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Imagem: Roy Lichtenstein na 32ª Bienal de Veneza, 1964, fonte: <http://www.labiennale.org/en/photocenter/biennale2.html?back=true>

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Abstract

Taking on Roy Lichtenstein's European rise to fame, my paper describes how his work arrived in Western Europe during the 1963 Crisis of Abstract, when Europeans were turning their attention to Realism anew. It then explains that they appreciated his engagement with contemporary reality. Moreover, Lichtenstein's popular imagery, colorful palette, and mechanized style appealed to them as a reflection of US-American civilization, whose influence was then at its pinnacle in Europe. They regarded him as a modern, American Courbet. His success was thus less "the triumph of American art" than the triumph of a European idea of the United States.

Keywords

Roy Lichtenstein; Pop Art; American Art; Realism; Cultural Transfers.

Resumo

Partindo do sucesso de Roy Lichtenstein na Europa, meu artigo descreve como seu trabalho chegou na Europa ocidental durante a crise da abstração em 1963 (*Crisis of Abstract*), quando os europeus estavam voltando sua atenção para um novo Realismo. O artigo demonstra que eles apreciaram o engajamento do artista com a realidade contemporânea. Ademais, as imagens populares de Lichtenstein, sua paleta colorida e seu estilo mecanizado pareceram-lhes um reflexo da civilização americana, cuja influência estava em seu ápice na Europa. Eles o viram como um Courbet moderno e americano. Seu sucesso foi portanto menos "o triunfo da arte americana" do que o triunfo de uma ideia europeia sobre os Estados Unidos.

Palavras-chave

Roy Lichtenstein; Arte Popular; Arte Americana; Realismo; Transferência Cultural.

At the 1966 Venice Biennale, many expected that the Grand Prize of Painting would go to Roy Lichtenstein, to the great dismay of those who felt that this prestigious award should not go to an artist who had been completely unknown three years before. Since his first European show, a Pop exhibition at the Galerie Sonnabend in May 1963, Lichtenstein had taken Western Europe by storm: his works had been featured in more than fifty shows and were already hanging in several private and public collections. In Venice all of the attention was focused on him and very few visitors ventured into the other rooms of the American pavilion where Ellsworth Kelly, Helen Frankenthaler, and Jules Olitski exhibited. Lichtenstein was on the cover of *Art and Artists*, *Artforum*, and *Metro*, and *Art International* devoted a long article to his work. The media wagers that he would receive the award were such that Henry Geldzahler, the curator of the American pavilion, publicly defended himself against the accusation that he was conspiring with Castelli and the Sonnabends to guarantee Lichtenstein's victory. At a press conference, he vociferously denounced the prize system as obsolete, declaring: "No committee or jury, no matter how constituted, can proclaim aesthetic quality. The prize and jury system must be abandoned" (Kramer, 1966). The jury, which was still deliberating, expectedly decided not to grant the Grand Prize of Painting to the artist Geldzahler had selected. However the jury did not recognize Lucio Fontana either, the other favorite for the prize, but rather Julio Le Parc, who had been Fontana's student in Buenos Aires. Le Parc was five years younger than Lichtenstein and even more unconventional in his artistic practice. Following a trend begun in 1964, the jury did not want to honor an artist at the end of his career but wished to recognize a rising star. It is thus likely that the American would have been awarded the Grand Prize of Painting if it were not for Geldzahler's comment.

Whatever happened in the deliberation room, the simple fact that Lichtenstein had been a serious contender for this prestigious award three years after his first appearance on the European scene is an indication of his swift success. Considering Lichtenstein's meteoric European rise, one may wonder why the artist became so successful so quickly. Why did Western Europeans embrace his work so enthusiastically? In order to answer those questions and better understand Lichtenstein's reception in Western Europe, this paper will first retrace and analyze the artist's European career from 1963 to 1969 and then offer some historical and cultural explanations for his blazing rise in Europe.

His success started in the fall of 1961 when Lichtenstein, who was then an art teacher at Rutgers University, brought a new series of paintings inspired by comic strips to the Castelli Gallery. Leo Castelli and his assistant Ivan Karp were both puzzled and fascinated by those paintings and decided to include them in a group show titled *An Exhibition in Progress* that opened in late September. In February 1962, they gave him a solo-show at the gallery which was a commercial and critical success. This result placed Lichtenstein at the center of a group of emerging artists who were taking New York by storm and whom the Press tentatively dubbed as Commonists or Vulgarists. In June 1962 *Life* magazine devoted a long article to the new movement. Titled "Something New Is Cooking," it informed *Life* readers that Lichtenstein's show at Castelli's had "sold out completely at prices from \$400 to \$1,200."¹ In the following months, Lichtenstein was included in many shows throughout the United States, including *The New Painting of Common Objects* at the Pasadena Art Museum in September 1962 and *The New Realists* at the Sidney Janis Gallery (the Abstract Expressionists' gallery) in November. This international confrontation between European Nouveaux Réalistes and the new Americans artists received a great deal of media attention and greatly contributed to the start of Lichtenstein's career. Throughout 1963, exhibitions succeeded at a quick pace: in March 1963 he was featured in *Six Painters and the Object*, curated by Lawrence Alloway at the Guggenheim Museum; in April 1963 his work was presented in *Popular Art* at the Nelson Gallery-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas-City, as well as *Pop Goes the Easel* at the Contemporary Art Museum of Houston, and *The Popular Image Exhibition* at the Washington Gallery of Modern Art. In July 1963 he was included in Alloway's *Six More* at the Los Angeles County Museum; in September he was in John Coplans's *Pop Art US* at the Oakland Art Museum; and in November in *Mixed Media and Pop Art* at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo. Due to this flurry of exhibitions, Lichtenstein garnered unprecedented media

attention. His name appeared regularly not only in specialized press but also in newspapers and magazines. In less than two years, he had become a household name in the United States.

In Western Europe, Lichtenstein's rise was even swifter. The first mention of his work came in March 1962 when the Swiss magazine *Art International* published Max Kozloff's essay "Pop Culture, Metaphysical Disgust, and the New Vulgarians." Dubious of the vulgar works, which he found rather uninspiring, the critic asked: "Are we supposed to regard our popular signboard culture with great fondness or insight now that we have Rosenquist?" (Kozloff, 1962: 36). Despite the adverse tone of Kozloff's review, his article was crucial in introducing these new artists to the magazine's wide international readership. It was particularly important for Lichtenstein. Although the text only briefly discussed him, his paintings visually dominated the article with four illustrations out of eight: *Emeralds* (1961), *Girl with Beach Ball* (1961), *Blam* (1962), and *The Kiss* (1962).² Additionally, *Girl with Beach Ball* was prominently featured at the beginning of the magazine in a half-page advertisement for the Castelli Gallery.

In May 1962, the Italian magazine *Metro* published an article about the realist wave that was hitting the United States and asked whether this was the end of abstract painting. The author, Bruno Alfieri, focused his discussion on Lichtenstein's "blowing up cartoons," and "huge canvases in blue, red or yellow," which were reproduced at the end of the essay on a two-page spread (Alfieri, 1962 : 4-13). In October 1962, Dore Ashton introduced the artist to West Germans in the monthly "Report from New York" which she wrote for the German art magazine *Das Kunstwerk*. She discussed an exhibition at the Mi Chou Gallery that was devoted to two periods of the Hudson River School, the 1860s and the 1960s. "But," as she noted, "their 1960 representative is only one man, Roy Lichtenstein, lately celebrated in the United States for his indifference to Art and Culture and his spellbinding fidelity to comic strips and billboards. As everyone addicted to the international art press knows by now, Lichtenstein makes large blow-ups of comic strip characters, together with balloons and text." Although Ashton disliked Lichtenstein's work, she conceded that, "its imperviousness made the show" (Ashton, 1962: 27).

In January 1963, *Art International* featured two essays in which several Lichtensteins were reproduced: Barbara Rose's "Dada Then and Now," examined the current American art scene and was illustrated with his *Woman Cleaning* (1961) and Pierre Restany's "Le Nouveau Réalisme à la Conquête de New York," which commented on Janis's *New Realists* show, featured *Roto Broil* (1961) and *The Kiss II* (1962) (Rose, 1963: 22-28; Restany, 1963: 29-36). Although the content of those articles was important, the illustrations were even more influential. While the black and white photographs washed away the *décollages* and *assemblages* of the European *Nouveaux Réalistes*, Lichtenstein's paintings maintained their visual appeal thanks to their clean graphic qualities. The German artist and dealer Konrad Fischer, for example, remembered his amazement as he came across the highly photogenic *Cleaning Woman*: "There I saw Pop art for the first time, this was a big experience for me, because it really talked to me. Above all, the works of Roy Lichtenstein and Claes Oldenburg" (*apud* Baum, 1989: 278).

In February 1963, the Italian magazine *Domus* continued spreading the news about Lichtenstein and his colleagues with two articles: Ettore Jr. Sottsass's "Dada, New Dada, New Realists" and Pierre Restany's "Le raz de marée réaliste aux USA." A review of Sidney Janis's *New Realists*, Sottsass's essay was lavishly illustrated with views of the shows, like the half page titled "Roy Lichtenstein, *Blam*, olio su tela," and photographs of the opening, including a portrait of Lichtenstein (Sottsass, 1963: 26-31). In his discussion of the new American realism, Restany identified several trends including "a realist painting in *trompe l'œil* based on the systematic enlargement of the represented object and use of industrial drawing techniques: comic strips, newspaper headlines, food cans or electric plugs, the commonplace treated in a monumental scale." Unimpressed, the French critic concluded: "I wonder if we will still be talking in two or three years of the Lichtensteins and Warhols, the comic-strip specialists" (Restany, 1963 : 34). Restany dubbed the realism of

those artists a “faux-style: le trompe l’œil populiste,” and opposed it to the “aventure de l’objet” found in the work of Claes Oldenburg, Jim Dine and George Segal. Although Restany was very critical of the trompe l’œil trend in general, he reserved his harshest criticism for Wayne Thiebaud and Tom Wessleman, only mentioning Lichtenstein once.



Figure 1: Roy Lichtenstein, *Tire*, 1961. The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

In May 1963 Western Europeans had their first opportunities to see actual paintings by Lichtenstein in Paris. Lichtenstein was first featured in *de A à Z: 31 Peintures américaines choisies par the Art Institute of Chicago* at the Centre Culturel Américain in Paris, alongside established figures such as Willem de Kooning, Adolf Gottlieb, and Robert Motherwell and emerging artists like Robert Rauschenberg, Robert Indiana, and James Rosenquist. Lichtenstein’s *La Bague* (1962) was the only Pop artwork reproduced in the catalogue, where its rigid outlines stood out among the muddy abstractions. That month, he also participated in a group show at the Sonnabend Gallery. Titled *Pop art américain* and featuring Oldenburg, Warhol, Rosenquist, Wesselman, John Chamberlain, and Lee Bontecou, it was the first European presentation of the movement. Ileana and Micheal Sonnabend had opened a Parisian gallery in the fall of 1962 to represent Leo Castelli’s artists in Western

Europe. Castelli was particularly anxious to exhibit the Pop artists over there because in New York the most enthusiastic reactions to the new style had come from Europeans, namely Duchamp, Dalí, Count Panza, and Jean Leymarie and the first client to buy a Lichtenstein had been British (Castelli, 1969). In June 1963, the Sonnabends gave Lichtenstein a solo-show, which featured among others *Eddie Diptych* (1962), *Tire* (1962; fig. 1), *Hopeless* (1963), and *I know... Brad* (1963). The Sonnabends commissioned a French critic, Alain Jouffroy, to write the essay for the catalogue so that he could convey Lichtenstein's work to the European public on their own terms.³ It was at Sonnabend's that many Europeans discovered Pop art and became infatuated with the new American style, people like Pontus Hulten, the director of the Moderna Museet of Stockholm, Wim Beeren, a curator at the Haags Gemeentemuseum, and Alfred Schmela, the gallerist from Düsseldorf.⁴ Fischer, smitten by what he saw in *Art International*, traveled to Paris with several friends, including Gerhard Richter, to learn more about these artists. At Sonnabend's they saw works on paper by Lichtenstein, Warhol and others (Baum, 1989: 278).

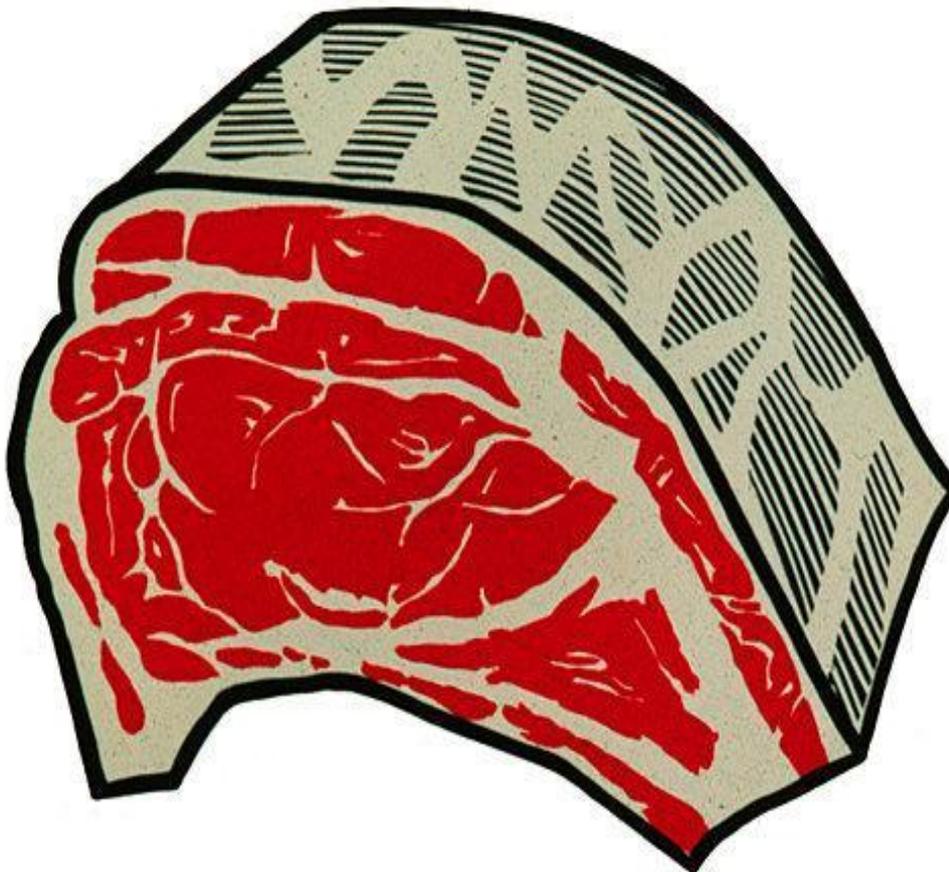


Figure 2: Roy Lichtenstein, *Standing Rib (Meat)*, 1962. The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, The Panza Collection.

In October 1963, the British public had the opportunity to see the artist's work when it was featured in *The Popular Image*, although most of the works had already been seen in Paris, since the show was more or less put together by Castelli and the Sonnabends.⁵ In February 1964, Hulten presented *Pop-kunst* at the Moderna Museet of Stockholm. The show also featured works that the Sonnabends had brought to Europe. As the catalogue indicated, some of these works had already been acquired by important European collectors: *Meat*

belonged to Count Panza (Fig. 2) and *Hot Dog* to René de Montaignu. In the following months, Lichtenstein appeared in *Violence in Contemporary Art* at the Institute of Contemporary Arts of London, and *Amerikanst Pop-kunst*, the Danish version of Hulten's show. In April 1964 he was featured in *'54-'64: Painting and Sculpture of a Decade*, an ambitious retrospective organized by the Tate Gallery. The show caused a stir in the art world when it opened, because it was regarded as relegating Parisian abstract artists in favor of American realists. In London, Lichtenstein appeared as the leader of American Pop art and more generally as *the* rising star of American art. While he was represented with five paintings, there were only two Rosenquists, one Oldenburg, one Indiana, and no Warhol or Wesselmann. Lichtenstein's representation was equal to Rauschenberg's and Jasper Johns's, and more important than Pollock's and Kline's (Wright; Fior, 1964).

From then on everything accelerated: in May 1964, *Whaam!* and other works were presented at the *XXe Salon de Mai* in Paris; in June, Hulten's show traveled to the Stedelijk Museum of Amsterdam; the same month, Bereen's *Nieuwe Realisten* opened in The Haag. The show featured three Lichtensteins including *Whaam!* and *Tire*. In September 1964, the show was presented at the Museum des 20. Jahrhunderts in Vienna, where Werner Hofmann, the director of the museum retitled it *Pop, etc.* It then traveled to the Akademie der Künste of West Berlin as *Neue Realisten & Pop Art*. In West Berlin *Whaam!* made the headlines. The exhibition was finally presented in Brussels in February 1965, where it appeared as *Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme, etc.* In its last version, Lichtenstein had three additional works, including *Hopeless* and *I Know... Brad*.⁶ However, this exhibition was not the first opportunity to see works by Lichtenstein in Belgium. In July 1964, he had been featured in *Figuratie Defiguratie*, an ambitious retrospective of figurative art organized by K.J. Geirland in Ghent. There, visitors encountered Lichtenstein in the company of Edvard Munch, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, Fernand Léger, Giacometti, and other prestigious masters.

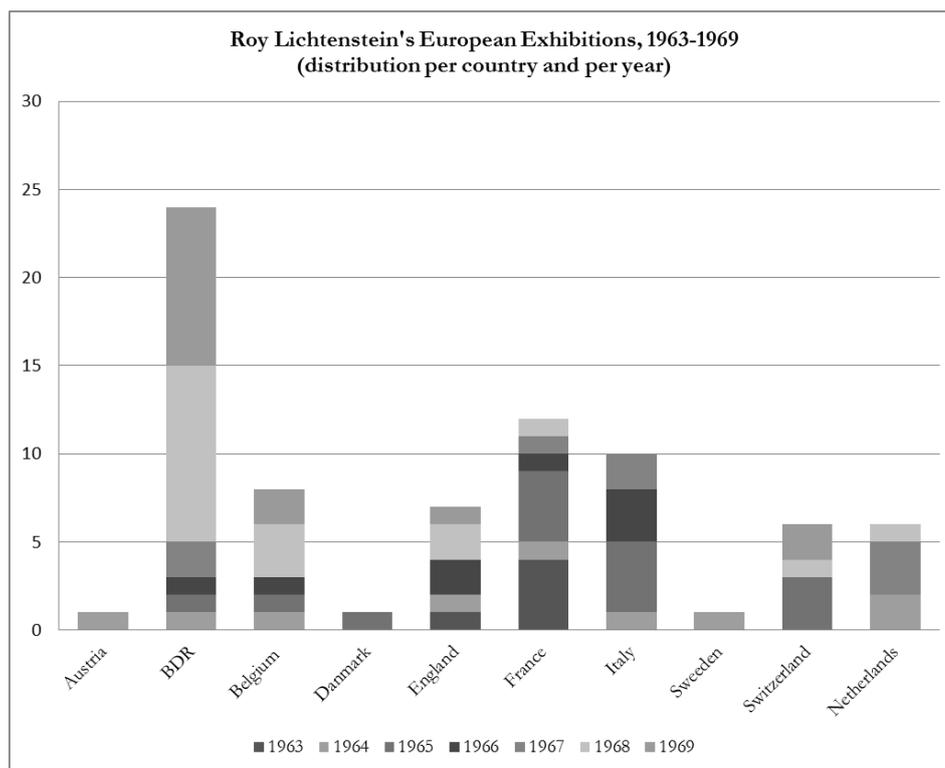


Table 1: Roy Lichtenstein's Western European exhibitions, 1963-1969
(distribution per country and per year).
Based on data collected by the author as part of the Artl@s project (www.ens.fr)

To summarize: in 1963, Lichtenstein was featured in eight shows across Western Europe and seventeen European publications; in 1964 he appeared in eleven exhibitions and twenty-two publications. In the following months, exhibitions and publications achieved swift success. In 1965, his work was presented in sixteen exhibitions and discussed in seventeen publications. In 1966, he had twelve exhibitions and thirty publications (due to the media buzz surrounding the Biennale); in 1967, he had twenty exhibitions, including a large retrospective which opened at the Stedlijk Museum in Amsterdam before touring Europe the following year, and sixteen publications; in 1968, he had twenty-three exhibitions, mostly in West Germany and Belgium, and thirty-two publications. Roy Lichtenstein, who was literally unknown in Western Europe before 1963, achieved an incredible level of fame in a mere five years (tables 1 and 2).⁷ By 1966, he could be regarded as the favorite for the Grand Prize of Painting in Venice and by 1967 he was able to have a solo-show at the Stedlijk museum. Willem de Kooning would also have his first solo-show there in 1967 but after Lichtenstein's. Compared to Pollock, Rothko and other American Abstract Expressionists, Lichtenstein was not only far more present on the European art scene in the 1960s but he reached a level of visibility that they never had.⁸ Even compared to Rauschenberg, Lichtenstein's European career was outstanding. By 1965, Lichtenstein was outdoing him in Western Europe.

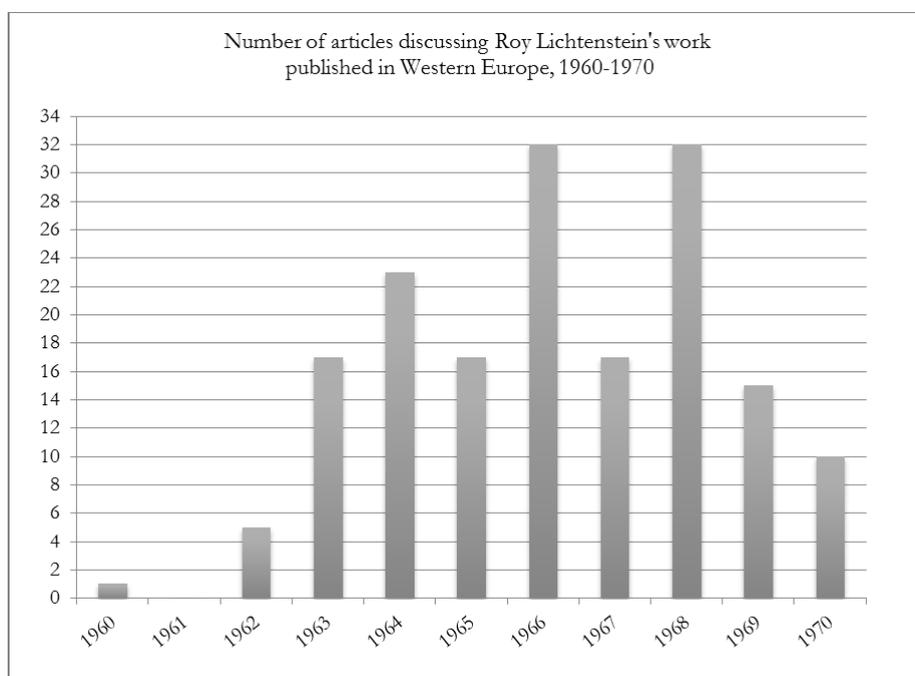


Table 2: Number of articles discussing Roy Lichtenstein's work published in Western Europe, 1960-1970. Based on data collected by the author as part of the ArtI@s project (www.ens.fr)

Not only was Lichtenstein highly visible in Western European galleries, museums, and publications, he was also well represented in major private collections. Count Panza started acquiring his work after Castelli and the Sonnabends had shown him photographs in 1962.⁹ Other early Lichtenstein collectors included Hans Beck in West Germany, Ted Power in Great Britain, and Hubert Peeters in Belgium.¹⁰ The largest European supporter of American Pop art, without a doubt, was Peter Ludwig, whose collection featured many Lichtensteins.¹¹ Karl Ströher, the other great German collector, started his own Pop collection with Lichtenstein's brushwork, and by 1970 the most expensive work he had ever bought was another of his brushwork paintings (Präger, 1991: 91-126; Bongard, 1970: 163-66). In 1970 at an auction in New York, the German dealer Rudolf Zwirner bought

Lichtenstein's *Big Painting* (1965) for \$75,000 which was "as much as has ever been paid at an auction for the work of a living American artist." (Shirey, 1970: 46)

To understand such a blazing success, it is necessary to consider the historical context of Pop art's arrival in Western Europe. When Lichtenstein and his colleagues appeared on the European art scene, the Parisian art world was undergoing a major crisis. A U.S. stock market crash in spring 1962, known as the Kennedy Slide, had disastrous consequences for the art market, especially for Parisian abstraction which had been the object of raging speculation since the late 1950s.¹² To cover their stock market losses, investors tried to trade their collections and the market was quickly flooded with paintings that did not sell. At auctions, prices fell between thirty and forty percent, which stirred panic as collectors saw the value of their collections collapse. Although the stock market eventually recovered, the effect of the crisis on the Parisian art market was longer lasting. Reporting from Paris in March 1963, Edward Roditi commented: "The art market has its rumors and panics, like any investment market. In a financially jittery season, it was widely rumored that no major Paris gallery had managed to sell, in a whole year, a single important work by Mathieu. [...] Wherever one went from Knoedler's to Dina Vierny's, the same works of Poliakoff seemed to stare at one from the walls."¹³ The Galerie de France saw a fifty percent decrease of its sales to foreign clients, while many other Parisian galleries like those of René Drouin, Jean Larcade and Lawrence Rubin had to close.¹⁴

The market crisis also coincided with a general fatigue for abstract art, which had been dominating the scene since the late 1940s. As the crisis struck, the Museum of Modern art presented *Recent Painting USA, The Figure*. This show, organized by an institution that had long championed abstract art, was interpreted by many as another proof that abstraction had passed. Several exhibitions between 1963 and 1965, including Bereen's *Nieuwe Realisten* and Geirlandt's *Figuratie Defiguratie*, attempted to take stock of figurative art's past and present. Those shows presented realism as a valid and significant artistic expression for the 1960s. Yet, the question that still lingered on everyone's mind was which realist trend they ought to embrace among all those presented.

At first Lichtenstein and the American Pop artists were only one group among others but they soon stole the spotlight. This was particularly obvious in the way Bereen's *Nieuwe Realisten* transformed as it traveled to Vienna, West Berlin, and Brussels. The original show was intended to present the long, diverse, and international history of contemporary realism but, as it traveled, its scope changed. Between the Dutch original in June 1964 and the Belgian reincarnation in February 1965, the number of artists and countries represented dropped, while the number of artworks increased. The artists over fifty years old, i.e. the older generation of figurative artists, were progressively removed from the show. In Brussels, the young American Pop artists with Lichtenstein at their head were particularly noticeable. By 1965, Pop art had become *the* realist style.¹⁵

One of the reasons for Pop artists' success was their extreme novelty. When their works arrived in Europe in the spring of 1963, art professionals and collectors were on the lookout for something to replace Parisian abstraction. In every group show, from '54-'64: *Painting and Sculpture of a Decade* to *Nieuwe Realisten* or *Figuratie Defiguratie*, they represented the newest generation. Compared to them, British Pop artists and the Nouveaux Réalistes, present on the European scene since the late 1950s, looked passé. Thanks to the combined efforts of Castelli and the Sonnabends, the newcomers enjoyed a powerful and coherent presentation that granted them fast public recognition and extensive media coverage. Exhibitions such as *The Popular Image* and *Pop-kunst*, which presented them as a cohesive group were essential since most Europeans still thought of art in terms of school.

Another reason for the success of the new American group was the European craze for everything American. As many scholars have pointed out, the Americanization of Europe did not happen in the 1950s but rather in

the 1960s. In the fifties, transatlantic exchanges were limited and fraught with suspicion and anxiety.¹⁶ Only in the early sixties, with the reconstruction of Europe, did transatlantic travels become cheaper and the exchanges improve and intensify.¹⁷ The early sixties also marked the toughening of the Cold War with the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961, and the Cuban Missile crisis in 1962. Those were also difficult years for many European countries: Adolf Eichmann's trial in 1961, as well as the trials of Auschwitz guards between 1961 and 1962, reopened the unhealed wounds of the Holocaust and greatly destabilized German youth; the Algerian War and the Putsch of the Generals in 1962 brought France to the verge civil war; in Belgium, the Congo Crisis and *Strike of the Century* further divided the country; while Italy fell into the bloody First Mafia War. In contrast, the United States of John and Jackie Kennedy represented a world of promise and progress, where man could walk on the moon. Kennedy's assassination and the wave of sympathy it triggered for the United States further intensified the trend.¹⁸ When Pop art popped in Europe, Western Europeans were both looking for an alternative to Parisian Abstraction and ready to embrace anything American.

If a renewed interest in figurative art and an attraction towards the United States can help explain the success of American Pop art in Western Europe, why did Lichtenstein emerge as their favorite? One of the reasons for the artist's success was that he benefited from the utmost support of Castelli and the Sonnabends. He had been the first of the future Pop artists to enter Castelli's gallery; because of that, the dealer sent Warhol to Eleanor Ward since he could not promote both artists. Lichtenstein was thus the first Pop artist to have a solo show in New York at Castelli's and in Paris at Sonnabend's. It was on him that the dealers focused their energy: it was his works that they used for their European advertisements, and photographs of his paintings that they gave to be written about on the movement. He was the one they placed in shows all over Europe; and it was for him that they lobbied eagerly at the 1966 Venice Biennale.¹⁹

However savvy Castelli and the Sonnabends were in their promotion of Lichtenstein, the artist could only be successful because European critics, curators, and collectors embraced him. His work appeals to them, I contend, because he was seen as both profoundly original and reassuringly traditional. On the one hand, his work was radical. Even among the Americans, he stood out. While works of Jim Dine and Oldenburg could bring to mind those of the Nouveaux Réalistes, the style and imagery of Rosenquist, Wesslman and Wharol were not too different from what Martial Raysse, Alain Jacquet, Giovanni Pistoletto or Öyvind Fahlström were doing. Lichtenstein's literal appropriation of comic books' imagery and benday dot technique was truly unique.²⁰ In the text he wrote for the 1963 exhibition, Jouffroy described their destabilizing effect: "this total change of horizon to which Lichtenstein invites us, the cruelty and coolness with which he demands from us this cleaning of the eyes through which is the only means to renew the communication between painter and viewer, all this is literally shattering. To face a Lichtenstein painting is a true trial, in the initiatory meaning of the word." Yet, despite his radical originality, Lichtenstein remained a painter whose oil on canvas displayed a high level of skill and technique. Because they preserved the artist's hand and craft, his paintings could still be recognized as traditional works of art,²¹ unlike Warhol's silk-screens which were slower to take off in Europe.²² Additionally, the fact that he was an art professor at a university, instead of an art director or billboard painter, granted professional quality and seriousness to his whimsical compositions. For the European art professional and collectors who had been supporting abstract paintings, it was easier to recognize Lichtenstein as a great artist compared to most of his colleagues.

It was also all the easier because Western Europeans saw his work as part of the long realist tradition. In the texts published in Europe in the early 1960s, American Pop art was commonly compared to nineteenth century realism and Lichtenstein to Gustave Courbet.²³ Writing for *Metro* in April 1963, Robert Rosenblum used this comparison to present him to the European public:

Lichtenstein's position may be compared to Courbet's. To the French master of the 1850s, both sides of the Ingres-Delacroix coin presented an artificial idealism of style and

subject which he combatted not only by the intrusion of vulgar content – whether toiling workers or sweating whores – but also by the adaptation of vulgar style, particularly popular prints, images d'Epinal, whose stiff composition and childlike drawing offered an earthy antidote to the weakening stylistic of the Romantic and Neoclassic modes. In the same way, Lichtenstein embraces not only the content, but also the style, of popular imagery in mid-twentieth-century America as a means of invigorating the moribund mannerisms of abstract painting. It is revealing that negative criticism of his art has generally been paraphrased in the same terms as negative criticism of Courbet's art – the subjects are considered too ridiculously ugly, the style to preposterously coarse for art (Rosenblum, 1963: 39).

By breaking free from the escapism of Parisian abstraction and confronting comic book conventions and style, Lichtenstein was following Courbet's footsteps and offering viewers a true representation of the world in which they lived.

Peter Ludwig enjoyed Pop art because it did not shy away from the reality of the modern world as abstract art had done: "for the first time in our century," he said, "art represents and acknowledges industrial society as an important reality. . . . My admiration for Pop art stems from the fact that it does stand up to the realities of this life and does not retreat from them" (Tuchman, 1976: 63). Alfieri agreed: "Lichtenstein literally follows the conventional optical data offered by modern society (a fact wrongly overlooked by a great many proponents of abstract painting, who are far too closed up in their ivory tower)." (Alfieri, 1962 : 6). Hubert Peeters concurred: "They did not work without belonging to their own days. And at that point they become prophets because they understood before you and me that the car, the poster, the tin were the landscape, the still-life and the symbol of this generation." (Peeters, 1972: 20). Describing this new generation, Peeters added: "Has there been one generation more deeply confronted with progress and renewal than ours that saw the appearance of the jet and the walk on the moon." (*Ibid.*: 14) Werner Hofmann, who wrote the essays for both *Pop, etc.* and *Neue Realisten & Pop Art*, did not personally enjoy Pop art, but still wanted to discuss it because he saw it as a symptom of the decadence of modern consumer society. As such, it was similar to the great nineteenth century Realist works of which he was a specialist (Hofmann, 1964).

For the Western Europeans, Lichtenstein was not just a modern Courbet; he was a modern American Courbet. The society he described was American civilization, and the texts that accompanied their European presentation, be they by Robert Rosenblum or Michael Sonnabend, stressed their Americanness (Rosenblum, 1963: 38-45). Lichtenstein's casual imagery, colorful palette, and mechanized style appealed to the European public as a reflection of the United States, which they regarded as the country of technique, efficiency, hygiene and comfort. Jouffroy claimed, for instance that: "Lichtenstein confronts us with the mechanical reality of all visual expression, while referring to the artifices of an inner life fully submitted to the standard conventions of communication." (Jouffroy, 1963). Europeans enjoyed his work because it matched what they knew of the United States through comic books and Hollywood movies. His preprogrammed form and stereotypical content were exactly what they expected of American art and had not found in Abstract Expressionism.²⁴

For all those reasons, Lichtenstein was enthusiastically embraced on the Old Continent. Among all the American artists who appeared on the European art scene after the Second World War, he was unquestionably the one whose success was the swiftest and most striking. Yet, as is generally the case in cultural transfers, Lichtenstein's reception was less a matter of what he brought to the European public than an expression of all the expectations and beliefs they transferred onto his work. Ultimately one could thus argue that Lichtenstein's European success was less the triumph of American art than the triumph of a European idea of American art.

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¹ "Something New Is Cooking," *Life Magazine*, June 15 1962, 120.

² Kozloff pays little attention to Lichtenstein because he considers him a charmer, while he chiefly criticizes the New Vulgarians for their over reliance on repulsive imagery.

³ Michel Bourel, "Les galeries d'Ileana Sonnabend," in *"Collection Sonnabend" - 25 années de choix et d'activités d'Ileana et Michael Sonnabend* (Bordeaux: Capc, Musée d'art contemporain, 1988).

⁴ On Europeans discovering Pop art at the Sonnabend Gallery, see: Hayden Herrera, "Postwar American Art in Holland," in *Views from Abroad - European Perspectives on American Art 1*, ed. Rudolf Herman Fuchs (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1995), 38; Stella Baum, "Ursula Schmela über Alfred Schmela," *Kunstforum International* 104 (November-December, 1989): 232.

⁵ In a letter to Panza di Biumo, Ileana Sonnabend talks about the show she and Castelli are organizing in London. Giuseppe Panza di Biumo, "Giuseppe Panza Papers, 1956-1990," (Los Angeles: The Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities Special Collections and Visual Resources, 940004).

⁶ Although the catalogue lists five works, it includes a reproduction of *I know... Brad*, which is not listed on the catalogue. Jean Dyrpréau, ed. *Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme, etc.* (Brussels Palais des Beaux-Arts, 1965).

⁷ Data for this project was collected as part of the Artl@s Project, see: www.artlas.ens.fr

⁸ For a comparative reception of American Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art in Europe, see Catherine Dossin, "To Drip or to Pop? The European Triumph of American Art," *The Artl@s Bulletin* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 79-103.

⁹ Giuseppe Panza di Biumo, *Giuseppe Panza: Memories of a Collector*, trans. Michael Haggerty (New York: Abbeville Press, 2007), 95, 101, 10-17; *ibid.*

¹⁰ J. Cladders, ed. *Pop Sammlung Beck* (Düsseldorf: Rheinland Verlag, 1970); Jennifer Mundy, "The Challenge of Post-War Art: The Collection of Ted Power," in *Brancusi to Beuys: Works from the Ted Power Collection* (London: Tate Gallery, 1996); Hubert Peeters, *Everybody knows: Sammlung Dr. Hubert and Marie-Thérèse Peeters, Brügge* (Münster: Landesmuseum Münster, 1972).

¹¹ On Ludwig's collection, see Rainer Speck, *Peter Ludwig Sammler* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1986).

¹² For an analysis of these events and their consequences on the art world, see chapter 5 in Catherine Dossin, *The Rise and Fall of American Art, 1940s-1980s: A Geopolitics of Western Art Worlds* (New York: Routledge/Ashgate, 2015).

¹³ Edouard Roditi, "A Market Report," *Arts Magazine*, September 1963, 33. The European press also reported on the bleak situation of the Parisian art market. See for instance: Gottfried Selb, "Paris - Die Karten werden neu gemischt," *Die Zeit* (March, 15 1963), <http://www.zeit.de/1963/11/paris-die-karten-werden-neu-gemischt>.

¹⁴ For more on the consequences of the crisis on the Parisian art market see Raymonde Moulin, *Le Marché de la peinture en France* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1967), 469-75. Julie Verlaine, "La tradition de l'avant-garde. Les galeries d'art contemporain à Paris, de la Libération à la fin des années 1960" (Doctorat d'histoire, Université Paris I, 2008), 439-42.

¹⁵ For more information on those exhibitions, Catherine Dossin, "Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme, etc. Comment Paris perdit le pouvoir de nommer les nouvelles tendances," in *Le nom de l'art*, ed. Vanessa Theodoropoulou and Katia Schneller (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2013), 49-62.

¹⁶ See for instance: Hanna Schissler, ed. *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949-1968* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press 2001); Alexis Schildt, "Americanization," in *The United States and Germany in the era of the Cold War, 1945-1990: a Handbook. Volume 1, 1945-1968*, ed. Detlef Junker (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

¹⁷ The first transatlantic passenger jet service appeared in October 1958. In the 1960s, the price of airfares dropped and allowed more people to travel to the United States.

¹⁸ For a detailed study of the reception of Pop art in West Germany, see Catherine Dossin, "Pop begeistert: American Pop art and the German People," *American Art* 25, no. 1 (Fall 2011): 100-11.

¹⁹ On the dealers' activities, see: Castelli, "Interviews Conducted by Paul Cummings, 1969, 1971 and 1973.," Michel Bourel, "Les galeries d'Ileana Sonnabend," in *Collection Sonnabend - 25 années de choix et d'activités d'Ileana et Michael Sonnabend* (Bordeaux: Capc, Musée d'art contemporain, 1988).

²⁰ Jacquet, like Sigmar Polke, would later use the dots but they used photographs as their model.

²¹ On this question see Michael Eric Lobel, "Image duplicator: Roy Lichtenstein and the emergence of Pop Art" (Ph.D., Yale University, 1999).

²² Warhol's slower European success might also be explained by his decision to show his Death series for his first solo-show at Sonnabend's. When he came back with his *Flowers* and *Cows* series, he was much better received. In addition, as the Europeans' attitude towards the United States became more critical in the late 1960s, Warhol's cynicism drew critics' and intellectuals' attention

²³ Alfieri, "USA: Verso la fine della pittura a stratta?."; Robert Rosenblum, "La rivolta 'realista' Americana: Lichtenstein," *Metro* April 1963; Robert Rosenblum, *Roy Lichtenstein* (Paris: Galerie Ileana Sonnabend, 1963); Dana Adams Schmidt, "Lichtenstein 'Whaams' London With Retrospective at the Tate," *The New York Times*, January 28 1968; Restany, "Le raz de marée réaliste aux USA."

²⁴ On the un-Americanness of Abstract expressionism, see for instance: F. C. Legrand, "La nouvelle peinture americaine," *Quadrum*, no. 6 (1959): 174-75.

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