Roy Lichtenstein was born in New York City in 1923.

He attended school there, and in 1939 studied with Reginald Marsh at the Art Students League. The following year he entered Ohio State University. However, in 1943 his education was interrupted; he served in the U.S. Army for three years. He received his bachelor of fine arts degree from Ohio State University in 1946 and a master of fine arts in 1949. He taught at Ohio State until 1951, then went to Cleveland to work. In 1957 he started teaching at Oswego State College in New York; in 1960 he moved to Rutgers University. Three years later he gave up teaching to paint full time.

From 1951 to about 1957 Lichtenstein's paintings interpret themes of the American West - cowboys, Indians, and the like - in a style broadly imitative of modern European painters. Next, he began hiding images of comic strip figures (Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, Bugs Bunny) in his paintings.

By 1961 he had evolved the imagery for which he became known. In addition to the imagery, based on comic strips, with their themes of passion, romance, science fiction, violence, and war, in which Lichtenstein employs the techniques of commercial art,

he also created variants of other artists' works, such as Woman with Flowered Hat (1963), based on a coarse, supermarket reproduction of a Picasso, and adaptations of paintings by Piet Mondrian, of Gilbert Stuart's portrait of George Washington, and of Claude Monet's haystacks and cathedral facades.

In the late 1960s he turned to design elements found in Art-Deco and the commercial art of the 1930s, as if to explore pop art's forerunners.

In 1966 his work was included in the Venice Biennale. In 1969 New York's Guggenheim Museum gave him a large retrospective exhibition.

The 1970s saw Lichtenstein continuing to experiment with new styles. His "mirror" paintings consist of spherical canvases with areas of color and dots

One of these, Self-Portrait (1978), follows Magritte in its playful placement of a mirror where a human head should be. During this decade, Lichtenstein also created a series of still lifes in different styles.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Lichtenstein began to mix and match styles, often augmenting his cartoony images with ideas derived from abstract expressionism. Often his works relied on optical tricks or illusions, drawing his viewers into a debate over the nature of "reality."

1996 marked a major departure for Lichtenstein. In an exhibition at New York's Leo Castelli gallery, he unveiled a series of paintings, "Landscapes in the Chinese Style," which eschewed irony in favor of delicate, wispy "impressions" of traditional Chinese landscape paintings. The series was praised for its subtlety and restraint, as recognizable Lichtenstein techniques - the use of modulated dots to represent mass for example - were used to support the compositions rather than to declare an individual style. Lichtenstein died on Sept. 29, 1997, at the age of 73.