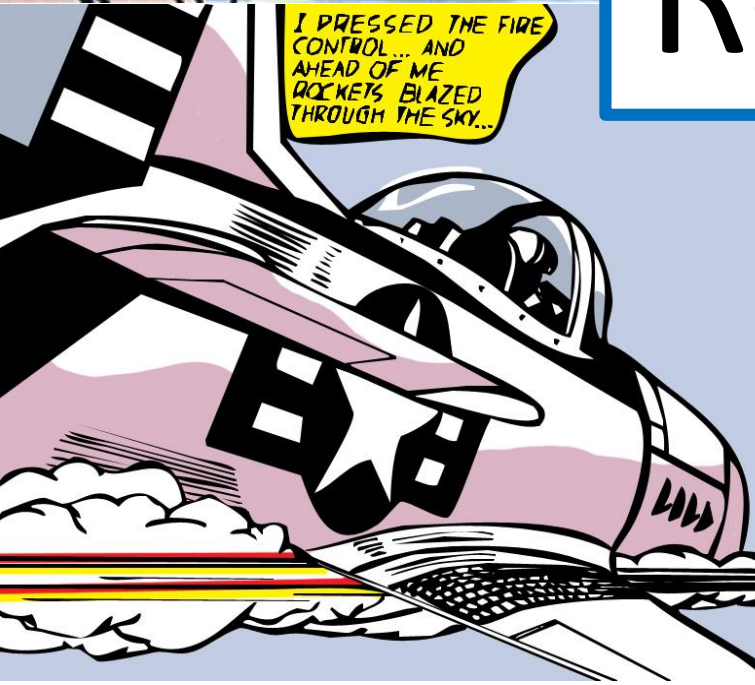# Overview

- American artist (1923-1997) died aged 74

- One of the leading artists of the American Pop Art Movement

- Inspired by advertisements and comic strips and popular American culture

- In 1943 he was drafted and sent to Europ for WW2

- He returned from the war and completed and undergrad and master's degree in Fine Art

- By the late 60s he turned to famous artists such as Matisse and Picasso for inspiration

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6jowA-pH-Y8
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f1s-nAijk_g
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6qr7cdpGDRo

Portraiture

Drowning Girl

1963

Oil Paint and Acrylic Paint on Canvas

171.6 cm x 169.5 cm

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-EsP26Pj0kk

Composition

The **focal point** is...........................
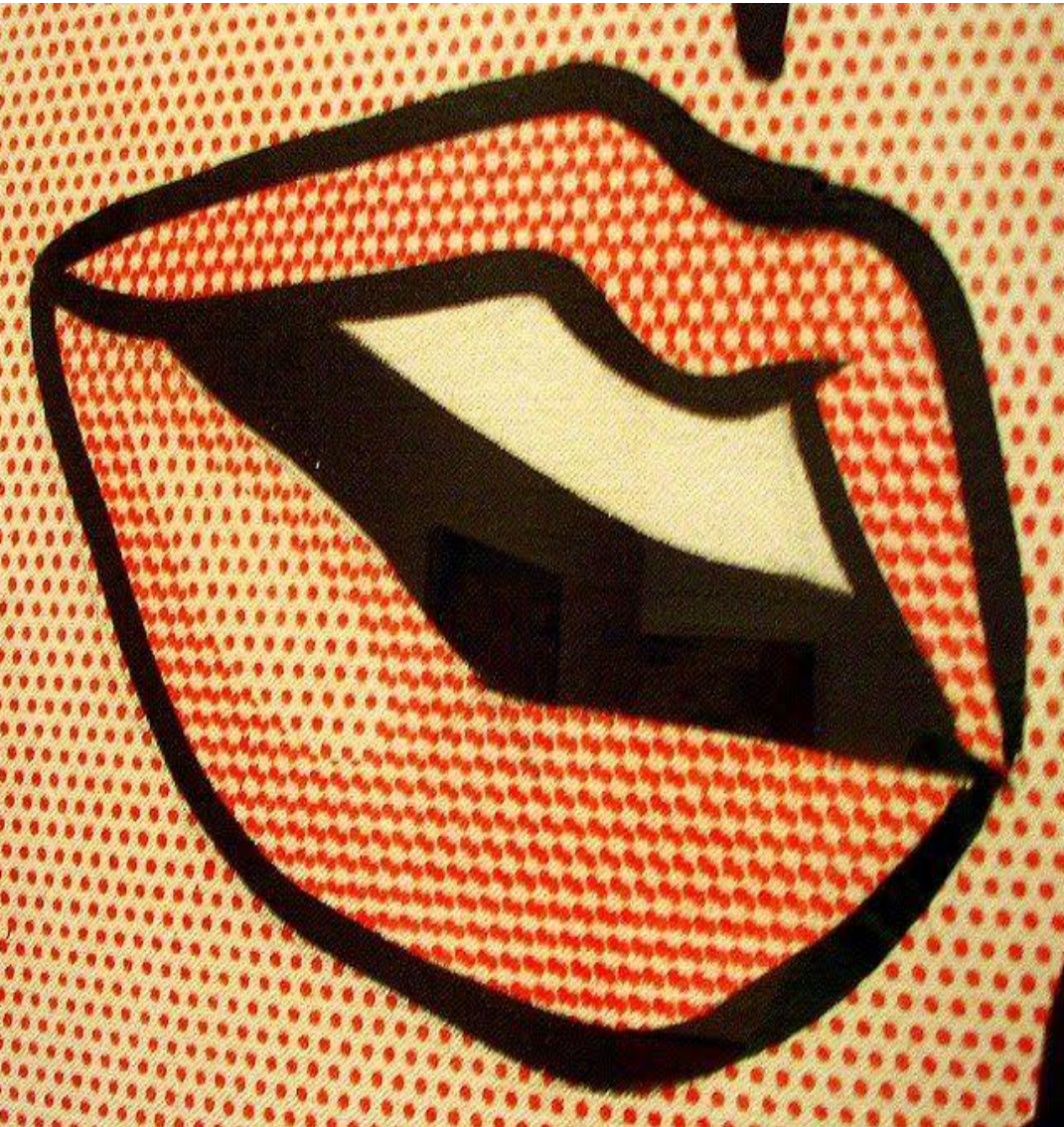
Lichtenstein creates a **circular composition.** The waves surround the woman like a whirlpool **drawing our eyes around the image and into the centre of her face.** This supports the idea that she is drowning and being engulfed by the sea.

Media Handling/Techniques

To make his painting appear mechanically produced, Lichtenstein painstakingly imitated the look of commercially printed images such as the comics he took most his inspiration from.

Working by hand, he first copied the source image, altering its **composition** as he liked. He then projected and traced his **sketch** onto a **canvas**, outlining its **figures** and **forms** in black and filling in the images with **primary colors** or with **patterns** of repeating dots that replicated the **Ben-Day dots** commonly used in mass-printing processes.

He painted the Benday dots by hand, that were historically used in newspapers and other forms of mechanical reproduction, to give the illusion of shading in illustrations. Here they are visible as the red spots filling the girl's skin and lips and in the grayish/blue tones of the water.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-srlQ6fKEPM

Colour

Lichtenstein applies a **simplistic colour palette** in most of his works, usually just **primary colours and black and white.** He does this to mimic mass-produced images and mechanical printing techniques, used especially comic strips.

In 'Drowning Girl' Lichtenstein only uses **blue, red, black and white** to create a **simplistic yet bold image.** He applies s**trong, opaque, block blue** to her hair that **frames and draws our attention to the girl's face.**

He creates a **paler blue/grey** in the waves by using a technique called **ben-day dots**. He applies small, even blue dots on the white background that when viewed from a distance give the impression of a block pastel blue.

Lichtenstein also uses this technique for the girl's skin and lips. **Applying red ben-day dots** gives the impression of a softer flesh colours when viewed from a distance. The dots are placed closer together on her lips to create slightly stronger colour.

Warm colours are confined to the **centre of the painting** through skin tone and the pink of her lips that immediately **draws our eyes to her face**.

Tone

There is **very little tone** in this painting creating a **very flat and 2d image**. Lichtenstein purposefully does this to make it look like a mass-produced comic strip.

His application of ben-day dots is used to give the impression of tone. The dots are placed closer together to show darker tone and further apart to suggest highlights.

This **simplified application of tone** is seen on the lips where we can see a **highlight on the left side of her lip** that suggests **light source**.

Texture

Lichtenstein **applies his paint smoothly and seamlessly** in the block areas of blue and black creating **flat areas** with **no implied texture**, again, to replicate comic strip imagery.

The only **slight suggestion of texture** is in the **hair and waves.** Lichtenstein applies **bold wavy lines** to suggest the girl's **sleek, flowing hair and the ripples in the waves**. However, again, the lines are **bold and simplified** to add to the **comic strip aesthetic**.

Line

Lichtenstein applies a **bold black outline** around all the imagery in the painting. This creates an **unrealistic and stylised image**. He does this to make his painting look like a **mass-produced comic strip.**

The use of **sweeping, curved lines** in the waves and her hair create a **swirling, spiraling movement** in the painting that supports the idea she is being pulled under by the current and draws our eyes around the image in a circular movement.

Shape/Form

SHAPE- The shapes of the waves surrounding the girl are **organic and irregular** adding a slight **softness** to the bold, harsh image.

FORM- Lichtenstein **does not enhance the form** of the imagery as he applies next to **no tone** making the image incredibly **flat and 2D**. The only slight suggestion of form is on the girl's lips where he has applied **an oval highlight** suggesting the **round form of her lips.**

Pattern

The **repeated** swirling, spiralling shapes of the waves create an **organic pattern** surrounding and swallowing the girl.

The soft foaming shapes on the tips of the waves **mirror** the stylised shapes of the girl's tears **creating repetition** in the painting.

An **irregular pattern** is created in the speech bubble at the top of the image **through the lettering**. This adds an additional and unusual element of interest to the painting that enhances the composition.

Scale

This is a **large-scale** painting at **171.6 cm x 169.5 cm.** The large size of the painting combined with a realtively simple composition and areas of block colour and thick black outlines creates a **striking image and strong visual impact.**

The **subject matter** in this painting is **accurately proportioned** which means the shape of the girl's face and hand is appears **realistic. However, the simplified cartoon style does not create a realistic image overall.**

Style

This piece is in the style of **POP ART. Artists of the pop art movement focused on creating images inspired by popular culture of the time, often simplifying and stylising the images to create a cartoon-like aesthetic.**

Lichtenstein based many of his early paintings on imagery he found in **comic books**. The source for this work is *Run for Love!* published by DC Comics in 1962, the cover of which the artist significantly altered to arrive at the finished composition. However, by applying areas of **block colour, thick black outlines and Ben-Day dots** his painting is inkeeping with the **style of comic strips** and mass-produced images.

Subject Matter/Imagery

Many of Lichtenstein's early paintings were taken from imagery he found in comic books. The **subject matter in 'Drowning Girl'** was taken from the comic book **'Run for Love'** that was published by DC comics. The subject matter Lichtenstein paints is a **section from the front cover.** He has cropped out the majority of the image to **focus purely on the girl.** Lichtenstein has **further simplified and stylised** the subject matter to create a **very modern, slick piece.**

Cropping down the image to purely that of the girl being engulfed by the waves and **scaling up** the image to a large size creates a **highly dramatic** image with **strong visual impact.**

Additionally, it adds **mystery to the piece** as the girl has been **removed from the wider context of the story**. So the image provokes questions: Where is she? How has she ended up in the situation? Who is Brad? Why is she so angry with Brad that she would rather drown than have him save her?!

Interestingly, the boyfriend is named Mal in the comic series. **Lichtenstein changed the name to Brad as he believed it to sound more 'heroic' and dramatic- inkeeping with pop culture.**

Mood & Atmosphere

> I DON'T CARE! I'D RATHER SINK -- THAN CALL BRAD FOR HELP!

Lichtenstein was inspired by the **melodramatic and heightened emotions** often conveyed in comic books. This can be seen in 'Drowning Girl' with the **posed, powting expression** on the girl's face and and the dramatic positioning of her hand infront of her face like a 'damsel in distress'.

Although this could be percieved is a dark and distressing image due to the fact the girl may be drowning it appears **light-hearted and humerous** due to the **stylised aesthetic** and, in particular, the **speech bubble** at the top that states she would rather drown than have her boyfriend save her which is completely **dramatic and over the top!**