**Definition:** pop art from Collins English Dictionary

1 a movement in modern art that imitates the methods, styles, and themes of popular culture and mass media, such as comic strips, advertising, and science fiction

**Summary Article:** pop art from The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide

Movement in modern art that took its imagery from the glossy world of advertising and from popular culture such as comic strips, films, and television; it developed in the 1950s and flourished in the 1960s, notably in Britain and the USA. Pop art reflected the new wealth, consumerism, and light-hearted attitudes that followed the austerity of the post-war period. It was also a reaction against abstract expressionism, the dominant art movement of the 1950s, which was serious and inward-looking – pop art was playful and ironic, and ignored the rules of the traditional art world. The movement helped to prepare the way for postmodernism, a feature of Western culture since the 1970s. Leading US pop artists include Andy Warhol, Jasper Johns, and Roy Lichtenstein; UK exponents include Richard Hamilton and Allen Jones. Andy Warhol's famous Twenty Marilyns (1962; Paris, private collection), depicting Marilyn Monroe, is a typical example of pop art.

Although sometimes regarded as mainly a US phenomenon, the term ‘pop art’ was first used by the British critic Lawrence Alloway (1926–1990) in about 1955, to refer to works of art that drew upon popular culture. Richard Hamilton, one of the leading British pioneers and exponents of pop art, defined it in 1957 as ‘popular, transient, expendable, low-cost, mass-produced, young, witty, sexy, gimmicky, glamorous, and Big Business’.

The chief pioneers of US pop art were Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg, both of whom used novel imagery; Johns, for example, made sculptures of beer cans (anticipating Andy Warhol's paintings of soup cans), and Rauschenberg incorporated photographs from glossy magazines in his collages. Other leading US exponents of pop art included Roy Lichtenstein, who based his paintings on frames in comic strips, and Claes Oldenburg, who is perhaps the best-known sculptor in the movement; his works include giant sculptures of foodstuffs. Food and cars, symbols of the consumer society, were among the recurring subjects of pop art.

In Britain, pop art emerged in the mid 1950s at about the same time as it did in the USA, and likewise became a distinctive force around 1960. Leading British figures included Peter Blake, David Hockney, Allen Jones, and Eduardo Paolozzi. For some of these artists, such as Hockney, pop art represented a brief stage in their career, but others have solidly committed themselves to the style. Allen Jones was still producing work in the 1990s that was very similar to his work of the 1960s. He is best known for sculptures in which erotically dressed women double as pieces of furniture; for example, a table is made out of a woman on all fours with a sheet of glass resting on her back.

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