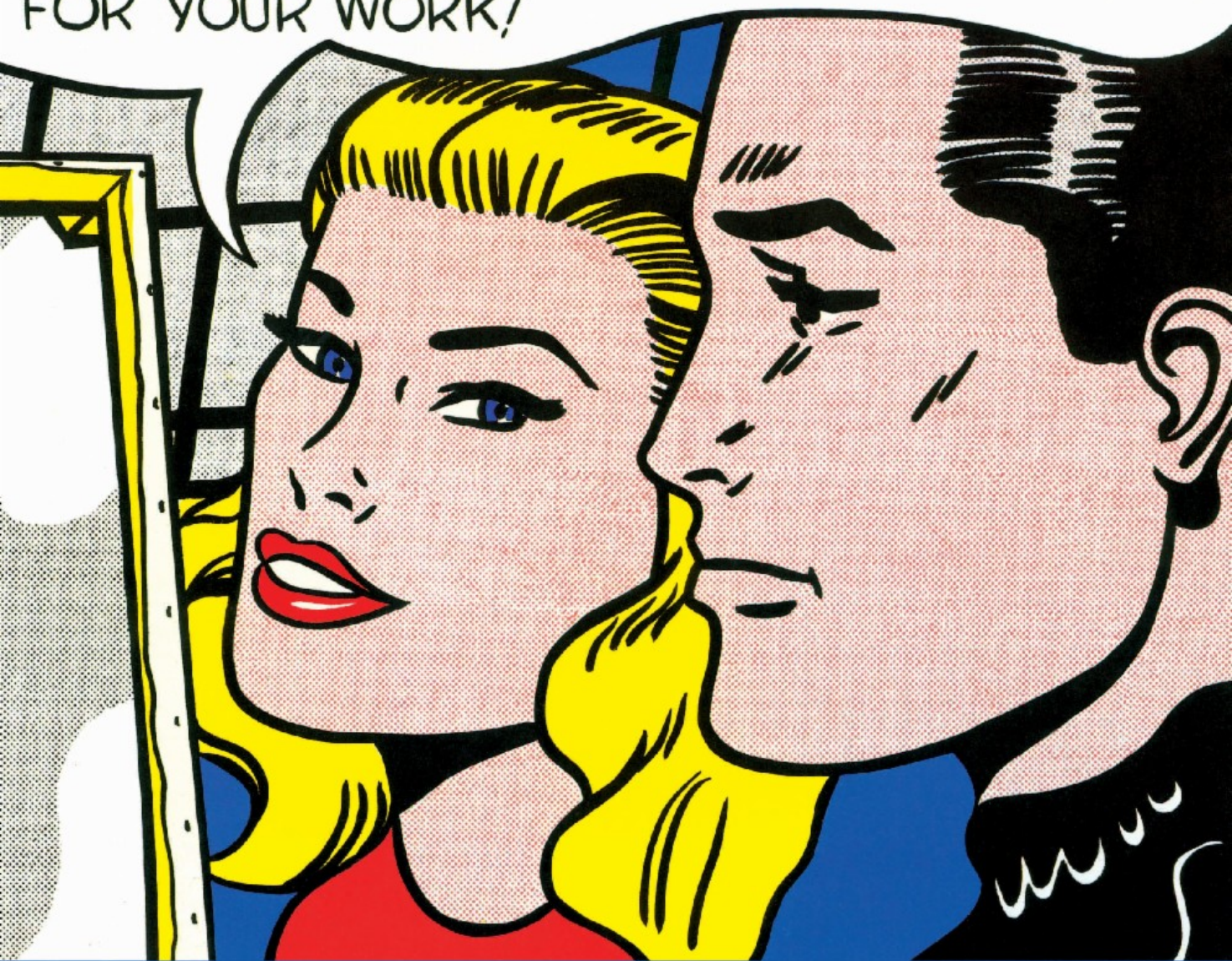


WHY, BRAD DARLING, THIS PAINTING IS A
MASTERPIECE! MY, SOON YOU'LL
HAVE ALL OF NEW YORK CLAMORING
FOR YOUR WORK!



POP ART

50 WORKS OF ART YOU SHOULD KNOW

MARCEL DUCHAMP

Fountain

1917

In 2004, *Fountain* was voted the most influential work of the twentieth century by a panel of five hundred art specialists. Without Duchamp's readymades—such found objects as this urinal, which he designated as art from 1913 onwards—Pop Art never would have existed. This might seem surprising, because Pop Art appears to trumpet surface over substance, but beneath Pop's glossiest manifestations lie strategic moves that Duchamp made first.

Duchamp's readymades undermined the elitism of "high" art by insisting that whatever the artist said was art became art. Art could be anything, even the urinal that he titled *Fountain*, tilted ninety degrees, and submitted to a prestigious New York art show in 1917—for which he was a judge—under the pseudonym of R. Mutt. Pronounced in German, this name sounds like *armut*, meaning poverty—an ironic contrast to the status and wealth of the show's patrons. Duchamp said the initial "R" stood for Richard, which, in French slang, means "moneybags."

Rejected by the hanging committee, *Fountain* found its way to Stieglitz's photography studio. Duchamp publically acknowledged the work, and since he

was already a famous figure, *Fountain* was then published worldwide, becoming globally famous. However, Duchamp, in a letter to his sister, credited an unnamed female collaborator with the whole idea, denying his authorship.

Fountain exposed and displaced both the art world's structures of taste and patronage and its heroics of authorship and originality. Duchamp substituted low—even vulgar and funny—for high. This set the tone for three important strategies of Pop Art: the appropriation of the commonplace; the Dada strategy of reifying ordinary objects as art by fiat of artistic intention; and the use of impersonal methods of production that bypassed the artist's hand and personality to undercut the cult of genius. The strategies of New York Pop Art progenitors Rauschenberg and Johns owed much to the Dada art movement and Duchamp in particular. Warhol, too, during his art school years, identified with Duchamp. Perhaps the first exhibition from which Warhol was rejected was when he submitted a "self-portrait" of Duchamp picking his nose to a senior exhibition at Carnegie Tech—the only juror to defend the work was George Grosz, who had personal links to Dada.



Marcel Duchamp, **Fountain**, 1917,
porcelain urinal, 24 x 18.9 x 14.1 in. (61 x 48 x 36 cm),
Moderna Museet, Stockholm

EDUARDO PAOLOZZI**I was a Rich Man's Plaything**

1947

Eduardo Paolozzi pioneered Pop Art in Britain—but in 1947, when Paolozzi pasted the sound-word “POP!” into this collage, the concept of Pop Art did not exist yet. In its combination of several elements that would later be recognized as key concerns in Pop Art—American imagery, advertising copy, cartoon conventions, consumer items, vulgar popular products, and sensational sexuality—this collage is hailed as the first work of Pop Art.

In August 1952, Paolozzi was a founding member of the Independent Group (IG), which focused British artists, designers, and intellectuals on the implications of popular culture and on the power that mass media and mass marketing have to shape aspirations and desire. The IG met informally at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in London. Founding members included critics Toni del Renzio and Reyner Banham, architects Alison and Peter Smithson, Richard Hamilton, and other artists and designers. Critic Lawrence Alloway and graphic designer John McHale—who both claimed to have first used the term Pop Art—and musician Frank Cordell and painter Magda Cordell, his wife, joined in 1953. Their

interdisciplinary topics of discussion included the mass-media theories of Marshall McLuhan, advertising, new artistic techniques, cinema, comics, trash literature, pop music, fashion, helicopter and car design, machine aesthetics, nuclear biology, and cybernetics.

In 1953, Paolozzi co-curated, with the Smithsons and others, the ICA exhibition *Parallel of Life and Art*, which focused on mass media and science and technology and their relevance to art. X-rays and enlarged reproductions of art and illustrations from magazines, encyclopedias, and science publications covered the walls and ceiling at odd angles, creating a disorienting environment: a metaphor of contemporary life.

“POP!” read with “CHERRY” in this collage evokes the slang term for “to deflower”—“to pop the cherry”—and the Coke bottle and pistol are phallic pointers. The pistol that Paolozzi pasted in front of the woman’s face implies violence; the “POP!” that shoots out signals death—it is the pop of the balloon deflating. In this Paolozzi image, men master machines, they are heroes flying high; women are low sinners, sirens of the street, playthings.

Intimate CONFESSIONS



I was a Rich Man's Plaything
Ex-Mistress
I Confess
If this be Sin
Woman of the Streets
Daughter of Sin



Real Gold



Eduardo Paolozzi, *I was a Rich Man's Plaything*, 1947, printed papers on card, 14.1 x 9.3 in. (35.9 x 23.8 cm), Tate, London

ROBERT RAUSCHENBERG

Minutiae

1954

Robert Rauschenberg's *Minutiae* is a mixed-media work, built on a wooden structure, that crosses the boundary between painting and sculpture: it steps away from the wall and into life. It incorporates ordinary found objects—pieces of balustrade and lace, a plastic-framed mirror, images—and such everyday materials as string and newspaper. Jasper Johns later named this type of work a “combine.” Choreographer Merce Cunningham commissioned *Minutiae* as a stage prop for a dance set to music by his partner John Cage. *Minutiae* is fully three-dimensional, with two rigid panels and a section of fabric curtain. Dancers can pass through its spaces, and it invites the viewer to do the same. The human scale of this work differentiates *Minutiae* from low-relief collages by earlier artists.

The mirror in the front panel is fixed, yet captures—albeit fleetingly—and reflects every change in the space; it registers the viewer's presence, then loses it. It incorporates time into the work, and invites the viewer to reflect on the fleeting nature of time—and images.

Rauschenberg met Cage and Cunningham during his first solo exhibition at Betty Parsons Gallery in New York

in 1951. The trio spent the summer of 1952 at Black Mountain College, North Carolina, developed strong friendships, and completed the first of several collaborations, which always incorporated elements of chance. When Rauschenberg met Johns, he too joined their circle. Rauschenberg was also associated with New York avant-garde performers in the Judson Dance Theater, and was a dancer and choreographer. He was resident advisor for the Merce Cunningham Dance Company (MCDC) from 1954 through the 1964 world tour—until his statement that the MCDC was his “biggest canvas” offended Cage. Johns succeeded Rauschenberg as artistic director from 1967 to 1980.

Cunningham recalled in an interview that when the MCDC took *Minutiae* on tour, Rauschenberg packed it into a box lashed to the top of their VW bus, hoping it wouldn't rain. Many years later, when Rauschenberg's works had become valuable, Cunningham was performing in Paris and a man told him that he had purchased *Minutiae* in Zurich and transported it to Paris in a padded, air-conditioned van. The irony sent Cunningham into fits of laughter. “My God,” he gasped. “Lucky it didn't rain!”



Robert Rauschenberg, **Minutiae**, 1954,
combine: oil, paper, newspaper, wood, metal, plastic,
with mirror on braided wire, on wood structure, 84.5x81x30.5 in.
(214.6 x 205.7 x 77.4 cm), private collection

RICHARD HAMILTON

Just what is it that makes the modern home
so different, so appealing?

1956

This iconic work of Pop Art featured in the 1956 exhibition *This is Tomorrow* at Whitechapel Gallery in London, and echoes some of the ideas in Eduardo Paolozzi's 1947 collage *I was a Rich Man's Plaything* (pp.26/27). Here incongruous images in a domestic setting unsettle the mass media's image of the ideal home, regulated by a virtuous housewife and the prompts of the TV set.

"POP" seems to balloon from the bodybuilder's briefs. The sucker top aligns with a can of meat, while its stick points to the vacuum's extra-long pipe. In American slang, "tootsie" means "young girl," a girlie reference that undermines the macho-man. He looks at the viewer, rather than the reclining woman, naked but for her lampshade headgear, which references a form of haute-couture hat in the 1950s. She looks at the viewer, too. Their sexual poses deny the ideal of the stable, married "mom and pop" around which the "modern home" is constructed.

Both the setting and the title of the collage come from an Armstrong Floors ad in the June 15, 1954 *Ladies Home Journal*, which also contained the ad of the Hoover Constellation working the staircase. The bodybuilder is Mr. L. A. 1954, "Zabo" Koszewski, cut from

Tomorrow's Man magazine (September 1954). The artist and soft-porn model Jo Baer recognized herself as the erotically posed woman. The ceiling is an image of earth that John McHale cut from *Life Magazine* (September 1955). The black-and-white rug depicts sunbathers packed on a beach. A blown-up *Romance* comic hangs on the wall—presaging the work of Roy Lichtenstein—alongside a stuffy high-art portrait in its paste frame.

In 1956, Hamilton understood "pop" to mean "popular." In a 1957 letter to Alison and Peter Smithson, he clarified, "Pop Art is: Popular (designed for a mass audience), Transient (short-term solution), Expendable (easily forgotten), Low-cost, Mass-produced, Young (aimed at youth), Witty, Sexy, Gimmicky, Glamorous, Big Business." Hamilton states, "At the time the letter was written there was no such thing as 'Pop Art' as we now know it. The use of the term here refers solely to art manufactured for a mass audience." Hamilton neither advocated these qualities in his own work, nor did what later became known as British Pop Art fit these criteria. Hailed as a "father" of Pop Art, Hamilton disavowed the accolade. His stance toward popular culture was critical and philosophical.



Richard Hamilton, **Just what is it that makes the modern home so different, so appealing?**, 1956, collage on paper, 10.2 x 9.8 in. (26 x 25 cm), Zundel Collection, Kunsthalle, Tübingen

JASPER JOHNS

Flag on Orange Field

1957

Johns was inspired to begin his iconic *American Flag* series by a dream in which he saw himself painting one. This changed his life—and the course of Pop Art.

In 1954, Jasper Johns destroyed all his prior art and resolved to leach the personal from his practice, stating, “I don’t want my work to be an exposure of my feelings.” He selected as subjects “things the mind already knows,” as he put it—flags, targets, numerals, and maps of the US. Though Johns stripped his personality from his work, his painterly surfaces referenced their creator. His images of such simple signs as flags pose logic puzzles of identity: if one paints a flag, is it a flag or a painting; does it stand for the United States of America—a country whose unity is denied by its multiplicity? And does the answer shift when the flag/painting inaccurately represents the number of states—in this work, there are only forty-eight stars—and becomes a modern sign of the nation in an earlier state?

Such philosophical and perceptual questions are deeper concerns in Johns’s work. Johns was influenced by the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein’s writings on logic and language, which

separated words from their meanings or contexts. The act of isolating the sign from its context or meaning and recontextualizing it as art was a key strategy in Pop Art. Critics recognized that this approach had many links with earlier Dada practices, and labeled works of Johns, Rauschenberg, and other Pop Art pioneers exhibited in the 1950s as “Neo-Dada.”

Flag on Orange debuted in 1957 as a window display in the now defunct department store Bonwit Teller. The display director there, Gene Moore, “curated” the early appearance of many future Pop masterpieces. The guy had an eye.

A popular American synonym for an iris flower is a flag. One could therefore interpret John’s title to mean “iris on orange field”—which then invites recall of other artists’ works that represent real flowering fields, such as Claude Monet’s famous *Field of Red Poppies*, as critic Barbara Rose has suggested. The orange frame around the flag stands in for a field, and the flag stands in for a flower: things are not what they seem. Such visual, linguistic, and language games pepper and enrich Johns’s work. The surface, painted in encaustic, undulates like a field, too.



Jasper Johns, **Flag on Orange Field**, 1957,
encaustic on canvas, 65.7 x 48.1 in. (167 x 124 cm),
Museum Ludwig, Ludwig Donation, Cologne

JASPER JOHNS

Painted Bronze (Ale Cans)

1960

Painted Bronze (Ale Cans) is an inverse of a readymade, yet poses similar questions of high and low, art and life, illusion and reality. Instead of a mass-produced object recontextualized as a work of art, Johns simulated mass-produced objects in the pricey bronze reserved for such high-art sculptures as equestrian emperors—and Picasso’s 1914 painted bronze, *Glass of Absinthe*, an important precedent. Like other commodities iconized in Pop Art, Ballantine beer was enjoyed equally by the common consumer and the celebrities, including Marilyn Monroe, who endorsed it: Joe DiMaggio, John Steinbeck, Ernest Hemingway, Rocky Marciano, and Frank Sinatra. It was the first beer consumers could carry home as a six-pack.

Jasper Johns said that a remark about his gallerist, Leo Castelli, inspired the sculpture: “Somebody told me that Bill de Kooning said that you could give that son-of-a-bitch two beer cans and he could sell them. I thought, what a wonderful idea for a sculpture.” Johns produced the first of two casts in 1960, which Castelli exhibited in 1961—and duly sold.

This sculpture plays with ambiguities of identity. It is a single sculpture, yet

looks like two beer cans pressed into a base that also bears Johns’s thumbprint—a bodily trace. The bronze cylinders and painted logos echo—yet differ from—mass-produced Ballantine cans, although the work was “editioned”: Johns cast and painted #2/2 in 1964, which he kept. One can is depicted opened, and is hollow and light; the other is closed, solid, heavy. One must separate the twinned cans, lift them off their base, mimicking the motion of a drinker, to reveal their differences. Such philosophical concerns virtually touch on questions of human partners. Johns and Rauschenberg’s relationship was coming to an end. Only one logo contains the word “Florida,” the tropical state whose Latin name means “flowery,” and evokes the word “florid”—implying flushed (often a side effect of alcohol and sex) or excessively complicated. Rauschenberg, a heavy drinker, later moved to Captiva Island, Florida. “XXX” is a sign of brewing purity—and pornography. Such subtle plays, often personal and allegorical, delighted Duchamp and other Dadaists. Johns certainly found *Painted Bronze (Ale Cans)* endlessly fascinating: he reworked the subject in different media and guises for years.



Jasper Johns, **Painted Bronze (Ale Cans)**, 1960,
oil on bronze, 5.5 x 7.9 x 4.7 in. (14 x 20.3 x 12 cm),
Museum Ludwig, Ludwig Donation, Cologne

During the 1960s, Jasper Johns—like Eduardo Paolozzi and other artists—was profoundly affected by the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein’s logic and his writings on language, which distinguished the sign from what it referred to. The extrication and elevation of the sign was a foundation of Jasper Johns’s pioneering work and became an enduring feature of Pop Art.

Johns emphasized the concrete in his work, and selected stock subjects: the flag and map of the United States, targets, and numbers. Though apparently straightforward, these subjects can be read as posing logic puzzles of identity.

The US, for example, rendered via its flag or map, is both a singular entity and composed of multiple fractious states. One is many. Also, the map or flag excised from its familiar contexts of civic authority and classroom and repositioned on a gallery wall becomes an entirely different thing. The sign floats free.

Rauschenberg had introduced Jasper Johns to his own dealer, Leo Castelli, who immediately appreciated the influence of Duchamp in Johns’s work and staged his wildly successful debut solo show in January 1958. Johns’s

work was featured on the cover of that month’s *ArtNews*. Alfred Barr, the Museum of Modern Art’s founding director, spent three hours at the exhibition, and bought the cover piece and two other works. Now, both artists were famous. American Pop had arrived, though not yet in name.

In 1960, Rauschenberg gave Johns a cheaply reproduced classroom map of the United States. Johns understood the gesture to mean he should add this subject to his repertoire. He first over-painted the found object, and then enlarged it as a painting, allowing many paint drips to remain. These reflect the operation of chance within the work, but also the artist’s control over the choice to leave or remove the drips. This underscores the process of painting, rather than the realization of a preconceived idea. The labels of the states are applied arbitrarily—Colorado appears several times. What were different states become the same. Territories are distorted; their boundaries blur; they become deterritorialized. What was one thing becomes another—and Jasper Johns’s finished map is quite unlike the found object he started from.



Jasper Johns, **Map**, 1961,
oil on canvas, 78x123.9 in. (198.2x314.7 cm),
The Museum of Modern Art, New York

CLAES OLDENBURG

Floor Burger (Giant Hamburger)

1962

Claes Oldenburg's vision of sculpture was revolutionary. From 1959 onward, he rendered subjects from the streets of his poor Lower East Side neighborhood and from everyday life. His novel media included trash—cardboard, newspaper, and the burlap sacks then used for bagging garbage. His sculptures hung on the wall or from the ceiling or stood directly on the floor. Gradually introducing color, he restricted his palette to seven bright colors of sloppily applied enamel paint, creating surfaces both gritty and commercial looking.

In December 1961, Oldenburg created one of the first art installations. He opened his studio on weekends as *The Store*, selling painted plaster sculptures of food and clothing—some simulacra, some with hallucinatory scale distortions—with price tags mimicking American retailers' prices ending in "-9" cents. This highlighted his art as a commodity, no less than the everyday objects he chose as valid subjects, and contrasted with the gallery setting where he'd shown similar works earlier that year. Some sculptures sat on the crockery or display hardware used in real stores and delis, blending the real and the art object.

The Store was a setting for happenings attended by such art-world personalities as Marcel Duchamp and Andy Warhol. Oldenburg's performers included Lucas Samaras, Red Grooms, Jim Dine, and Patty Mucha, who sewed props from burlap and other materials that inspired giant soft sculptures of edibles, of which *Giant Hamburger* is best known. Stuffed with foam rubber and boxes, this work invites viewers to interact with it—and make something happen. Patty and Claus made love on the meat, between the buns.

The Art Gallery of Ontario's purchase of *Giant Hamburger* in 1967 caused art students to protest outside with a giant sculpture of a ketchup bottle, of which Oldenburg said, "They should have made it soft." Oldenburg's more enduring artistic concern was not soft sculpture but gigantism. His monumental sculptures of everyday objects, made with Coosje Van Bruggen since the seventies, are popular for their wit, often accentuated by their context. *Batcolumn* (1977) is a towering baseball bat erected among Chicago's skyscrapers. *Dropped Cone* (2001) projects from the top corner of a Cologne mall, as if an ice cream had been discarded by a god on high.