

ART

World of Warhol

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Most people would not consider urinating on a canvas as a form of artwork, but that was the reason Andy Warhol caught our attention, wasn't it?

Also referred to as "Warhol's Piss Paintings," the Oxidation paintings were created when Victor Hugo, Ronnie Cutrone and Walter Steding, members of Warhol's infamous Factory, took turns urinating on canvases coated with wet copper paint, which would oxidize and turn orange and green when soaked in urine. This is just one example of Warhol's outrageous works. His actions, and his art, have never fit the societal standard. He deviated from what the world viewed as normal, took ordinary objects that we see every day and turned them into something unusually extraordinary. Most people know Warhol by his neon colored screen prints, usually depicting famous actors and actresses. Others know him for making the Campbell's Soup label surprisingly famous. However, these are just the basics. What people generally overlook are the bizarre, fantastic pieces he created, the artwork that would eventually change the way we look at pop culture.

Warhol, originally born Andrew Warhola and known as the "Prince of Pop," got his start in New York City. Most of his projects were created in a downtown Manhattan loft, famously known as "The Factory." The original Factory was often referred to by those who frequented it as the Silver Factory. It was covered with tin foil, mirrors, and silver paint, the entire atmosphere was metallic.

The Factory was decorated by Warhol's friend Billy Name, from whom Warhol conceived the idea, and who was also the in-house photographer at The Factory. Warhol would often bring in silver balloons, or silver clouds as they were later named, to drift about the room and around the ceiling. The silver represented the decadence of the scene, as well as the seductive feel of the early sixties. The first years of The Factory were known as the Silver Era, not simply in reference to the design, but because of the carefree lifestyle. Members of The Factory lived what they called 'glamorous' lives, consisting of money, drugs, parties and fame.

More important than The Factory itself, was the artwork that emerged from this space. When asked about

Warhol's work, most students reply that they know him for his popular screen prints, such as those of Marilyn Monroe and Elvis Presley. Others know him for his artwork involving Campbell's soup cans, Brillo pad boxes, and Coca-Cola bottles. What most people do not know is that Warhol created a vast array of films as well as artwork. Perhaps these are disregarded because they were extremely radical for his, and even our, generation. His projects certainly stood out among those of other artists.

John Cale from the Velvet Underground recalls, "It wasn't called The Factory for nothing. It was where the assembly line for the silkscreens happened. While one person was making a silkscreen, somebody else would be filming a screen test. Every day something new."

Warhol made it a point to implant his opinions on mainstream America through his art, all the while neglecting standard societal viewpoints. Surprisingly, Warhol's statement pieces were not his prints, but his movies. These films contained nudity, graphic sexuality, same-sex relations, drug use and even transgender characters. All of these themes were considered socially obscene for the time, and theatres that would show his underground films were often cleared out and the staff arrested.

However, some of his most notable films such as *Sleep*, *Kiss*, *Eat* and *Empire* were not of this vulgar variety. The films, as well as many others, contain simple concepts and objects and are usually very long. In the movie *Empire*, Warhol filmed the Empire State building for approximately seven hours, barely touching the camera. "He wanted the machine to make the art for him", his friend Gerard Malanga had said. Although his films were very lengthy and did not contain much action, people could not help but be intrigued by them. Although Warhol created films involving some variation of plot, the majority of his followers enjoyed the beautiful simplicity of his earlier films.

Also obscure are the screen tests that Warhol would take of certain people who would visit The Factory, and often times become Factory regulars. Warhol surrounded himself with movie stars, musicians, and



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heiresses, which reflected his obsession with fame. Warhol shamelessly proclaimed, "I love Los Angeles. I love Hollywood. They're beautiful. Everybody's plastic, but I love plastic. I want to be plastic."

The people in these screen tests became known as Warhol Superstars, and they included names such as Brigid Berlin, Gerard Malanga, Ivy Nicholson, Ingrid Superstar, Billy Name, Candy Darling, Nico, and Edie Sedgwick.

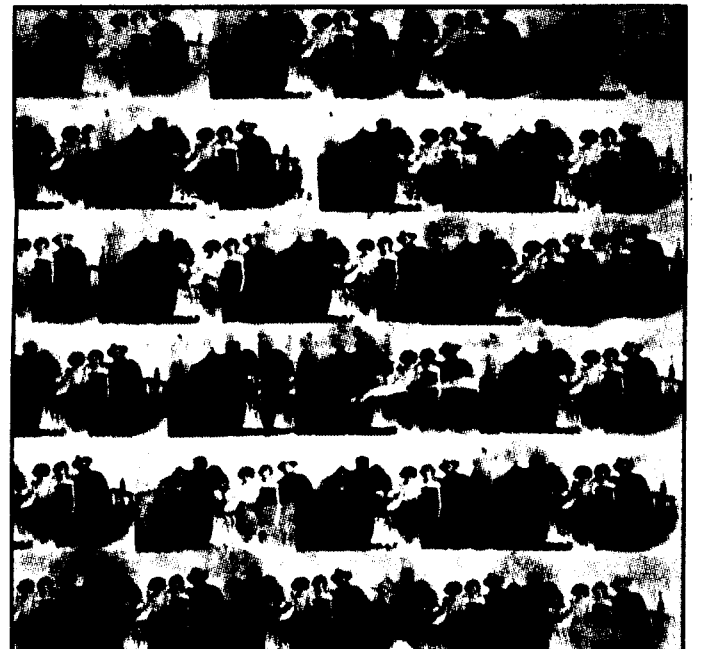
Warhol's works are still popular today. His prints can be found in a variety of fine art museums, but most notable is the Andy Warhol Museum in downtown Pittsburgh. Not only does this museum contain many of his famous prints, but also a wide variety of his movies. There is a floor dedicated to his personal life, relationships and some of his earlier drawings.

Warhol can even be found in today's pop culture, such as in the recent film *Factory Girl*. Many people today, as well as those from the 60s, have found Warhol's work to be offensive, crude, bizarre, and simply put, not an actual form of artwork at all. But whether you like him or not, Warhol has made an undeniable, significant change in the way we see pop culture today.

As Warhol says, "don't pay any attention to what they write about you. Just measure it in inches."



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