TEACHERS’ NOTES

WARHOL’S MANY FACES

ANDY WARHOL

GALLERY OF MODERN ART

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THE ‘ANDY WARHOL’ EXHIBITION HAS BEEN ORGANISED BY THE QUEENSLAND ART GALLERY AND THE ANDY WARHOL MUSEUM, ONE OF THE FOUR CARNEGIE MUSEUMS OF PITTSBURGH. FUNDING FOR INSURANCE HAS BEEN PROVIDED THROUGH THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT EXHIBITION INDEMNITY SCHEME, ADMINISTERED BY ARTS QUEENSLAND.

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This tour examines Warhol’s self-portraits through a study of his prints, paintings and films. It also explores how Warhol’s multiple presentations of his persona mirror his interest in a wide array of modes of cultural production — film, photography, television and publishing. What do we learn about the artist through his many guises?

Topics:
• the role of art in contemporary society
• the many roles of an artist and multiple areas of production
• representations of identity
• art objects and their originality.

Subject areas:
• Visual Arts
• Film, Television and New Media
• English
• Studies of Society and the Environment.

Students participating in this tour should come away with an understanding of Warhol’s influence on:
• our notions of what constitutes art
• our ability to now attribute the term ‘art’ to a wide range of activities (film, media, publishing)
• the way artists explore, construct or reflect their identity through their work
• the ways meanings are evaluated and reconstructed in texts (such as identity and celebrity)
• society’s fascination with celebrity culture.

Note:
• there are a small number of works in the ‘Andy Warhol’ exhibition that contain adult content or mature themes. Parents, teachers and carers are advised to check further signage at the exhibition entry and in gallery spaces.
• questions and activities throughout this tour accompanied by an asterisk (*) have been specifically developed for secondary school students.

INTRODUCTION
Andy Warhol is probably the most photographed artist of the twentieth century. Not only was he frequently in the media, but he also created many self-portraits throughout his career — despite constructing a notoriously camera-shy and self-effacing persona. He used a number of different styles and techniques to present images of himself like masks, assuming roles such as cool rock star, celebrity, photographer, drag queen, monster or freak; he also used his own image as a wallpaper motif.

This tour considers the ways Warhol’s self-portraits were constructed to represent images of ‘Andy Warhol’, often serving to conceal and disguise rather than reveal any insight into the artist’s persona. Warhol’s love of celebrity culture, and his fascination with the production of personae and images rather than psychological profiles of the self, are important aspects of his practice.

‘IF YOU WANT TO KNOW ALL ABOUT ANDY WARHOL, JUST LOOK AT THE SURFACE OF MY PAINTINGS AND FILMS AND ME, AND THERE I AM. THERE’S NOTHING BEHIND IT.’
Students will explore how Warhol’s many presentations of his persona mirror his interest in a wide range of modes of cultural production — film, photography, television and publishing. Warhol made a significant contribution to our ability to now attribute the term ‘art’ to a wide range of activities. His work challenged the artistic conventions of medium, originality, technique and style. He embraced commercialism and populism, expanding definitions of art and the artist.

**FOR DISCUSSION**

- Why do artists make self-portraits?
- While the mirror or photograph can tell a person what he or she looks like, the physical image does not reflect the whole self. Consider the self-explorations Warhol engaged in to represent himself.
- How did Warhol conceal or disguise aspects about himself? Think about his use of devices such as wigs, make-up and camouflage.
- For each of Warhol’s self-portraits consider:
  - how expression, posture, clothing, background, colour, texture and style express the different identities of Warhol
  - the advantages or disadvantages of photography as a medium for self-portraiture
  - how a *Time Capsule* can also be considered a self-portrait of the artist.
- As a group discuss the ways that we construct our own identities and, importantly, the ways we present them to others (for example, through fashion, hobbies and the things we say to others). *
After moving to New York in 1949, Warhol established himself as a commercial artist and quickly achieved recognition in the advertising world. A hand-made quality and sense of fantasy characterised his early commercial work. These images were included in magazines such as *Glamour*, *Vogue*, *Harper’s Bazaar*, and the Sunday supplement of the *New York Times*. He designed advertisements, window displays, stationery, book jackets and record covers, and worked for department stores such as Tiffany, Bonwit Teller and shoe company I Miller and Sons.

One of Warhol's first jobs as a commercial artist was illustrating shoes for fashion magazines. In these whimsical drawings, the shoes take on a life of their own — they have distinct personalities and some of them seem to even be portraits without faces. Reflecting his obsession with fashion and outward appearances, shoes continued to feature in Warhol's art throughout his career. These early commercial works demonstrate Warhol's intuitive knowledge of the ways images can create desire, a sensibility exploited in his later images of celebrities and stars.

As well as being one of the most important visual artists of the period, Warhol is among the most provocative and influential filmmakers of the 1960s. Many early films were based on single, or very few shots, of extremely long duration, such as *Empire* 1964. Others document everyday activities, such as *Eat*, *Kiss* and *Sleep*.

*Empire* is a static single shot of the Empire State Building in New York from early evening until nearly 3.00am the next day. Many writers have made symbolic associations with the nature of the building in discussing this work — connected to ideas of ‘empire’ and the United States, or to the passing of time itself. However, Warhol was not prescriptive about the work’s ‘meaning’ — the associations are left up to the viewer. Warhol also famously said that talking about his movies was more interesting than watching them.

Warhol’s interest in monotony and repetition is also demonstrated in paintings and prints made up of identically repeated images. He was aware of several minimalist musical works of the 1950s and 1960s, such as John Cage’s notorious ‘silent’ composition 4’ 33” 1952; La Monte Young’s ‘eternal’ drone music; and the 18-hour performance in 1963 of Erik Satie’s *Vexations*, an 80-second piano piece repeated 840 times.

After these early film pieces, Warhol made more complex films often featuring actors from the Factory. These films were characterised by extreme subjects and transgressive activities, and later he produced his own television shows which were more for the mainstream.

**FOR DISCUSSION**

- How do you think people would have reacted to seeing *Empire* for the first time at a cinema in 1964? How does your viewing of the work in the Gallery affect your reaction to it? Think about what happens when you look at the same subject for hours at a time. How is this work similar to practices such as meditation? *
In 1974, motivated by a desire for order before moving from his Union Square studio to a new location on Broadway, Warhol began collecting and organising his belongings into uniform cardboard boxes. These boxes of ephemera, called Time Capsules, contain the objects and materials that consumed his daily life, including mail, photographs, clothes and newspaper clippings. Over 600 Time Capsules were created and they offer an intriguing insight into the detail and social context of Warhol's life.

Time Capsule 21 contains a number of interesting historical artifacts and source images, such as photographic strips of art collector Ethel Scull which were used for her commissioned portrait; the newspaper source for 129 Die in Jet! 1962; copies of the first issue of his magazine, initially titled Inter/View; a magazine page from which a photo of a mourning Jackie Kennedy has been clipped; and photographs of the critically injured Warhol being transported to hospital after the 1968 shooting.

The Andy Warhol Museum has painstakingly inventoried around 120 of the Time Capsules, and three (21, 68 and 237) feature in the exhibition.

FOR DISCUSSION

• What is the significance of the items selected for Warhol’s Time Capsules? What is revealed about the artist? (i.e. his hobbies, interests, everyday habits, his personality?)
• Do you think Warhol intended for his Time Capsules to be viewed? Why or why not?
• Why do people like to collect things? What does this activity say about them? Why is it sometimes hard to let go of the things we own or have acquired?
• Why would an artist choose collecting as an artistic practice? *
ANDY WARHOL AND TV

Warhol’s career evolved parallel to the rise of television as the dominant mass medium. In 1968, after his near-fatal shooting by Valerie Solanas, Warhol compared life and TV, finding the latter more real and immediate:

People sometimes say the way things happen in movies is unreal, but actually it’s the way things happen to you in life that’s unreal. Right when I was being shot and ever since, I knew that I was watching television. The channels switch but it’s all television.

(Andy Warhol, The Philosophy of Andy Warhol: From A to B and Back Again, Harcourt, New York, 1975, p.91.)

In 1980 he began work on Andy Warhol’s TV, a series of half-hour cable television programs that were broadcast weekly. Between 1985 and 1987, his Andy Warhol’s Fifteen Minutes appeared on the cable television music channel MTV. Often hilarious and inventive, both programs were based loosely on his successful Interview magazine, similarly focusing on interviews with artists, fashion designers, actors and celebrities. Capturing the feeling of the era, Warhol spoke with individuals ranging from artist Georgia O’Keefe, to film director Steven Spielberg, to model Jerry Hall. Warhol died in February 1987, leaving the last episode of Andy Warhol’s Fifteen Minutes unfinished.

Warhol was one of the most photographed people of his day and he loved any kind of publicity. He once stated, ‘I think I am a symbol of our times, of our culture, just as much as rockets and television’. (Andy Warhol in F Feldman and J Schellmann (eds), Andy Warhol Prints: A Catalogue Raisonné, Abbeville Books, New York, 1989, p.13.)

FOR DISCUSSION

• Consider some of the famous quotes Warhol made, such as ‘I am a deeply superficial person’ and ‘In the future everybody will be world famous for fifteen minutes’. Think about what these comments reveal about Andy Warhol's personality and personal philosophy. Come up with your own quote which reveals something about you and your views on society or culture.
The near-fatal shooting of Warhol by Valerie Solanas in 1968 profoundly affected the artist. During the early 1980s he adopted more traditional themes such as still lifes, religious subjects and self-portraits. This choice of subject is consistent with Warhol’s ongoing concern with death in both his life and his art and, as a devout Catholic, the spectre of death carried both promise and dread.

Warhol’s late works, such as the *Last Supper* paintings, retain the combination of his iconic choices of subject with a complex layer of associated histories and references. Here Warhol has provocatively reduced Leonardo da Vinci’s work to schematic outline drawings and introduced advertising logos and price tags — reminding us that traditions, beliefs and histories can also be commodities.

**GoMA / Gallery 1.3**

Warhol spent most of his career in the public eye and is probably the most photographed artist of the twentieth century. He also, however, presented a camera-shy, self-effacing image to the world which, ironically, constructed an almost mythical persona. Like his approach to depicting celebrities and stars, Warhol’s production of self-portraiture similarly presented personae and images of ‘Andy Warhol’ rather than a psychological profile of the self.

While self-portraits appear throughout Warhol’s career, few of them offer any insight into the artist’s persona and serve instead to conceal and disguise. He uses various media to present images of himself that are mask-like.

**GoMA / Gallery 1.3**

FOR DISCUSSION

- Warhol said that there was absolutely nothing behind his work. Do you think his statements fit with his self-portrait? In your opinion, is it superficial? Why or why not?
Although Warhol created many self-portraits throughout his career, they often serve to conceal and disguise rather than reveal any insight into the artist's persona. Like the Set of 6 Self-Portraits 1966, Self-Portrait No.9 1986 presents an image of Warhol which is essentially a disguised identity.

From an early age Warhol was conscious of his physical characteristics such as his paleness, wispy hair (and eventual baldness), acne and bulbous nose. He had surgery, bought wigs and toupees, had collagen injections and consumed large quantities of vitamin supplements in an effort to overcome his imperfections and attain a certain desirable 'look'. Warhol assumed roles such as cool rock star, celebrity, photographer, drag queen, monster or freak, and also used his own image as the motif for his wallpapers.

Following his near-fatal shooting in 1968 by Valerie Solanas, Warhol's self-portraits acquired a distinctly melancholy and morbid tone. In Self-Portrait No.9 1986 Warhol uses a 'fright wig' as an identity prop to create a disembodied hallucinatory image, which plays with the conflicting associations of the technicolour palette, camouflage pattern, and the artist's image consumed in darkness.

For Discussion
- Compare Self-Portrait No.9 1986 with Self-Portrait 1966–67. How are they different? Consider when the two works were made and what this might reveal about the artist.

Andy Warhol and the Velvet Underground

Warhol 'discovered' the Velvet Underground in 1965 and quickly instated himself as their manager, booking them for a series of gigs at underground nightclubs and happenings, including his travelling multimedia show the Exploding Plastic Inevitable. Their first event was at a psychiatry convention, initiating the extravagant, psychedelic light and slide shows which became a feature of their performances. With some opposition from the band, Warhol introduced enigmatic German model and singer Nico to the group. Warhol was responsible for the album cover for The Velvet Underground & Nico in 1967, and the Velvets also featured in a number of his films between 1966 and 1967. Their street-wise, punk sensibility and songs on drug addiction, sex, politics and death were revolutionary and remain highly influential. Despite the internal divisions which led to their separation from Warhol in 1967, the band's development was inseparable from Warhol's Factory — a fact which Reed acknowledged in a 2007 interview: 'I was always surrounded by [Warhol's] work, I was in the middle of it, I was part of his work'.

GoMA / Gallery 1.3

Teachers' Notes

warhol's Many faces
Warhol’s Many Faces

Observations of beauty, love, success and many other topics based on tape recordings of Warhol, actors and personalities from the Factory are contained in the book The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again). Warhol described his tape recorder as ‘my wife’ and obsessively taped conversations and everyday activities. The book also outlines his approach to art as commercial, popular and business-like, in contrast to the traditional role of the artist as non-commercial and original.

Another book by Warhol as a novel, published in 1968, is based on 24 hours of tape recordings (24 one-hour tapes) of the actor and Factory personality Ondine in conversation. The Andy Warhol Diaries was edited by Pat Hackett from a set of tax expense records after Warhol’s death in 1987.

Warhol’s work demonstrates how Pop art has contributed to a philosophical and practical incorporation of art into popular culture. His work has also given great significance to art generated as a product of contemporary culture.

GoMA / River Room

BACK IN THE CLASSROOM

• Think about the relationship between Warhol’s early commercial works, that are advertisements for objects, and the way that a self-portrait could be seen as a kind of advertisement for yourself.
• Take a digital photograph of yourself and either photocopy or digitally manipulate it to create two self-portraits that both present very different personas. Discuss what you have chosen to reveal about your personality, and whether it is real or fictional. Write a short poem about yourself to display with your portrait. Include aspects that relate to your personality, style or appearance. What do you want the viewer to learn about you? Create a class book with all the students entries included.
• Select a celebrity and create a portrait of them without showing their face — what elements would you incorporate to make the person recognisable. You can use many different mediums such as drawing, painting or collage.
• Create your own video diary. How could these also be considered self-portraits?
• Bring in five items which reflect his or her individual character, personality or interests. Assemble the items in clusters in the classroom. Examine the collections and try to guess who each belongs to, then compose a profile about the student whose objects they are.
• Compile a collection which represents your contemporary youth culture. Using objects and photographs, you might like to present a narrow point of view about your generation. Discuss what objects you will include or exclude, and consider how to label and display the items.
• As a group, choose some examples from the historical genre of self-portraiture to discuss in relation to Warhol’s work. Discuss the similarities and differences in different artists’ depictions of the self throughout history. *
• Research what it means for an art work to be ‘medium-specific’. How does Warhol’s work and philosophy challenge this notion? *
ANDY WARHOL

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The Andy Warhol exhibition has been organised by the Queensland Art Gallery and The Andy Warhol Museum, one of the four Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh. Funding for insurance has been provided through the Queensland Government Exhibition Indemnity Scheme, administered by Arts Queensland.

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