

= Brushstrokes series =

Brushstrokes series is the name for a series of paintings produced in 1965 ? 66 by Roy Lichtenstein . It also refers to derivative sculptural representations of these paintings that were first made in the 1980s . In the series , the theme is art as a subject , but rather than reproduce masterpieces as he had starting in 1962 , Lichtenstein depicted the gestural expressions of the painting brushstroke itself . The works in this series are linked to those produced by artists who use the gestural painting style of abstract expressionism made famous by Jackson Pollock , but differ from them due to their mechanically produced appearance . The series is considered a satire or parody of gestural painting by both Lichtenstein and his critics . After 1966 , Lichtenstein incorporated this series into later motifs and themes of his work .

= = Background = =

In the early 1960s , Lichtenstein reproduced masterpieces by Cézanne , Mondrian and Picasso before embarking on the Brushstroke series in 1965 . The Brushstrokes were contemporaneous with abstract painting that no longer emphasized the gestural aspect , with non @-@ demonstrative modes carrying the day . Lichtenstein was identified with some such modes by critics and found himself linked to both Frank Stella and Kenneth Noland . Brushstrokes was the first element of the Brushstrokes series .

Prior to producing his first Brushstroke work , Lichtenstein spun his upcoming work as a satire of Abstract Expressionism . He stated that he intended to draw drips of paint and depictions of brush strokes . Years after the series was completed , Lichtenstein claimed the source for the series was Renaissance artist Frans Hals , a painterly artist whose brushstrokes descended from hallowed examples of European art as an inspiration to abstract expressionism .

According to the Lichtenstein Foundation 's website , he began creating Brushstroke painting in the autumn of 1965 and presented the Brushstroke series at Castelli 's gallery from November 20 through December 11 . A 1967 painting entitles Brushstrokes was produced for the Pasadena Art Museum 's 1967 Lichtenstein exhibition . Later he produced an eight @-@ print Brushstroke Figures series using collage elements . The series is described as an " ... instance of Abstract Expressionism recycled through conventions taken from the mass media ... " He began making sculptural renditions of his Brushstrokes paintings in the early 1980s in a wide variety of shapes and sizes . Many of these were painted bronzes .

The inspiration for the series was Charlton Comics ' Strange Suspense Stories 72 (October 1964) by Dick Giordano which depicted an artist who was worn out emotionally after completing a painting . However , only the original directly references the comic strip . Although the Brushstrokes series had a brief timespan , the motif served as a theme in Lichtenstein 's works for the final 32 years of his career .

In the 1960 Lichtenstein characterized his inspiration as follows : " Although I had played with this idea before , it started with a comic book image of a mad artist crossing out , with a large brushstroke ' X , ' the face of a friend that was haunting him Then I went on to do paintings of brushstroke alone . I was very interested in characterizing or caricaturing a brushstroke ... " He has also described this series as follows : " [I] t 's taking something that originally was suppose to mean immediacy and I 'm tediously drawing something that looks like a brushstroke ... I want it to look as though it were painstaking . " In the 1990s , he described his inspiration in more artistic terms

It [the Brushstroke] was the way of portraying this romantic and bravura symbol in its opposite style , classicism . The Brushstroke plays a big part in the history of art . Brushstroke almost means painting or art . I did isolated Brushstrokes in 1965 and used cartoon brushstrokes to depict subject matters in the 1980s . I also did Brushstroke sculptures in bronze and wood to make them more palpable the Brushstroke , it is just an idea to start with , and painting it makes it more concrete , but when you do it in bronze sculpture , it becomes real and has weight and is absurd , contradictory and funny .

Lichtenstein has also described the effect of depicting a single artificial brushstroke sculpturally with

hundreds of small brushstrokes : " My recent sculpture of a Brushstroke is an attempt to give strong form to something that is a momentary occurrence , to solidify something ephemeral , to make it concrete . "

In 1981 , Lichtenstein return to the brushstroke and introduced complexity to the simple element of the painter 's brushstroke and added free hand strokes to his " decoy ones " .

= = Details = =

Works in the Brushstrokes series depict brushstrokes as their subject . However , rather than present the use of the delicate artist paint brush , Lichtenstein created the strokes of the broad house @-@ painter 's brush . His works both turned a mundane household task into a planned artistic operation and made a time @-@ consuming task appear as if it were produced mechanically in an instant . The Brushstroke series paintings " ... contain the clear outline , process colors , and Benday @-@ dot screen of the comic strip , but like the landscapes , they exchew narrative in favor of reducing a subject (in this case , painting) to its most basic symbol (the brushstroke) . " The satirical element of the Brushstroke is obvious to many because it is a calculated presentation of the spontaneous gestural works of its day .

Although both the Cubists and the Futurists conveyed movement and speed within the two dimensions of a painting , it was Pollock who brought dynamic movement to the canvas in the 1950s with his form of abstract expressionism known as gestural painting in works such as Autumn Rhythm , 1950 . In Little Big Painting and subsequently even more so in Big Painting No. 6 and Yellow and Green Brushstrokes , for example , dynamic activity was a prominent feature of the series . Lichtenstein 's loops and depiction of sweeping gestures all resemble Pollock 's gestural painting . As a result of this series , Lichtenstein was able to present works to the viewing audience that resembled what they had become accustomed to seeing , however , his result is completely flat without any trace of the brushstroke or the artist 's hand . Meanwhile , the work references mechanical printing with the Ben @-@ Day dots background , which enables Lichtenstein to parody his predecessors and make a " powerful abstract composition " . The effort to make the painting appear mechanically produced by flattening the brushstroke also gives the illusion that the brushstroke is floating freely .

The works in the series are considered ironic mechanical representations of gestural techniques . They depict the brushstroke directionality beginning with the full beginning , gradual fraying and ragged ending laid out over a field of Ben @-@ Day dots . Additionally , the series is an expression of the dealings of commercial art with its remote interaction . The significance of Lichtenstein 's choice of the brushstroke as a subject is expressed by analogy : " ... the Ben @-@ Day dots are to the painting of Lichtenstein what the brushstroke is to Abstract Expressionism : an image of process . " The brushstroke remained a part of his works for the remainder of his career . He produced painted bronze sculptural versions of his brushstrokes throughout his career .

In 2001 a large show of his work from his estate entitled " Brushstrokes : Four Decades " was held in New York City at the Mitchell @-@ Innes and Nash gallery .

= = Critical response = =

According to Diane Waldman of ARTnews , the works " ... spoofed the bravura brushstroke , replete with drips , of the Abstract Expressionists . Issues of vital importance to them , such as gesture and the involvement of the whole body in the act of painting , were reduced to a single brushstroke . " She interprets this as a criticism of the corruption of Abstract Expressionism by uncreative painters . Though not described as abstract art , the brushstrokes forms are considered to be invented . The series was part of Lichtenstein 's 1960s slant towards reductive , economical work .

The works in this series are regarded as having " dense abstract complexity " to blur the clarity of his earlier references while emphasizing " ... the bravura of the brushstroke ... " rather than the subject that it is used to depict . The use of the artist 's paintbrush to create enormous renditions of house @-@ painter brushstrokes in the quasi @-@ mechanical Lichtenstein style is a commentary

on his own painting actions . The series was a response to the Pop Art critics of the day , who were mostly abstract expressionist . He expropriated the most basic element of expressionism in his own style both in painting and in sculpture . The series of Brushstroke canvases is regarded as a group of works that parody gestural painting by commenting on the normal individual relationship between the artist and his tools .