

## Roy Lichtenstein's **Female Head** To Feature in Sotheby's New York Evening Auction of Contemporary Art

Acquired in 1977, the Same Year it was Painted, and  
Cherished in a Private New York Collection for 40 Years  
– Making Its Auction Debut on 16 November –



© ESTATE OF ROY LICHTENSTEIN

*Property from a Private New York Collection*  
Roy Lichtenstein  
**Female Head**  
Signed and dated 77 on the reverse  
Oil and magna on canvas  
60 by 50 inches  
Estimate \$10/15 million

Unveiling at Sotheby's London on 6 October

**NEW YORK, 4 October 2017** – Sotheby's is delighted to announce that Roy Lichtenstein's **Female Head** will be featured in our [Contemporary Art Evening Auction](#) on 16 November in New York. This superb example of the artist's most iconic subject matter – the female head – will be unveiled in our London galleries this Friday, and on view through 8 October. Acquired from Leo Castelli Gallery in November 1977, just months after it was painted, the bold, vibrantly colored and beautiful painting will carry a pre-sale estimate of \$10/15 million when it makes its auction debut this November.

*Grégoire Billault, Head of Sotheby's Contemporary Art department in New York, noted: "To stand in front of this painting is to understand and appreciate Roy Lichtenstein's enduring engagement with beguiling blondes, as well as his brilliance as one of the trailblazers of Pop Art. Vividly combining his favorite subject with his distinctive visual lexicon, Female Head is a magnum opus of the artist that will have universal appeal to collectors today."*

While female figures served as heroines of Lichtenstein's Pop narrative in the 1960s, a decade later his signature blondes take on more enigmatic roles. Executed in 1977, *Female Head* is one of the very finest examples of Roy Lichtenstein's works from his so-called Surrealist period and is evocative of the artist's genius and creativity. By dislocating and disconnecting the facial features of three portraits – two mirrored faces are joined by a third silhouette, which also functions as a brushstroke-like coil of yellow hair – the artist engages the complex worlds of Cubism, Surrealism, and Pop with unparalleled energy and imagination. *Female Head* radiates with a seductive allure, executed in an intricate configuration of his favored primary-color palette, Ben-Day dots, and modernist line. Exhibited in a number of the artist's most important exhibitions, including the 1993 retrospective at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, *Female Head* is exemplary of Lichtenstein's contribution to 20th century art history. Masterworks from this period of Lichtenstein's body of work are held in renowned institutions around the world, including the Guggenheim Museum, the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

In addition to its stylistic context, this large-scale painting is impressive for its inclusion of the full arsenal of the artist's iconography and technique drawn from the language of graphic and commercial art. One of his most complex meditations on 'art about art', *Female Head* is a visual tour of Roy Lichtenstein's *oeuvre*; from the signature blonde to the female figure, the Ben-Day dots to the brushstroke, and finally the mirror to the picture frame, all of his trademarks are present in this

work. Marvelously engaging with the history of the fractured female form – paying homage to masters like Picasso, Magritte and Dali – Lichtenstein here weaves Surrealist archetypes with his own distinctive pioneering style, resulting in an image that is undeniably one of the most seductive paintings from the 1970s.

Appearing at auction for the first time, *Female Head* comes from the collection of Elizabeth R. Rea and the late Michael M. Rea, passionate collectors and proponents of the arts in all forms. Elizabeth Richebourg Rea, an accomplished fine-art photographer, has had a notable career in the art world. In 1970, she began her professional life at The Museum of Modern Art as director of the Art Lending and Art Advisory departments, offering curatorial advice to corporations forming art collections. Leo Castelli, Roy Lichtenstein's dealer, subsequently hired Elizabeth where she honed her artistic eye and acquired extensive knowledge of the artist's work. In 1976 Castelli formed an adjunct gallery to represent the Estate of Joseph Cornell in the sale and exhibition of Cornell's work. Elizabeth was appointed director and organized numerous Cornell exhibitions worldwide. Her accumulative knowledge and experience led to her role as freelance curator for two major retrospectives on the work of Roy Lichtenstein. She was catalogue editor for The Museum of Modern Art 1987 exhibition *The Drawings of Roy Lichtenstein*; and research consultant for the 1993 Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum exhibition *Roy Lichtenstein*. In addition to her photography, Elizabeth Rea serves on several boards including the Peggy Guggenheim Advisory Board in Venice and Symphony Space in New York. She is an Honorary Trustee of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation.

A portion of the proceeds from *Female Head* this November will benefit the Dungannon Foundation, sponsor of The Rea Award for the Short Story.

#### ABOUT THE REA AWARD FOR THE SHORT STORY & THE DUNGANNON FOUNDATION

Founded in 1986 by Michael M. Rea, a passionate reader and collector of short stories, The Rea Award for the Short Story is given annually to a living American or Canadian writer whose published work has made a 'significant contribution in the discipline of the short story as an art form'. The Rea Award is unique in that it is not given for a collection of stories or for a body of work, but rather for originality and influence on the genre. The Dungannon Foundation was established by Michael Rea to sponsor The Rea Award for the Short Story and Rea Visiting Writers/Lecturers at the University of Virginia. The Dungannon Foundation continues under the direction of his widow Elizabeth Rea.

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\*Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Prices achieved include the hammer price plus buyer's premium and are net of any fees paid to the purchaser where the purchaser provided an irrevocable bid.

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