**POP! Art**

*Drawing from various forms of popular culture such as comic books, advertisements, movies and television, artists in this style used everyday objects to create witty and often humorous pieces that came to be known as Pop Art.*

Pop art burst onto the scene in the early 1960’s as a reaction to the individual emotionalism of **Abstract Expressionism**. This style of art commented on the artist’s frustration with the art establishment, and the strong power of commercial culture in society. By using everyday objects in their work, they portrayed the notion of popular culture being cheap, fleeting and accessible to all.

**Characteristics:**
- Referenced aspects of popular culture, such as comic strips, hence the name “Pop” art
- Main subject matter was everyday objects, such as soup cans
- Focused on the mass materialistic and consumerist culture
- Hard edges, almost no brush strokes, and extremely careful preparation
- Often incorporated a sense of wit, satire and humour
- Some artists used commercial printing methods such as silk-screening and collages, instead of the traditional painting method

**Robert Rauschenberg** (b. 1925)

"I only consider myself successful... when I do something that resembles the lack of order I sense" -- Rauschenberg

Rauschenberg acted as the bridge between Abstract Expressionism and Pop Art

**Characteristics:**
- Created "Combine Paintings": his work combines various media, such as silk screens, found objects and found images with abstract painting to create art that stimulates the senses
- Rauschenberg purposely creates chaotic arrangements of everyday objects for the viewer to personally interpret
- One person may analyze his work differently from another, and his art challenges the viewer to see these ordinary things in a new light
- Also challenged distinction between “art objects” and “everyday objects”

**Canyon, 1959**

- “Combined Painting” using oil, pencil, paper, metal, photographs, fabric, wood, mirrors, pillows among other found objects
- Images used are that of family photographs (boy with upraised arm is Rauschenberg’s son), public imagery (statue of liberty) political posters, and objects from the trash
- The formal disarray challenges the viewer to interpret it in their own way
- His disorderly compositions relate to the chaos and unpredictability of modern urban experience, also displayed in his work *Rebus, 19something*

**First Landing Jump, 1961**

- He makes the viewer look at ordinary things in a different context, such as a car tire in a painting instead of on a car.
Claes Oldenburg (b. 1929) born in Sweden, grew up in the US
- Swedish sculptor, best known for creating sculptures of everyday objects, scaled to enormous sizes
- Also popularized soft sculptures, a type of sculpture made using materials that are flexible and adaptable, such as cloth, foam, rubber, etc.
- Took a more critical and humorous attitude toward his subjects by reanimating dull, everyday culture

**Shoestring Potatoes Spilling from a Bag, 1966**
- Depicts an overturned paper bag, spilling french fries onto the floor
- An example of one of Oldenburg’s soft sculptures
- Made from painted canvas sewed together and stuffed with a type of soft foam
- Enlarged to nearly 10 feet high
- Comment on our consumer based culture, specifically fast food

**Lipstick (Ascending) on Caterpillar Tracks, 1969**
(Caterpillar tracks - large belts used in place of wheels on the base of vehicles such as army tanks)
- Sculpture of a giant lipstick tube on caterpillar tracks, resembling a missile grounded in a tank
- The missile is in the form of a feminine cosmetic with erotic overtones, playing on the themes of love and war
- The sculpture was installed on Yale University campus and was later removed because of its offensive irreverent humour

Jasper Johns (b. 1930)
- Closely associated with Rauschenberg and incorporates Abstract Expressionist techniques in his art, such as brushstrokes.
- Unlike Rauschenberg’s chaotic compositions, Johns’ work is controlled and organized
- He uses common subject matter, for example flags or numbers, that are often looked at but seldom studied in depth
- Johns’ intends the viewer to take a deeper view into the things they often overlook
- Uses collage materials partially buried beneath the thick encaustic paint.

**Target with Four Faces, 1955**
Commentary on difference between representation and abstraction:
Target: is representational but is still flat like an abstract.
Psychological dimension: use of thick encaustic over collage materials such as newspapers provides Johns with a way to literally cover certain personal anxieties and fears → lower left corner is a lone man in a trench coat + the partial faces at the top = Johns’ sense of loneliness and emptiness (he was gay in a homophobic era).

**Numbers in Color, 1959**
- Uses complimentary colours of blue and orange to create push-pull tension
- Overall effect is texture and pattern but the numbers are the subject matter