

Media release

Basel, August 20, 2026

Roy Lichtenstein
Sweet Dreams, Baby!

August 22, 2026–March 14, 2027, Kunstmuseum Basel | Neubau

Curator: Fabienne Ruppen

The Kunstmuseum Basel presents prints from all periods of the pop-art legend Roy Lichtenstein's (1923–1997) oeuvre. Many of the approximately fifty works have never been on public display. The exhibition is held on occasion of a generous gift from the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation, thanks to which the Kunstmuseum's Kupferstichkabinett (Department of Prints and Drawings) now has one of the most important collections of Lichtenstein's work outside the United States.

Roy Lichtenstein. Sweet Dreams, Baby! showcases a representative survey of Lichtenstein's colorful and vibrant world. The exhibition sheds light on how the American artist became a pioneer of pop art (short for "popular," in the sense of popular culture) in the 1960s with his catchy motifs, love of experimentation, and brilliant technique. With plenty of wit and irony, Lichtenstein transposes the visual language of consumer goods, advertising brochures, and store-window displays into visual art. The comic-book aesthetic, in particular, is a vital source of inspiration: enlarged details (close-ups), luminous colors, and Ben-Day dots become hallmarks of his art.

The New York art scene initially responds to pop art with shock, perceiving it as banal. Meanwhile, the familiar imagery of this new mode of creative expression appeals to a wide audience, in no small part due to the medium of printmaking and its reproducibility: Lichtenstein's first prints featuring the comic-book aesthetic are posters and invitations for his exhibitions at the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York. They are printed inexpensively in large runs and make the artist a household name.

Lichtenstein's interest in printmaking dates back to his student years. The exhibition includes six examples from the late 1940s and early 1950s that illustrate the rigor of his experimentation with various printmaking techniques early in his career. From the late 1960s onward, he collaborates with renowned printing studios such as Gemini Graphic Editions Limited, Los Angeles; Tyler Graphics, Bedford, N.Y.; and Graphicstudio at the

University of South Florida, Tampa. In close consultation with their staff, he produces technically masterful individual prints and series. *Portrait* (1989), for instance, is the result of an eighteen-step printing process. The combination of four different techniques—lithography, woodcut, screen printing, and waxtype, which was developed specifically for this project by Graphicstudio—produces exceptionally varied surface effects ranging from mat areas to glossy and iridescent spots to fluid-looking brushstroke motifs.

In the course of five decades, Lichtenstein creates over 350 screen prints, etchings, lithographs, woodcuts, and linocuts. In celebration of the artist's centennial in 2023, the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation has given a total of approximately one hundred prints to the Albertina in Vienna, the British Museum in London, and the Kunstmuseum Basel, establishing three reference collections in Europe. The Kunstmuseum received thirty-three works that showcase the full diversity of Lichtenstein's oeuvre as a printmaker. These include printed *Paper Plates* (1969) as well as an unconventional reinterpretation of Vincent van Gogh's *The Sower* (1985) and the monumental *Wallpaper with Blue Floor Interior* (1992).

The exhibition *Roy Lichtenstein. Sweet Dreams, Baby!* brings the public debut of this gift in Basel. It is rounded out by additional prints by Lichtenstein from the Kunstmuseum's Kupferstichkabinett, which began acquiring his work in the 1960s, as well as a loan from a private collection (*Entablature VI*, 1976) and the paintings *Hopeless* (1963) and *Mirror #2* (1970), both of which are on deposit to the Kunstmuseum.

The Roy Lichtenstein Foundation was established in 1998 by Dorothy Lichtenstein (1939–2024), the artist's widow. Its mission is to make his work accessible to the public, including by producing a continually updated online catalogue raisonné.

Imagery related to the exhibition

www.kunstmuseumbasel.ch/en/media

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