

5 MINUTE READ

Jessica Lichtenstein



from **VENÜ #46 FALL/HOLIDAY**  
by **VENÜ MAGAZINE**



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Christian Siriano

## THE WORK OF JESSICA LICHTENSTEIN

By Lisa Mikulski



**THIS IS A PROMISE. I THINK;** concrete and plaster heart with engraved lockets and watches, 24 × 21 × 9 in 61 × 53.3 × 22.9 cm, 2020

When first experiencing Jessica Lichtenstein's art, I was mesmerized. I had many questions. But as I studied the work, mostly, for a time, I just wanted to be with it, to explore it with my eyes and let it feed my soul.

In searching for Lichtenstein's work online, one will find an oft-used quote: "Using the female body as a mechanism to explore deeper themes of power, female representation, fetishism, and objectification, usually in an ironic and cheerful way her work consciously plays with the boundaries of power, commercialization, consumerism, fantasy and propriety, provoking tensions that challenge the viewer to confront his or her own gaze." What does this mean? Talking with Lichtenstein via phone as she waited for her flight back home to New York City, she explained.

It began at the start of her career with a fascination with mass-produced, hyper-sexualized, Japanese anime figurines. Removing the dolls from their boxes, Lichtenstein manipulated them to present them in a new light, allowing her to provide alternative meanings. Through Lichtenstein's vignettes, the girls are displayed for "public inspection and the viewer can voyeuristically watch these girls examine and perfect both themselves and their lives, exposing the extremism of a consumer culture dominated by western ideals of beauty and lifestyle."



**BAG LADY II, Installation/Sculpture (pvc and resin figurine with mixed media on acrylic in plexiglass case) 11.5 × 11.5 × 7.25 in | 29 × 29 × 18.5 cm**

The girls return in Lichtenstein's next series, WordSculptures. Here she examines the pornographic world of Japanese-inspired comic books. Her website tells us that in "creating imagined fantastical landscapes, infused with a highly sexualized environment, Lichtenstein places these appropriated heroines in scenes that are reminiscent of Renoir's, Cezanne's, or Picasso's Nude Bathers — scenes that harken back to a time of 'female as muse.' Layering these images behind a thick buffer of acrylic, the pieces take a critical distance from their own content and in fact, beg the viewer to do the same."



**A Burst of Fragrance from the Black Branches** wood, acrylic, epoxy and mother of pearl  
80 × 60 × 3 in | 203.2 × 152.4 × 7.6 cm, 2020



**Morning** c-print acrylic / Edition 5 + 2AP 47.5 × 47.5 × 2 in 120.5 × 120.5 × 5 cm, 2016

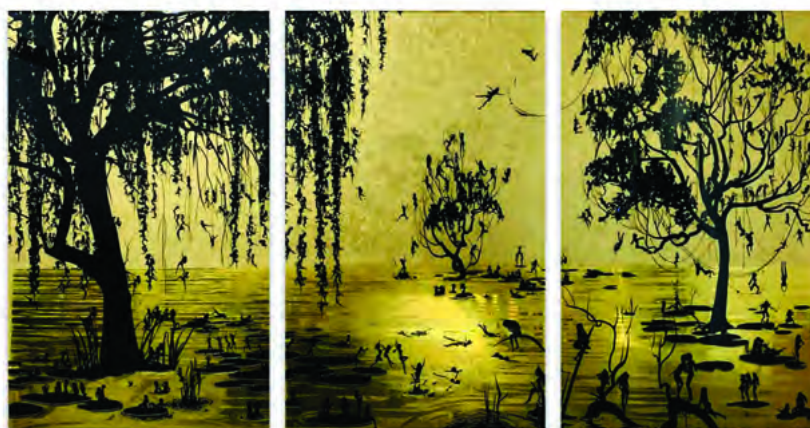
Leaving behind the world of anime figurines and word sculptures, the artist's next step in her evolution turned to landscape visions. Here we see the artist's maturity and sophistication coming to fruition. From afar, the viewer sights a silhouetted tree against a bright background of metal leaf or colorful acrylic settings. Purples, bright pinks, and Nordic blues draw us in until finally, up-close, we are presented with a forest of beings. Thousands of Lichtenstein's girls' make up the leaves, branches, and flowers of the piece. They drip from the blossoms of willowy Japanese cherry trees. Like nymphs or fairies, the girls play and explore jumping from the branches to the waterlilies below. Each girl is an individual, yet undeniably part of the whole. They are beautiful, strong, and celebratory as they emerge from the shadows into the light.

Then came 2020. As the world changed, so too did Lichtenstein's focus.





Detail from "After the Storm,"

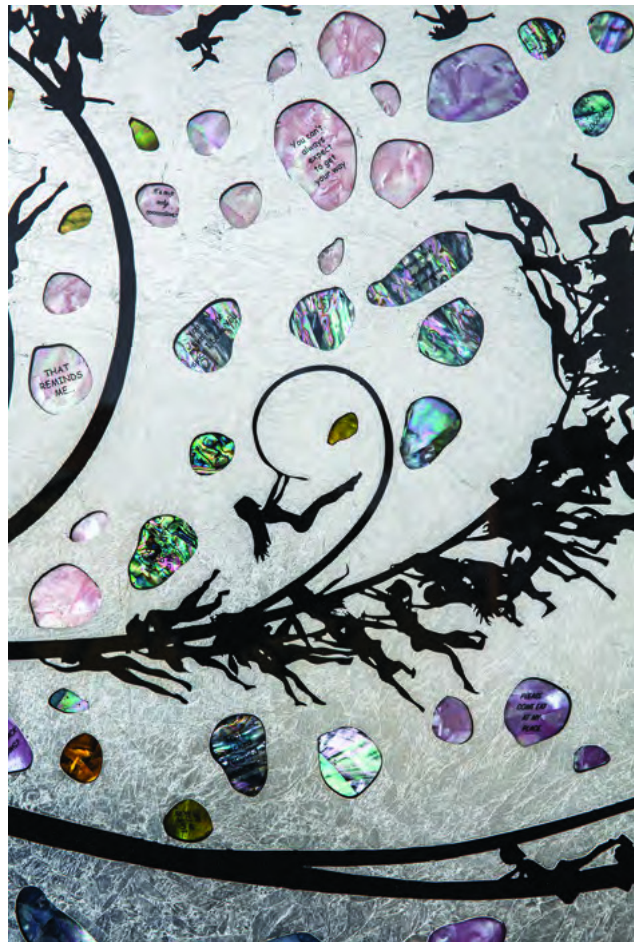
**GOLDEN DAYS, wood, epoxy, gold leaf & brass leaf, 120 × 60 × 3 in, 304.8 × 152.4 × 7.6 cm**

Global events affect people in different ways -- some shut down, others produce prolific bodies of work. Lichtenstein falls in the latter camp. Her most recent series, *A Perfect Storm*, is an amalgam of digital, sculptural, and installation work, taking a year and a half to complete. The series also includes something new for the artist and her collectors -- that of a non-figurative sculptural medium.

Until this point, there had always been figures populating the pieces. But Lichtenstein wanted to give her girls a voice. In a departure from figurative work, she created hearts. *A Perfect Storm* presents a series of concrete hearts bursting with voices in the form of engraved lockets. The words and phrases engraved upon the lockets are the ruminations of a world in the throes of a global catastrophe. They contain snippets from newspapers, Instagram, poetry, pornography, comic books, and diaries. They represent not only fears and insecurities, but the hopes and dreams that swirled through our collective mind during a tumultuous year.

The artist is well known for her lush forested installation work and *A Perfect Storm* doesn't disappoint. Created digitally using millions of photoshop layers, each element of Lichtenstein's forest is created and composed. The final product is printed out on wallpaper. A scattering of cut out paper girls litter the gallery floor like fallen leaves. You are invited to enter Lichtenstein's world.





**WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN, wood, epoxy, aluminum leaf and mother of pearl 80 × 60 × 3 in, 203.2 × 152.4 × 7.6 cm, 2020**

The two-dimensional pieces in *A Perfect Storm* shimmer with mother-of-pearl and depict our heroines in silhouette being blown about by stormy winds. They cling to branches as the inlaid mother-of-pearl, engraved with quotes and fleeting thoughts, swirl about the composition.

Tiffany Benincasa of C. Parker Gallery says:

"Jessica's works resonate with a wide range of collectors. When they first see her pieces, I watch how viewers are captured by the elegance and sophisticated presentation of her works. Then they are drawn in for further study and captivated by the details. Some collectors love the strength and powerful messaging, while others delight in the whimsical and ironic underlying details. While art is in the eye of the beholder, it is especially true with Jessica's works where there exists a balance between the seriousness and gravitas of her creations and the playfulness of the pieces.

As a mother, a wife, and a businesswoman I love all the aspects Jessica addresses during her creative process. Her message is to be bold, be brave, be strong, be soft, be brilliant and be a woman - ah, to be a feminist."



**THIS IS A PROMISE, I THINK, Detail from opening page**

Jessica Lichtenstein has put together a beautiful body of work. The amount of time, vision, and dedication that has gone into A Perfect Storm and her subsequent works have reignited this writer's love of art and provides a glimpse of hope for our future. □

See more of Jessica Lichtenstein's work at the following venues: Website: [jessicalichtenstein.com](http://jessicalichtenstein.com) Instagram: @jesslicht C. Parker Gallery in Greenwich Connecticut: [cparkergallery.com](http://cparkergallery.com) | @cparkergallery Winston Wächter Fine Art, New York: [newyork.winstonwachter.com](http://newyork.winstonwachter.com)



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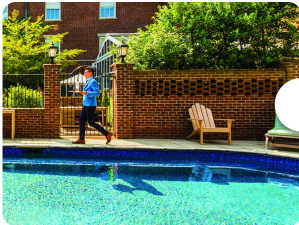
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