

= Drowning Girl =

Drowning Girl (also known as Secret Hearts or I Don 't Care ! I 'd Rather Sink) is a 1963 painting in oil and synthetic polymer paint on canvas by Roy Lichtenstein . Using the conventions of comic book art , a thought bubble conveys the thoughts of the figure , while Ben @-@ Day dots echo the effect of the mechanized printing process . It is one of the most representative paintings of the pop art movement , and part of the Museum of Modern Art 's permanent collection since 1971 . The painting is considered among Lichtenstein 's most significant works , perhaps on a par with his acclaimed 1963 diptych Whaam ! . Drowning Girl has been described as a " masterpiece of melodrama " , and is one of the artist 's earliest images depicting women in tragic situations , a theme to which he often returned in the mid @-@ 1960s .

The painting shows a teary @-@ eyed woman on a turbulent sea . She is emotionally distressed , seemingly from a romance . A thought bubble reads : " I Don 't Care ! I 'd Rather Sink ? Than Call Brad For Help ! " This narrative element highlights the clichéd melodrama , while its graphics reiterate Lichtenstein 's theme of painterly work imitating mechanized reproduction . The work is derived from a 1962 DC Comics panel , while also borrowing from Hokusai 's The Great Wave off Kanagawa and from elements of modernist artists Jean Arp and Joan Miró . It is one of several Lichtenstein works that mention a character named Brad who is absent from the picture . Both the graphical and narrative elements of the work are cropped from the source image .

= = Background = =

During the late 1950s and early 1960s a number of American painters began to adapt the imagery and motifs of comic strips . Roy Lichtenstein made drawings of comic strip characters in 1958 . Andy Warhol produced his earliest paintings in the style in 1960 . Lichtenstein , unaware of Warhol 's work , produced Look Mickey and Popeye in 1961 . Although Warhol had produced silkscreens of comic strips and of other pop art subjects , he supposedly relegated himself to Campbell 's Soup Cans as a subject at the time to avoid competing with the more finished style of comics by Lichtenstein . He once said " I 've got to do something that really will have a lot of impact that will be different enough from Lichtenstein and James Rosenquist , that will be very personal , that won 't look like I 'm doing exactly what they 're doing . "

Drowning Girl depicted the advancement of Lichtenstein 's cartoon work , which represented his 1961 departure from his abstract expressionism period , from animated cartoons to more serious themes such as romance and wartime armed forces . Lichtenstein said that , at the time , " I was very excited about , and very interested in , the highly emotional content yet detached impersonal handling of love , hate , war , etc . , in these cartoon images . " Lichtenstein parodied four Picassos between 1962 and 1963 . Picasso 's depictions of weeping women may have influenced Lichtenstein to produce portrayals of vulnerable teary @-@ eyed women , such as the subjects of Hopeless and Drowning Girl . Another possible influence on his emphasis on depicting distressed women in the early- to mid @-@ 1960s was that his first marriage was dissolving at the time . Lichtenstein 's first marriage to Isabel Wilson , which resulted in two sons , lasted from 1949 to 1965 ; the couple separated in 1963 .

When Lichtenstein made his transition to comic @-@ based work , he began to mimic the style while adapting the subject matter . He applied simplified color schemes and commercial printing @-@ like techniques . The style he adopted was " simple , well @-@ framed images comprised of solid fields of bold color often bounded by thick , stark border lines . " The borrowed technique was " representing tonal variations with patterns of colored circles that imitated the half @-@ tone screens of Ben Day dots used in newspaper printing " . PBS asserts that this is an adaptation of the ligne claire style associated with Hergé . Lichtenstein once said of his technique : " I take a cliché and try to organize its forms to make it monumental . "

The subject of Drowning Girl is an example of Lichtenstein 's post @-@ 1963 comics @-@ based women who " look hard , crisp , brittle , and uniformly modish in appearance , as if they all came out of the same pot of makeup . " In the early 1960s , Lichtenstein produced several " fantasy drama "

paintings of women in love affairs with domineering men causing women to be miserable , such as Drowning Girl , Hopeless and In the Car . These works served as prelude to 1964 paintings of innocent " girls next door " in a variety of tenuous emotional states . " In Hopeless and Drowning Girl , for example , the heroines appear as victims of unhappy love affairs , with one displaying helplessness ... and the other defiance (she would rather drown than ask for her lover 's help) . " Drowning Girl , the aforementioned works and Oh , Jeff ... I Love You , Too ... But ... are among those tragedies that make the author a popular draw at museums .

= = History = =

Drowning Girl is derived from the splash page from " Run for Love ! " , illustrated by Tony Abruzzo and lettered by Ira Schnapp , in Secret Hearts # 83 (November 1962) , DC Comics . This is the same comic book issue that inspired Hopeless .

In 1963 , Lichtenstein was parodying various types of sources such as commercial illustrations , comic imagery and even modern masterpieces . The masterpieces represented what could have been dubbed the " canon " of art and was thought of as " high art , " while the " low @-@ art " subject matter included comic strip images . His masterworks sources included the likes of Cézanne , Mondrian and Picasso . During this time in his career , Lichtenstein noted that " the things that I have apparently parodied I actually admire . " At the time , Lichtenstein was exploring the theme of " industrialization of emotion " . In Lichtenstein 's obituary , Los Angeles Times critic Christopher Knight said the work was " a witty rejoinder to De Kooning 's famously brushy paintings of women " . His comic romances often depicted stereotypical representations of thwarted passions . Although the Lichtenstein Foundation website claims that Lichtenstein did not begin using his opaque projector technique until the fall of 1963 , Lichtenstein described his process for producing comics based art , including Drowning Girl :

As directly as possible ... From a cartoon , photograph or whatever , I draw a small picture ? the size that will fit into my opaque projector ... I don 't draw a picture to reproduce it ? I do it in order to recompose it ... I project the drawing onto the canvas and pencil it in and then I play around with the drawing until it satisfies me .

When Lichtenstein had his first solo show at the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York City in February 1962 , it sold out before the opening . In addition to Drowning Girl , the exhibition included Look Mickey , Engagement Ring , Blam and The Refrigerator . The show ran from February 10 through March 3 , 1962 . According to the Lichtenstein Foundation website , Drowning Girl was part of Lichtenstein 's first exhibition at Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles from April 1 ? April 27 , 1963 , featuring Masterpiece , Portrait of Madame Cézanne and other works from 1962 and 1963 . It was also part of his second solo exhibition at the Leo Castelli Gallery from September 28 ? October 24 , 1963 that included Torpedo ... Los ! , Baseball Manager , In the Car , Conversation , and Whaam ! . Marketing materials for the show included the lithograph Crak ! The Museum of Modern Art acquired Drowning Girl in 1971 , and their webpage for this work credits Philip Johnson and Mr. and Mrs. Bagley Wright for the acquisition .

= = Description = =

Some sources describe the subjects of Lichtenstein 's tragic girls series as heroines (in the sense that they are the counterparts to the heroes) , and others do not (in the sense that they are not heroic) . Drowning Girl is a painting of a female subject who would prefer to give in to the power of the ocean than call for aid . Lichtenstein 's version of the scene eliminates everything but the sea and a few body parts of the subject : her head , shoulder and hand , which are barely above the water . As her face is presented her eyes are shut with drops of what appear to be tears flowing from them . Because Lichtenstein only presents a single frame , the viewer does not know what happened before this moment and what is going to happen after it . Furthermore , the viewer has no way to know who Brad is and why she is so reluctant to call him .

According to The Grove Encyclopedia of American Art , the most important element of Lichtenstein

's procedure in the early 1960s was " the enlargement and unification of his source material " . Although , according to some sources , the changes made to produce Drowning Girl are not regarded as significant , Lichtenstein made several notable changes from the original source : " In the original illustration , the drowning girl 's boyfriend appears in the background , clinging to a capsized boat . Lichtenstein cropped the image dramatically , showing the girl alone and encircled by a threatening wave . He changed the caption from ' I don 't care if I have a cramp ! ' to ' I don 't care ! ' and the boyfriend 's name from Mal to Brad . " With the former narrative change , Lichtenstein removed evidence that the drowning girl has a cramp in her leg . With the latter narrative change , Lichtenstein attempted to change the perception of the boyfriend . When discussing another work (I Know ... Brad) , Lichtenstein stated that the name Brad sounded heroic to him and was used with the aim of clichéd oversimplification .

Lichtenstein 's method entailed " strengthening of the formal aspects of the composition , a stylization of motif , and a ' freezing ' of both emotion and actions " . Although comic @-@ book panels depict a moment in time , Drowning Girl is borrowed from an example of a comic @-@ book panel depiction of a moment relatively more " pregnant " with past- and future @-@ dependent drama than most moments . This work also marks a phase in Lichtenstein 's career when many of his works were given present @-@ participial titles such as Sleeping Girl , Crying Girl and Blonde Waiting , which accentuates the works ' " relation to process and action . " According to The Grove Encyclopedia of American Art , during this phase of Lichtenstein 's career " a constant if restrained and a gentle sense of humor contribute just as much to the cheerful lightness of Lichtenstein 's work as the balanced , completely harmonious composition . "

Narrative content was in the forefront of much of Lichtenstein 's work as a means to engage the viewer . Measuring 171 @.@ 6 cm x 169 @.@ 5 cm (67 @.@ 625 in x 66 @.@ 75 in) , Drowning Girl presents " a young woman who seems to have cried herself a river ... literally drowning in emotion , " according to Janis Hendrickson . The melodrama makes it clear that she has been hurt by a " Brad " , the name given to several of Lichtenstein 's heroes . Vian Shamounki Borchert says that the caption makes it clear that the subject is practically " drowning in a sea of tears " .

In typical Lichtenstein fashion , the tragic female is presented " in a suspended state of distress . " According to Janis Hendrickson , the subject 's head appears to rest on a wave as if it were a pillow and lies in the water as if it were a bed , creating a blend of " eroticism and final resting place " . The waters of the sea swirl around the subject 's waves of hair creating the perception of a whirlpool . The painting is representative of Lichtenstein 's affinity for single @-@ frame drama that reduces the viewer 's ability to identify with it and that abstracts emotion . His use of industrial and mechanical appearance further trivialize the sentiments , although the painterly touches add to its simplification .

= = General context = =

In the early 1960s Lichtenstein 's theme of comics @-@ based work was hotly debated . In a 1963 New York Times article , Brian O 'Doherty wrote that Lichtenstein 's work was not art , saying Lichtenstein was " one of the worst artists in America " who " briskly went about making a sow 's ear out of a sow 's ear . " This was part of a widespread debate about the merits of Lichtenstein 's comic blow @-@ ups as true art . In January 1964 Life ran a story under the title " Is He the Worst Artist in the U.S. ? " on this controversy . Later reviews were much kinder and Todd Brewster noted that this may have been motivated by popular demand saying in Life in 1986 that " Those cartoon blowups may have disturbed the critics , but collectors , tired of the solemnity of abstract expressionism , were ready for some comic relief . Why couldn 't the funny pages be fine art ? " Although his work is now widely accepted , there remain critics who continue to raise issues about it such as the claim that every comic @-@ based work was done without attributing the original creators , nor paying any royalties or seeking permission from the original copyright holders . David Barsalou has dedicated decades to identifying all of Lichtenstein 's source materials and has posted over 1000 images on Flickr detailing Lichtenstein 's unrecognized sources .

Today some critics question Lichtenstein 's artistic skills as it relates to comics . Everett Kinstler

notes that , although today Lichtenstein is closely associated with romance comics due to his teary "mannered close @-@ ups " , in his day " no comics publisher would have hired Lichtenstein ? he wasn 't good enough . " He felt Lichtenstein lacked the ability to portray the emotional range of the story through facial expressions and body language independently .

= = Reception = =

Many sources describe *Whaam !* and *Drowning Girl* as Lichtenstein 's most famous works . The Daily Mail listed it along with *Whaam !* and *Oh , Jeff ... I Love You , Too ... But ...* as one of his most famous at the time of its 2013 Lichtenstein Retrospective display at the Tate Modern . It is also regarded as one of his most influential works along with *Whaam !* and *Look Mickey* . John Elderfield , Museum of Modern Art chief curator noted that the 2004 " MoMA in Berlin " exhibition held during the Museum 's renovation was a " synoptic overview of 20th @-@ century art " . Highlights from the 212 @-@ piece exhibition according to various publications such as The New York Times and artnet were van Gogh 's *Starry Night* , Matisse 's *Dance* and Lichtenstein 's *Drowning Girl* , all of which were touring outside the United States for the first time .

Drowning Girl was part of the largest ever retrospective of Lichtenstein that visited the Art Institute of Chicago from May 16 to September 3 , 2012 , the National Gallery of Art in Washington , D.C. from October 14 , 2012 to January 13 , 2013 , the Tate Modern in London from February 21 to May 27 , 2013 and The Centre Pompidou from July 3 to November 4 , 2013 . During the 2012 ? 13 retrospective , The Huffington Post described *Drowning Girl* as Lichtenstein 's " masterpiece of melodrama " . Danish art critic and Louisiana Museum of Modern Art director Poul Erik Tøjner called the work an example of Lichtenstein 's " post @-@ coital perdition " pieces , describing it as the " star witness " of this genre of his works . He notes that the subject is reaching far @-@ flung depths as she acts out of pride . Tøjner perceived eroticism in this painting , likening the open mouth to a vaginal feature and noting the singularity of Lichtenstein using an open mouth . With that in mind , he compares the tears to ejaculate residue .

This was painted at the apex of Lichtenstein 's use of enlarged dots , cropping and magnification of the original source . Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum curator Diane Waldman notes that Lichtenstein made *Drowning Girl* a cornerstone of his career because of " his extraordinary sense of organization , his ability to use a sweeping curve and manipulate it into an all-over pattern " . According to The Oxford Dictionary of American Art and Artists , the work is " a mix of cliché , melodrama , pathos , and absurdity ... " The result is described by art scholar Jonathan Fineberg as " a remarkably impassive style " . The image is typical of Lichtenstein 's depiction of comic subjects responding to a situation in a clichéd manner .

Lichtenstein 's tinkering with the source material resulted in a recomposition with sharper focus after he eliminated several elements that distract from the depiction of the woman , such as the capsized boat , troubled male subject and the general seascape . The result was swirling , swooping waves and " animate white foam " that envelope the subject with a " pictorial buoyancy " that form an " aquatic continuum " .

Drowning Girl presents an " unmistakeable acknowledgement to the flamboyant linearism of Art Nouveau " . The waves are intended to " recall Hokusai as well as the biomorphic forms of Arp and Miró ; " just as the source comics may have intended to . Lichtenstein has claimed a strong relation between the original comic book source panel and Hokusai 's *The Great Wave off Kanagawa* , making this work a bridge between the two . The adaptation of the wave print is said to add a decorative look and feel to the painting , without which the work might be much more alarming to the viewer . Lichtenstein even made the connection between *Drowning Girl* 's arabesque waves and " the Art Nouveau aesthetic " . Regarding this work , Lichtenstein stated :

In the *Drowning Girl* the water is not only Art Nouveau , but it can also be seen as Hokusai . I don 't do it just because it is another reference . Cartooning itself sometimes resembles other periods in art ? perhaps unknowingly ... They do things like the little Hokusai waves in the *Drowning Girl* . But the original wasn 't very clear in this regard ? why should it be ? I saw it and then pushed it a little further until it was a reference that most people will get ... it is a way of crystallizing the style by

exaggeration .

Tøjner describes the work as " Lichtenstein 's finest formulation of a counter @-@ image to the many explosions in his universe " , noting that the drama is past its peak although it may seem to be at a crescendo . He also notes that " the tears are drawn with classic Lichtenstein waxy fullness " despite the surrounding water , which must be significant since " naturalistic justification " is absent . 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 . Nonetheless , the name of the work was not universally known . In a December 1964 Art Magazine review of his October 24 ? September 19 , 1964 Castelli Gallery show , Lichtenstein was referred to as the author of I Don 't Care , I 'd Rather Sink (Drowning Girl) . According to Gary Garrels of the Museum of Modern Art , the work is a " poetics of the utterly banal , of displaced ordinariness " resulting in an " image frozen in time and space " , making it " iconic " . Comparing this to the source , Garrels says it is a rendering " in a simplified vocabulary " produced while Lichtenstein put aside his mechanical objectivity . According to The Grove Encyclopedia of American Art , extreme examples of his formalization become " virtual abstraction " when the viewer recalls that the motif is an element of a larger work . Thus , Lichtenstein reinforced a non @-@ realist view of comic strips and advertisements , presenting them as artificial images with minimalistic graphic techniques . Lichtenstein 's magnification of his source material stressed the plainness of his motifs as an equivalent to mechanical commercial drawing , leading to implications about his statements on modern industrial America . Nonetheless , Lichtenstein appears to have accepted the American capitalist industrial culture .

Lanchner wrote of how Lichtenstein 's translation of a " highly charged " content with coolly handled presentation intensified the contrast between the two . While contrasting Lichtenstein 's Ben @-@ Day dots use in Drowning Girl with another artist 's work , Sarah Rich and Joyce Henri Robinson note that the work " satirizes the melodrama of soap operas and serial comics , turning the drama of the title figure 's potential suicide into a high camp performance " .