



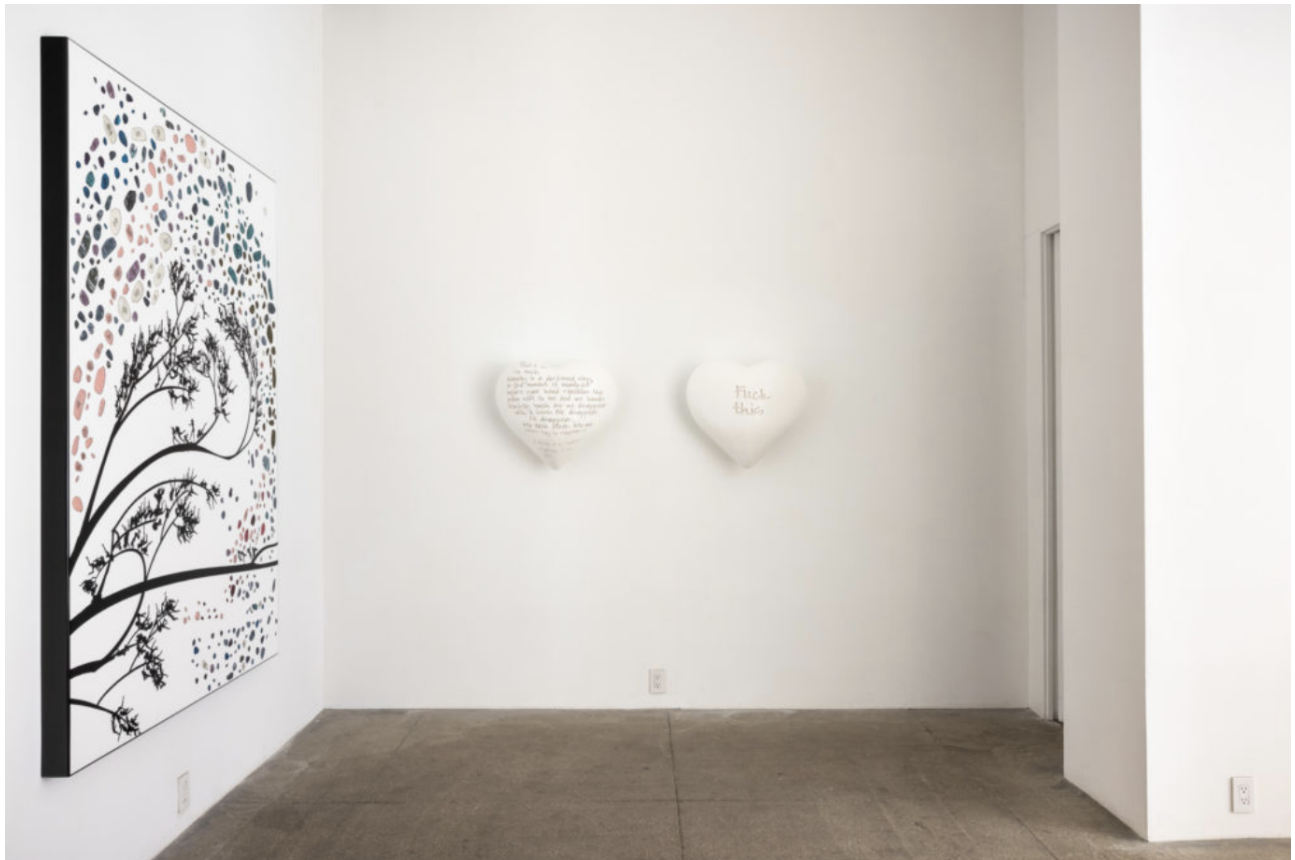
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Cultbytes

Jessica Lichtenstein's Most Recent Immersive "A Perfect Storm" Reveals the Chaos of Our Inner Thoughts

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TAYLOR ENGLE



"A Perfect Storm," Installation view at Winston Wächter Fine Art, 2021.

"The title came first," Jessica Lichtenstein said. "We were going through this shit storm of political, racial, socioeconomic, viral tension, all coalescing to create a larger storm that was the year 2020. But the reality is, these are all things that were undercurrent for years, coming to surface all at once." Lichtenstein's art speaks to the pandemic, economic instability, racial reckonings, a polarizing political climate—all of the chaos we've collectively experienced over the past year, along with our everyday thoughts

Winston Wächter Fine Art, Inc.

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and anxieties that swirl around our minds on a daily basis, no matter what's happening externally.

The mixed-media artist has always been inspired by the female body as a means to explore power, representation, and fantasy. However, her latest digital, sculpture, and installation immersive exhibit *A Perfect Storm*, live at the Winston Wächter Gallery in Chelsea from March 4 – April 17, explores humanity as a whole, and how we get through life.

Once Lichtenstein had her title and concept, she began collecting random thoughts, words, and quotes from everything and everywhere: novels, poetry, philosophy, newspapers, porn, social media, memes, her diary, the news, etc. She wasn't sure exactly what she'd do with them, but she felt inspired.

"I think besides the obvious shitty parts of COVID, there have been some silver linings. The takeaway of focusing on staying healthy, taking care of your loved ones, connecting with family. The pandemic freed up a lot of time for contemplation, and I was inspired by the fact that we were all going through this global crisis together," Lichtenstein said.

The vortex of text adds a tumultuous layer to Lichtenstein's body of work: look closely and you'll find everything from random tweets and anxious thoughts to Trumpisms, quotes from #MeToo, pornography, and poetry. While some of it does relate to the pandemic, Lichtenstein's work is a reminder that, COVID-19 or not, we are always going through it in some way, and we're also finding happiness along the way.

Lichtenstein is recognized for her digital forest wonderlands—a beautiful collage of female figures that reveal themselves as such upon close inspection. Similar figures appear in *A Perfect Storm*, but instead of being depicted as free and euphoric, these figures are being tossed around by the elements, clinging desperately to dark branches as the fleeting words and thoughts swirl around their bodies.

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"And noew, I'm different than before,' 2020, Wood, epoxy, aluminum leaf and mother of pearl.
70 x 70 x 30 inches.



Detail.

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The exhibit also includes some sculptural work—Lichtenstein’s first foray into the medium. Her concrete hearts display a similar chaotic, beautiful, messy combination of thoughts, words, phrases, and sentiments. Modeled to emulate locket, the hearts were created with actual locket, watches, concrete, and other mixed media.

“A locket is so sentimental. You either give it to someone or get it for yourself as some sort of reminder. They’re all very aspirational in nature. My thought was, wouldn’t it be slightly ironic if instead of engraving them with these positive messages, they contained our actual everyday thoughts—the ones we try to get rid of. The storm inside our minds,” Lichtenstein said.



“There is a crack in everything,” 2020. Concrete and plaster heart with engraved locket and watches, 24 x 21 x 9 inches.

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"A Perfect storm," Installation View at Winston Wächter Fine Art, 2021.

"There are always storms," Lichtenstein continued. "It became more apparent during the lockdown as we went through our turmoils, separate but together. The angst became awful and beautiful at the same time. Once I got these lockets and engraved them all, I wanted to have these words and thoughts and emotions sort of spilling, pouring, exploding out. Buried inside, cracked open. All the things that make up a human heart."

"A Perfect Storm" does a breathtaking job of reminding us of our humanity, and allowing us to take solace in that. And while Lichtenstein's past work has mostly reflected the thoughts and experiences of women, this exhibit breathes life into the entire universe. These fleeting notions have no gender, no age, no sexuality. They're simply part of the human experience, relatable to all.

The exhibit itself is an immersive experience, as Lichtenstein had hoped it would be. The installation of female figures blown in the wind, titled "After the Storm," is

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surrounded by a beam of shining light where visitors are meant to stand and literally experience the storm “blowing over.”

“Whatever storm you have, there will be a clearing. People are going into this room and experiencing a powerful release from the past year. I love this idea of experience, and I want to continue emulating it in my work,” Lichtenstein said. “Art can feel so small, snooty, untouchable. But I want it to be for everybody.”

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