

## ANDY WARHOL Artist Bio

1928 – 1987

ANDY WARHOL was born Andrew Warhola on August 6, 1928 near Pittsburgh, PA. His parents were Czechoslovakian immigrants. His father was a construction worker and his mother was a housewife. Andrew and his two older brothers, Paul and John were raised in a religious home, adhering to the Catholic customs of their parent's native country. Andrew's mother read to him from comic books and encouraged him to color in coloring books. She would reward him with a chocolate bar whenever he completed a page of his coloring.

From an early age Andy displayed significant talent and interest in art. He was selected to receive free Saturday art classes at the Carnegie Institute of Technology (now Carnegie Mellon University) and frequently received top honors in these classes. When Andy was nine years old he became ill with chorea, a neurological disorder characterized by involuntary muscle contractions and jerky movements of the face, hands, shoulders and hips. Sometimes this condition is also known as St. Vitus' dance. He had to stay inside to recuperate, and occupied his time with Superman comics, coloring, taking pictures with the family Kodak, collecting memorabilia and idolizing popular celebrities.

When Andy was thirteen years old his father died of tuberculosis. His father had only managed to save enough money to provide for the college education of one of the children. Since Andy was his mother's favorite, he was chosen. In 1945 he enrolled in the Department of Painting and Design at the Carnegie Institute. While in college, Andy developed his BLOTTED LINE TECHNIQUE, which allowed him to make multiple versions of the same drawing with unique and irregular line quality in each version. During this time Warhol also experimented with using hand made RUBBER STAMPS, and PHOTOGRAPHIC REPRODUCTIONS that he had either traced or copied using a projector.

Andy moved to New York in the summer of 1949, after graduating from college where he worked as an increasingly famous commercial ILLUSTRATOR. He worked for many

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companies, but his shoe illustrations in the New York Times skyrocketed him to fame in 1955. He became one of the highest paid artists in the field and received many awards for his innovative work. It was during this time that he began signing his name, “Andy Warhol,” dropping the final “a” from his last name.

In the 1960s, Warhol decided to stop making commercial art and entered the fine art world. Around this time a new art style was emerging in Britain, called POP ART. Pop Art celebrated western consumerism; common subjects included everyday objects and images, popular culture and the media (advertising, film and newspaper). Pop Art was mechanical and depersonalized- it used commercial printing and manufacturing techniques, and argues that art is just another commodity. Warhol’s life interests, experiences, and talent set him up to become the “Prince of Pop” because he was highly in tune with contemporary art world happenings, and acutely aware of the influences of commercial art on consumerism due to his graphic art expertise.

Warhol’s early Pop works were hand painted, but by 1962 he had begun to use the commercial art process of silkscreen to print images on canvas. He kept his finger on the pulse of popular culture by attending readings, performances and exhibitions. He made studio visits and encouraged other young artists. In the 1960’s Warhol expanded his artistic interests to other media. He created the magazine *Interview*, began making films, writing books, and collaborating with the rock group “The Velvet Underground”.

From 1963 to 1968 Warhol’s studio, “The Factory”, was the epicenter of the Pop Movement. Celebrities often dropped by the Factory for the ongoing parties. In 1968, an actress from one of Warhol’s earlier movies walked into the Factory and shot Warhol. After several surgeries and two months in the hospital, he emerged with a renewed attitude. The open door policy of the Factory changed and the location was moved. Warhol began concentrating on commissioned celebrity portraits and his Pop style made him highly sought after for corporate ad campaigns.

Warhol mysteriously passed away in February of 1987, from complications following a routine gall bladder surgery. He had become a legendary art-world figure in command of vast financial and cultural empires. Upon his death, his 27-room townhouse was

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sealed and the contents were auctioned off for \$25.3M. The proceeds went to the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts (which provides funding for organizations that foster artistic innovation who fund and exhibit artists creating innovative work) and were in part used to establish the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh, PA. Andy Warhol was truly a gifted artist of enormous energy and innovation who captured the spirit of his generation.

### RESOURCES

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