

**ICONS,
CELEBRITIES
AND STARS**

**ANDY
WARHOL**
GALLERY OF MODERN ART

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ICONS, CELEBRITIES AND STARS

'IT'S THE MOVIES THAT HAVE BEEN REALLY RUNNING THINGS IN AMERICA EVER SINCE THEY WERE INVENTED. THEY SHOW YOU WHAT TO DO, HOW TO DO IT, WHEN TO DO IT, HOW TO FEEL ABOUT IT AND HOW TO LOOK HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT IT.'

(Andy Warhol, *Giant Size*, Phaidon Press, New York, 2006, p.315.)

This tour explores Warhol's fascination with celebrity, with a particular focus on his portraits of famous people (including himself). What images come to mind when we think of the term 'celebrity'? How do the media and society help to construct celebrities today? Is this different to the way stars were considered at the time Warhol made his works?

Topics:

- representations of celebrity, glamour and fame
- role of the media in contemporary society
- portraiture.

Subject areas:

- Visual Arts
- Film, Television and New Media
- Studies of Society and the Environment
- Modern History
- English.

Students participating in this tour should come away with an understanding of:

- the influence of Warhol's fascination with celebrity, glamour and fame on his work, particularly his celebrity portraits
- the relationship between the media and celebrities
- the gap between public and private personas
- the relationship between Warhol's celebrity portraits and his other works.

Note:

- questions and activities throughout this tour accompanied by an asterisk (*) have been specifically developed for secondary school students.

INTRODUCTION

The late American historian and curator Robert Rosenblum described Warhol as 'a celebrity among celebrities and an ideal court painter to this 1970s international aristocracy that mixed, in wildly varying proportions, wealth, high fashion and brains'. (Robert Rosenblum, 'Andy Warhol: Court painter to the '70s' in David Whitney (ed.), *Andy Warhol: Portraits of the '70s* (exhibition catalogue), Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, p.15.)

Warhol was fascinated with fame and glamour. As a teenager he collected photographs of stars and celebrities and his first major job in New York was with the leading style magazine, *Glamour*. By the 1950s in America, the Hollywood movie industry had established a powerful publicity machine to promote movies and actors. The 'star' system could catapult actors, singers and dancers to overnight fame by creating personas that appealed to consumers. Warhol recognised that the world of publicity, advertising and movies was both a container of dreams and a reflection of desire.

By the 1970s and 1980s, Warhol was being commissioned to produce portraits of famous people. The portraits were intended to flatter and pander to individual egos, and were a seamless combination of Warhol's commercial and artistic practice.

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This tour looks at the concept of celebrity and the way fame is generated, using the works of Andy Warhol, and his obsession with glamour as a starting point for discussions. Classroom activities to complement the tour examine contemporary vehicles for celebrity, such as YouTube and *Big Brother*, within the context of Warhol's famous statement, 'In the future everyone will be world famous, for fifteen minutes'.

FOR DISCUSSION

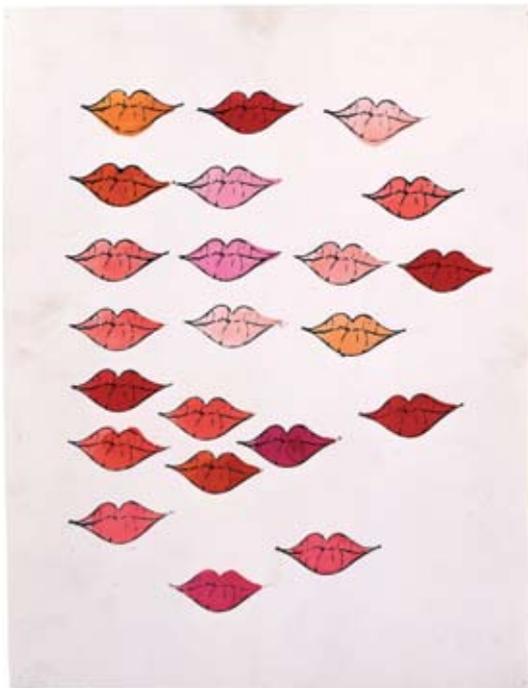
- Why are portraits important to us? Why do you think artists have created portraits throughout history?
- How do you define fame?
- Discuss a time in your life which you would consider your '15 minutes of fame'.
- Discuss the influence of the media on today's society and how television programs such as *Big Brother* and *Australian Idol* manufacture celebrity.

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'MARILYN'S LIPS WEREN'T KISSABLE, BUT THEY WERE VERY PHOTOGRAPHABLE.'

(Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol: From A to B and Back Again*, Harcourt, New York, 1975, p.54.)



Lips (Stamped) 1950s

Ink and Dr Martin's Aniline dye on Strathmore paper / 36.8 x 28.6cm / The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh / Founding Collection, Contribution The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. / © The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts Inc.

Lips (Stamped) was created in the 1950s, a time when Warhol was producing illustrations by commission for magazines such as *Harpers Bazaar*. Although the work pre-dates Warhol's famous images of celebrities, the lips conjure up a world of glamour and charm, epitomising the lives of those celebrities and icons Warhol so much admired and depicted in his later portraits.

Warhol's celebrities such as Monroe, Liza Minnelli and Debbie Harry are all heavily made-up with lashings of red lipstick and other brilliant hues applied to their cheeks and eyelids. The idea of applying make-up, particularly red lipstick, is deeply entrenched in the notion of dressing up and transforming oneself into a more glamorous version of oneself.

Throughout history, artists have used female lips to symbolise health, beauty, femininity, attraction and danger. Brightly painted lips have featured as of the signature motif of the film *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* 1975, and Salvador Dali's wood and satin Mae West lips sofa, to name a few. One of the most famous depictions of bright red lips is in Andy Warhol's silkscreen portrait of Marilyn Monroe (featured in this exhibition).

GoMA / Gallery 1.1

FOR DISCUSSION

- In this work, Warhol has repeated an image many times. Warhol's later works, including his celebrity portraits, also often featured repeated images. Discuss the effect of the repetition of imagery.

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Red Jackie 1964

Acrylic and silkscreen ink on linen / 101.6 x 101.9 x 2.5cm / The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh / Founding Collection, Contribution The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. / © The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts Inc.

In November 1963 US president John F Kennedy was assassinated, and in early 1964 Warhol began his series of *Jackie* silkscreen paintings based on eight grainy newspaper photographs of the President's widow. Like Marilyn Monroe and Elizabeth Taylor, Jackie radiated a sense of tragic mystery, accentuated by the funereal and shadowy tones of the paintings.

The multiple paintings of Jackie reveal the trajectory of events both before and after the fatal shooting. These paintings, based on public appearances following the assassination of her husband, are increasingly blurred and illegible, suggesting a kind of memorial to this utopian period in American history. In these works Warhol also comments on the instantaneous dissemination of news on a massive scale, and its inherent potential for manipulation.

I'd been thrilled having Kennedy as president; he was handsome, young, smart — but it didn't bother me that much that he was dead. What bothered me was the way the television and radios were programming everybody to feel so sad . . . (Andy Warhol and Pat Hackett, *Popism: The Warhol Sixties*, Harcourt, New York, 1980, p.60.)

GoMA / Gallery 1.1

FOR DISCUSSION

- In the 1960s Warhol chose to paint popular figures such as Jackie Kennedy and Marilyn Monroe. If Warhol was alive today, who might he have painted and why?
- Why are people fascinated with the lives of celebrities?



Mao Tse-Tung 1972

Colour screenprint / One of ten sheets: 91.6 x 91.6cm (each) / National Gallery of Australia, Canberra / © The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts Inc.

Between 1972 and 1974 Warhol created numerous paintings, drawings and prints of the Chinese Communist leader Mao Zedong. The image of Mao came from the cover of the ubiquitous *Little Red Book*, a book of extracts of articles and speeches, and is transformed with backgrounds of saturated colour and energetic brushwork.

In 1972 US President Richard Nixon's official visit to China represented the easing of the Cold War and opened diplomatic relations between the two countries. Mao's image appeared regularly in the media at the time. Warhol frequently asserted his apolitical status, but often engaged explicitly with topical political iconography. In addition, he may have been fascinated by Mao's creation of a personality cult. The *Mao* images ironically transform the Chinese leader into a pop icon, ultimately suggesting the resemblance of Communist propaganda to US advertising strategies.

The *Mao* works were famously exhibited at the Musée Galliera in Paris in 1974, where Warhol covered the gallery walls with his *Mao* wallpaper specially designed for the installation.

GoMA / Gallery 1.1

FOR DISCUSSION

- Does the man in these pictures look like a pop star or a politician? Why?
- Look closely at the images of Mao. Are they all based on the same photograph? How has Warhol made each painting different?
- How do these pop images of Mao Zedong position his public persona? *

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Ladies and Gentlemen
(portfolio) 1975

Colour screenprint and photo-screenprint / Six of ten sheets: 111 x 73cm (each) / Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane / Purchased 1995 with funds from the 1994 International Exhibitions Program / © The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts Inc.

Ladies and Gentlemen marks a significant shift in Andy Warhol's approach to portraiture. Rather than using found images, as he had done in his iconic 1960s portraits of subjects such as Marilyn Monroe, Warhol's portraits from 1975 are based chiefly on his own polaroid photographs of sitters in his studio. It was a technique that he used predominantly for commissioned portraits, and *Ladies and Gentlemen* is one of the few non-commissioned, 'thematic' series based on his studio polaroids. The series is also of note in Warhol's print oeuvre for its introduction of collaged pieces of coloured paper to define different sections of the image — a device that became a feature of his later work.

While there were many glamorous transvestites and drag queens in Warhol's milieu, the sitters for *Ladies and Gentlemen* were found by his manager at a New York transvestite bar and paid to sit for the portraits. As Warhol's witty title implies, the subjects of these works are ladies in terms of gender and gentlemen in terms of sex. Their self-conscious poses and obviously constructed personae point to one of the underlying themes of Warhol's oeuvre: that identity is made or 'performed'.

GoMA / Gallery 1.1

FOR DISCUSSION

- Look at other portraits in the exhibition. How many feature people adopting particular poses? Copy some of the poses — do they come naturally to you?
- What does it mean to say that identity is performed? What is involved in the different identities you perform each day (i.e. school student, daughter/son, cricket player, etc.). *

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ICONS, CELEBRITIES AND STARS



Debbie Harry 1980

Acrylic and silkscreen ink on linen /
Two panels: 106.7 x 106.7cm (each) /
The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh /
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Visual Arts, Inc. / © The Andy Warhol
Foundation for the Visual Arts Inc.

Warhol's celebrity portraits of the 1970s and 1980s took a different approach to his 1960s depictions of movie stars. Most significantly, the great majority were commissioned portraits. The expanding entertainment, music and movie industries of the period created wealth, notoriety and business opportunities for actors, performers, artists and entrepreneurs. For many, the idea of achieving fame and recognition became, an end in itself. The American writer Tom Wolfe called it the 'me' generation. The previously separate spheres of politics, business and entertainment began to merge, creating a highly visible social world familiar to millions through television, movies, magazines, gossip columns and international travel.

The celebrity portraits emerged from this world of high society, paparazzi, nightclubs and new wealth. The late American historian and curator Robert Rosenblum described Warhol as: 'a celebrity among celebrities and an ideal court painter to this 1970s international aristocracy that mixed, in wildly varying proportions, wealth, high fashion and brains'. (Robert Rosenblum, 'Andy Warhol: Court painter to the '70s' in David Whitney (ed.), *Andy Warhol: Portraits of the '70s* (exhibition catalogue), Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, p.15.)

Like his earlier portraits of stars such as Marilyn Monroe or Elizabeth Taylor, Warhol used photographs as the basis for his celebrity paintings. However, rather than use found images, he used a Polaroid 'Big Shot' instant camera almost exclusively for the portraits. Celebrities were often photographed in a tightly cropped, square format. The lighting from a powerful flash bleached out all shadows and created a flat and featureless face — a sort of mask — and completely free of blemishes and imperfections. At a fee of \$25 000, with the option of a second panel in a different colour for an additional \$15 000, the portraits were intended to flatter and pander to individual egos. Warhol's society portraits were his most unapologetically commercial works, seamlessly merging art and business.

GoMA / Gallery 1.1

FOR DISCUSSION

- What are the different circumstances through which people become famous?
- How do certain devices such as lighting and close cropping influence the way we make meanings from images?
- Name a famous star who is featured regularly in magazines. How many times do you think have you seen the celebrity's picture this year? Consider the way these images are used, and how this influences our opinion of the celebrity. Discuss the statement 'any publicity is good publicity' and how this applies to celebrities today. *

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Self-Portrait No.9 1986

Acrylic and screenprint on canvas /
203.5 x 203.7 cm / National Gallery of
Victoria, Melbourne / Purchased
through The Art Foundation of Victoria
with the assistance of the National
Gallery Women's Association, Governor,
1987 / © The Andy Warhol Foundation
for the Visual Arts Inc.

Warhol spent most of his career in the public eye and is probably the most photographed artist of the twentieth century. He also, however, ironically presented a camera-shy, self-effacing image to the world. Like his approach to depicting celebrities and stars, Warhol's production of self-portraiture similarly presents 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 styles and media to present images of himself that are like masks. The *Set of 6 Self-Portraits* 1966 from the Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, and *Self-Portrait No.9* 1986 from the National Gallery of Victoria both present mask-like images of Warhol.

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 and hallucinatory image which is further disguised and confused by an overlaid camouflage pattern. *Self-Portrait* 1986, in which the artist's image is consumed in darkness, is the most emphatically funereal.

GoMA / Gallery 1.3

FOR DISCUSSION

- Why do artists make self-portraits?
- What do we learn about Andy Warhol, the person, by looking at his self-portraits? Why does the artist take on different roles or personas? Which portrait do you think captures the true essence of Warhol the artist?
- Discuss the photographs and portraits of Warhol on display in the context of the following quote *:

'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.'

(Andy Warhol in David Moos, 'Andy Warhol, painter', *Supernova: Stars, Deaths, and Disasters, 1962-1964*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, 2005, p.29.)

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INTERVIEW MAGAZINE

Interview magazine was founded in October 1969. In his usually evasive and ironic fashion, Warhol gave various accounts of the reason for its birth — it was to give his younger Factory friends 'something to do', or to contribute to his already active social life. (Warhol once commented, 'I have a social disease. I have to go out every night'.) The monthly magazine gradually morphed from an underground newsletter to a full-scale, large-format publication involving many talented photographers, editors and authors. Under Warhol's casual direction, the magazine was pioneering in its bright pop-inspired format and in identifying underground cultures.

In the late 1970s *Interview* became increasingly gossipy and sensationalist as Warhol frequented the famous Studio 54 New York nightclub along with other members of the international jet set. Featured on the front cover or in the magazine's capacious pages were politicians, filmmakers, rock stars, fashion designers, literary figures and socialites, from Warhol himself to rock star Mick Jagger, actor Jack Nicholson and the American president's wife Nancy Reagan. Many of its interviews were between celebrities, providing an intimate and often humorous glimpse into the lives of the rich and famous.

GoMA / Gallery 1.2

FOR DISCUSSION

- Can you see any similarities between the covers of *Interview* magazine and Warhol's celebrity portraits?
- How is *Interview* magazine an extension of Warhol's obsession with fame and glamour?
- Discuss the ways in which an interview could be considered similar to a portrait.*

BACK IN THE CLASSROOM

- Bring to class a range of popular magazines and discuss the types of covers each of them have, and how they compare to Warhol's *Interview* magazine. Contrast the fashions and poses and discuss what is considered glamorous today.
- Invent a new celebrity icon. Write a complimentary profile about them, as it would appear in a magazine.
- Write down what thoughts or experiences five famous smiles conjure for you.
- Select an image of your favourite celebrity and use ideas from the 'Andy Warhol' exhibition to change their style and appearance.
- Use a computer program to manipulate photos of your own face to make it appear glamorous or famous. How similar are the processes of screenprinting to digital technology?
- Make copies of internet interviews given by popular celebrities. As a group, analyse the typical types of questions asked? What do the interviews reveal about the celebrity? *
- Is fame always a reward for achieving success? Consider Warhol's statement, 'In the future everyone will be world famous for fifteen minutes' in the context of contemporary culture including *Big Brother*, YouTube, MySpace and Facebook. *
- Which political figures today are featured regularly in the media (for example, George Bush, Kevin Rudd). How has the media shaped our views of their leadership? Consider political cartoons, internet jokes, television reports. *

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