

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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PRESS RELEASE

GAGOSIAN GALLERY
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Tue – Sat 10:00am – 6:00pm



ROY LICHTENSTEIN: *Landscapes in the Chinese Style*

Saturday, 12 November – Thursday, 22 December 2011
Opening reception: Saturday, November 12th, from 6 to 8 pm

I think (the Chinese landscapes) impress people with having somewhat the same kind of mystery (historical) Chinese paintings have, but in my mind it's a sort of pseudo-contemplative or mechanical subtlety...I'm not seriously doing a kind of Zen-like salute to the beauty of nature. It's really supposed to look like a printed version.

--Roy Lichtenstein

Gagosian Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of Roy Lichtenstein's *Landscapes in the Chinese Style*.

Although Lichtenstein will always be synonymous with Pop Art, he continued to make inventive new work for almost three decades beyond the 1960s, during which he had become famous for his distinctive use of popular cartoon images and commercial painting style. An engagement with the work of other artists and cultures is a defining trait of Lichtenstein's oeuvre. He constantly mined antecedent imagery and took inspiration from a diverse array of sources, from comic strips and advertising slogans to classical architecture and the art of the European Modernists. Beginning in the 1940s, he turned to art-historical styles and in the 1970s he employed them once again as well as quoting his own works – for example, rendering his subject in a way that conflated Expressionist or Cubist style with his own signature method of painting.

Seizing on traditional Chinese painting, in particular from the Song Dynasty (960-1279 AD), Lichtenstein garnered inspiration on how to craft the delicate, ethereal atmosphere so implicit to *Landscapes in the Chinese Style* from the monochromatic prints of Edgar Degas featured in a 1994 exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. He was struck by Degas' ability to suggest the features of a landscape with just a few strategic swathes of gray, thus allowing an unformed, nebulous shape to stand for exacting form. Lichtenstein also visited exhibitions of East Asian Art in New York, Washington and Boston, and perused exhibition catalogues--which may partly account for the emphasis on the secondary nature of his source imagery, deriving from reproductions of original works rather than from the works themselves.

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Lichtenstein re-interpreted the traditional scenes and motifs using his own established methods and materials. Carefully stylized, *Landscapes in the Chinese Style* are formed with simulated Benday dots and block contours, rendered in hard, vivid color, with all traces of the hand removed. Consistent with his entire oeuvre, *Landscapes in the Chinese Style* play with American stereotypes and clichés by incorporating the elements of Asian culture most familiar to Western viewers-- a crooked bonsai tree in *Landscape with Fog* (1996), a pointed coolie hat in *Landscape with Boats (study)* (1995). However, the overt irony of his earlier Pop works cedes to aestheticism and formal delicacy: the Benday dots do not mimic the arbitrary techniques of commercial illustration, but rather appear in cloud-like patches that express the effervescence of space and form, as in the dreamy, abstract *Landscape with Boat* (1996). Sublimating the intrinsic serenity of his source material, Lichtenstein reflects on the harmony and balance of the ancient works through his unmistakable and edgy lexicon of modern visual effects.

A fully illustrated catalogue will accompany the exhibition, featuring essays by Karen Bandlow-Bata and Carol Yinghua Lu.

Roy Lichtenstein was born in 1923 in New York, where he died in 1997. His work has been exhibited extensively worldwide. Recent retrospective surveys include "All About Art," Louisiana Museum, Humelbaek (2003, traveled to the Hayward Gallery, London, Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art through 2005); and "Classic of the New", Kunsthau Bregenz (2005), "Roy Lichtenstein: Meditations on Art" Museo Triennale, Milan (2010, traveled to the Ludwig Museum, Cologne).

For further information please contact the gallery at hongkong@gagosian.com or at +852.2151.0555.