

Now Screening: Andy Warhol Prints

ADAM STARR



Figure 1 *Birmingham Race Riot*, from the portfolio *X + X (Ten Works by Ten Painters)* 1964, Serigraph on paper, 20 x 23 3/4 in.

Andy Warhol's art acted as a mirror for the American public, highlighting both moments of social tension and previously overlooked consumer objects. He canonized elements of American culture in images that came to signify the era. Warhol was fascinated by the dark side of American life, and early in his career often focused on death and disaster. For the painting *Race Riot* (1964), Warhol used a photograph by Charles Moore from the May 17, 1963 issue of *Life* magazine and later returned to Moore's work for the print *Birmingham Race Riot* (figure 1).¹ *Race Riot* depicts police dogs tearing the trousers off a Black man in Birmingham, Alabama. Warhol thought repetitive exposure to harsh images inured viewers to their reality. He claimed,

"when you see a gruesome picture over and over again, it doesn't really have any effect."² While the impact of an image may be lost through repetition, it also may force confrontation with a deeper truth.

Warhol's name is synonymous with Pop art, a movement that rebelled against the hegemony of Abstract Expressionism and refocused modern art from personal expression to the image saturation of modern life. Repetition and the use of common or commercial objects as subject was a common tool used by many Pop artists. Warhol merged commercial art—as seen in his screen printing and commercial imagery such as Campbell's soup cans or Brillo boxes—with high art

and engaged consumer culture in content and process. His use of found images also recalls the readymade objects of Marcel Duchamp and raises similar questions of authorship. In the case of *Birmingham Race Riot*, he cropped and reversed the image printed in *Life* and manipulated the screen to simulate the appearance of a newsprint photograph, but the copyrighted source image was identifiable. Warhol's use of many found images, including this one, was not authorized by their original creators and resulted in multiple lawsuits.

Warhol continued to appropriate images, as for example in the series, *Flowers* (1964-1970). He altered a photograph by Patricia Caulfield in *Modern Photography* that demonstrated how different filters created very different color effects.³ This must have aligned with Warhol's sensibilities as he went on to produce over 900 versions of *Flowers* in various colors.⁴ The seriality seen in *Flowers*, and in many of his works, creates visual impact; the sheer number of repetitions immerses the viewer in a world of vacuous simulacra. According to artist and curator John Coplans, "there are not only many more than a few in any given series, but that it seems to the viewer there are many more than can possibly be counted. [...] Warhol invariably selects an image that pre-exists in endless multiples. Thus his series give the appearance of being boundless, never finished and without wholeness."⁵

In November 1966, Caulfield sued Warhol over the unauthorized use of her photograph.⁶ Although the suit was settled out of court, Warhol switched to using his own images or sought permission from copyright holders. According to his longtime assistant and friend, the poet Gerard Malanga, "Andy realized that he had to be very careful about appropriating for the fear of being sued again." Warhol's fascination with Polaroid emerged from necessity.⁷ He used both the popular instant color film – taking photographs incessantly – and professional negative film for the silkscreen prints.

Portrait commissions were a stable source of income for Warhol; he charged \$25,000 per portrait.⁸ Many critics looked down on this work as commercial, yet Warhol reveled in the corporatization of art. He claimed that, "Business art is the step that comes



Figure 2 *Frederick Weisman*, 1984, Serigraph on paper, 44 x 28 3/4 in.

after Art."⁹ For Warhol, the subject's pose was paramount to the success of a portrait. He would shoot dozens of Polaroids from different angles looking for the perfect pose.¹⁰ One can see subtle changes from shot to shot, leading to the final photograph that was the basis for the silkscreen. An example of his studio practice is the 1984 portrait *Frederick Weisman*, (figure 2), here exhibited with a sampling of Polaroids from that shoot. He posed Weisman with his body square to the camera, which gave a more dominant and imposing impression. Warhol created celebrity in his commissioned portraits, reinforcing his promise that everyone would enjoy "fifteen minutes of fame." In addition to his own Polaroid photographs, Warhol brought stars and political figures to the screen print using film stills (*Grace Kelly*, 1984) and historical photographs (*Mao Tse-Tung*, 1973 and *Sitting Bull*, 1986).

Celebrity for Warhol extended beyond the flesh to include familiar objects and famous landmarks, such as *Cologne Cathedral*. Warhol adopted the steep perspective of the cathedral façade that resembles both Impressionist Claude Monet's *Rouen Cathedral* series (1892-94) and tourist photographs. At the suggestion of the printer Rupert Jason Smith, he experimented with adding diamond dust to prints while the ink was wet.¹¹ The shimmer and inherent

glamor imparted by diamonds matched the brilliance Warhol saw in his subjects. He applied diamond dust to the yellow *Cologne Cathedral*. (1985) with limited effect. Warhol achieved a more intense effect by using crushed glass in the red *Cologne Cathedral*. (figure 3).

Another of Warhol's innovations was the automation of art production, which became so central to his process that his studio was known as The Factory. The space served as a hangout for artists, musicians, socialites, and other "Warhol Superstars," who also constituted the amphetamine-fueled assembly line for Warhol's wide-ranging production. The musician John Cale of The Velvet Underground recounted: "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."¹² The Factory process recalls Warhol's early work as a commercial artist and his use of the blotted line technique, which combined ink drawing with rudimentary printmaking. This technique allowed Warhol to rapidly replicate hand-drawn images by relying on assistants to do the blotting.¹³ Every blotting would result in a slightly different image. Warhol accepted variations as part of the art. For his *Sunset* prints (1972), Warhol produced over 600 unique versions.¹⁴



Figure 3 *Cologne Cathedral* (detail), 1985, Serigraph on board with pulverized glass powder, 39 1/2 x 31 1/2 in. Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery, Scripps College.

Warhol took a commercial tool – the screen print – and elevated it to high art. He demolished barriers separating high and low art, and pointed the way for subsequent artists, including sculptor Jeff Koons and street artist Shepard Fairey, to use new modes of production for very different types of art practice. Warhol's art reflected society in complex and novel ways. He canonized pillars of culture and then subverted their representation through the medium of screen printing. Warhol's icons are now screening.

Adam Starr is a mathematics major at Pomona College ('18) and Curatorial Intern, Pomona College Museum of Art.

- 1 Source photograph by Charles Moore in "The Dogs' Attack Is Negroes' Reward," *Life* (17 May 1963), 30-31. Curator and collector Sam Wagstaff, an early Warhol supporter, acquired the painting *Race Riot*. The following year he commissioned Warhol to produce a print for *X + X (Ten Works by Ten Painters)*.
- 2 Gene R. Swenson, "What is Pop Art? Answers from Eight Painters, Part I: Jim Dine, Robert Indiana, Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol," *ARTnews* (Vol. 62, No. 7, Nov. 1963), 24-27, 59-64.
- 3 *Modern Photography* (Vol. 28, No. 6, June 1964), 84-89, 102.
- 4 Rainer Crone, *Andy Warhol* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1970), cat. # 30.
- 5 John Coplans, "Early Warhol: The Systematic Evolution of the Impersonal Style," *Artforum* (March 1970), 52-59. Reprinted in *Pop Art: A Critical History*, ed. Steven Henry Madoff (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 297.
- 6 Victor Bockris, *Warhol: The Biography* (New York: Da Capo, 2003), 260.
- 7 Gerard Malanga and Christoph Heinrich, "Freezing a Motion Picture: An Interview with Gerard Malanga," *Andy Warhol Photography: The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, Hamburg Kunsthalle (Thalwil/Zürich: Edition Stemmle, 1999)*, 116.
- 8 Tony Shafrazi, "Andy Warhol: Portraits," *Andy Warhol Portraits*, ed. Tony Shafrazi (London: Phaidon, 2007), 14-17.
- 9 Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol: From A to B and Back Again* (New York: Harcourt, 1975), 92.
- 10 Shafrazi, 14.
- 11 Riva Castleman, *The Prints of Andy Warhol* (Paris: Flammarion, 1990), 30.
- 12 John Cale, "My 15 Minutes" interview by Jonathan Jones, *The Guardian* (Guardian News and Media, 11 Feb. 2002) Web 25 July 2016.
- 13 Patrick S. Smith, "Commercial Art Assistants," Nathan Gluck interview, *Warhol: Conversations about the Artist* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research, 1988), 56.
- 14 Donna De Salvo, "God Is in the Details: The Prints of Andy Warhol," *Andy Warhol Prints: A Catalogue Raisonné: 1962-1987*, ed. Frayda Feldman and Claudia Defendi, 4th revised edition (New York: D.A.P./Ronald Feldman Fine Arts/Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, 2003), 18-35, cat. # 28.



I think somebody should
be able to do all my
paintings for me.

—Andy Warhol

Cologne Cathedral (detail), 1985
Serigraph on board with diamond dust, 39 1/2 x 31 1/2 in.

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST



Flowers, 1970
Serigraph on paper, 36 x 36 in.
P2013.14.1 (front, detail)

Sunset, 1972
Serigraph on paper, 34 x 34 in.
P2013.14.2 (above)

Frederick Weisman, 1984
Serigraph on paper, 44 x 28 3/4 in.
P2013.14.3

Grace Kelly, 1984
Serigraph on paper, 40 x 32 in.
P2013.14.4

Cologne Cathedral, 1985
Serigraph on board with diamond dust,
39 1/2 x 31 1/2 in.
P2013.14.5

Sitting Bull, 1986
Serigraph on paper, 36 x 36 in.
P2013.14.7

*All Pomona College Collection. Gift of the
Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.
Extra, out of the edition. Designated for
research and educational purposes only.*

“Now Screening: Andy Warhol Prints” is curated by Adam Starr (PO’18). It is the third in a series of exhibitions developed by student curators under the Janet Inskeep Benton ’79 Summer Undergraduate Research Program (SURP) at the Pomona College Museum of Art.

Frederick Weisman, 1984
Polacolor ER, 4 1/4 x 3 5/16 in.
P2008.5.66

Frederick Weisman, 1984
Polacolor ER, 4 1/4 x 3 5/16 in.
P2008.5.67

*All Pomona College Collection. Gift of The
Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.*

*Birmingham Race Riot, from the portfolio
X + X (Ten Works by Ten Painters) 1964,
Serigraph on paper, 20 x 23 3/4 in.
Pomona College Collection.
P66.23*

Mao Tse-Tung, 1973
Serigraph on paper with
hand drawn elements,
35 3/4 x 57 7/8 in.
Pomona College Collection.
Gift of the C. E. Merrill Trust
P73.24

Cologne Cathedral, 1985
Serigraph on board with pulverized glass
powder, 39 1/2 x 31 1/2 in.
Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery,
Scripps College. Gift of the Andy Warhol
Foundation for the Visual Arts. Extra, out
of the edition. Designated for research and
educational purposes only.
2013.19.1

All images © The Andy
Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc.

Now Screening: ANDY WARHOL PRINTS



JANUARY 17 – MAY 14, 2017

POMONA COLLEGE MUSEUM OF ART

333 N. COLLEGE AVENUE CLAREMONT CA, 91711 | (909) 621-8283
MUSEUMINFO@POMONA.EDU | WWW.POMONA.EDU/MUSEUM

POMONA COLLEGE MUSEUM OF ART