he made the captain appear more aggressive by depicting him with his mouth wide open , also opting to leave the eye which was not looking through the periscope open . He also made the ship appear to be more technologically sophisticated with a variety of changes . The scar was actually most readily apparent in panels other than the source from the same story .

This work exemplifies Lichtenstein 's theme relating to vision . Lichtenstein uses a " mechanical viewing device " to present his depiction of technically aided vision . The depicted mechanical device , a periscope in this case , forces the vision into a monocular format . In some of his works such as this , monocularly is a strong theme that is directly embodied although only by allusion . Michael Lobel notes that " ... his work proposes a dialectical tension between monocular and binocular modes of vision , a tension that operates on the level of gender as well . " The work is regarded as one in which Lichtenstein exaggerated comic book sound effects in common pop art

style .

= = Reception = =

This painting exemplifies Lichtenstein 's use of the background / foreground shift and ironic colloquialisms in critical commands . Although most of Lichtenstein 's war imagery depicts American war themes , this depicts " a scarred German submarine captain at a battle station " . The manner of depiction with the commander 's face pressed against the periscope reflects fusions of industrial art of the 1920s and 1930s . The ironic aspect of this in 1963 is in part due to its temporal displacement referring back to World War II during the much later period of the Cold War . The styling of the balloon content , especially that of the large font characters , is complemented by or complementary to the other traditional visual content of the painting . Lichtenstein 's alterations heightened the sense of urgency in the image , however , they also offset that menace by forming a detached work . A November 1963 Art Magazine review stated that this was one of the " broad and powerful paintings " of the 1963 exhibition at Castelli 's Gallery .