



Iconic Mass Culture: Andy Warhol's Portraits

PURPOSE OF THIS PACKET:

To provide K-12 teachers with background information on the exhibitions and suggest age appropriate applications for exploring concepts, meaning, and artistic intent of work exhibited, before, during, and after the museum visit.

CURRICULAR UNIT TOPIC:

Teachers and students examine iconic imagery found in *Iconic Mass Culture* and think critically about what this tells us about our understanding of culture in America. The focus of this educational packet and curricular unit is to **observe, question, explore, create and reflect**.

OBSERVE:

Students and teachers will observe the examples of portraiture in *Iconic Mass Culture*. Students will make comparisons between the Polaroid portrait series and the silkscreen prints in this exhibit.

QUESTION:

Students will have an opportunity to read, write, sketch, and listen to teachers and museum educators, and then, to come up with questions about the work they see, the cultural context and the concepts behind the art work and the artist who created it. Students will question the materials and techniques used and their own responses to the art work in the exhibition.

EXPLORE:

Students are encouraged to examine the cultural and social context of the Pop Art Movement as it relates to the art in *Iconic Mass Culture*. How does Andy Warhol use photographic portraits to convey his ideas?

CREATE:

Students will be given time to create. They will sketch, draw, paint, or print a work that reflects the student's individual identity/culture.

REFLECT:

Students will evaluate their final art products with other students from their classes and with teachers and museum educators. They will receive feedback on the art work and the concepts behind the making of the art work. After this process, each person may write an essay about their art, the artist, or their museum experience.





Andy Warhol (American 1928-1987), *Pia Zadora*, 1983, Polaroid, 4 x 3 inches, University of Wyoming Art Museum, gift of the Andy Warhol Foundation of the Visual Arts, Inc., The Andy Warhol Photographic Legacy Program. Copyright 2010 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

INTRODUCTION

For the 20th anniversary of the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the Photographic Legacy Program distributed collections of original photographs to 180 academic museums and galleries in the U.S. As a recipient of the program, the University of Wyoming Art Museum received 150 Polaroid and gelatin silver prints taken by Andy Warhol (American, 1928-1987) over the course of his career.

Using a Polaroid camera to shoot formal portraits, Warhol posed his models in front of a plain background. He treated and presented each subject equally—both the celebrity and the unknown persons—with an overall intent of making each subject look their best, often applying heavy white makeup to hide imperfections. Often asking his models to select their favorite image, he involved his subjects in the artistic process and created a collective ideal of beauty. Using this communal idea

of beauty, he produced images that mirrored the idea of mass culture—a product that appeals and is accessible to everyone.

Contrasting the uniformity of the Polaroid portraits are the candid and more personal gelatin silver prints. Exposing the human-side of his subjects, Warhol captures the figures in a single moment in time, often in awkward positions. Whether celebrities or unidentified people, his subjects become accessible on a personal level and are seen in situations that can be easily related to by the public. Warhol infuses his own artistic perspective rather than the democratic ideal of the Polaroid portraits.

The screenprint portraits combine the two approaches – the communal idea of beauty and the personal artistic perspective. Warhol's use of the screenprint process mass-produced the universal ideal of beauty drawn from the Polaroid portraits. It also allowed Warhol to add his artistic perspective as employed in the gelatin silver prints. The screenprint image remains static while colors and lines are altered based on Warhol's artistic inspiration.

In a celebrity-obsessed era, Warhol raised both the celebrity and unknown persons to an equal iconic status by treating and studying each subject similarly, regardless of who they were or the portraiture technique he employed.

- Text Label

Iconic Mass Culture: Andy Warhol's Portraits

HISTORY

The 1960's saw the dawning of a new art form – one that has been described as the opposite of emotion-laden Abstract Expressionism, and unconcerned with the purity of line and form and color found in the work of the Color Field painters and Minimalists. Instead, this artwork celebrated the energy and growing dominance in the world of American and

Western European culture. It acknowledged the explosion of advertising as a means of influencing every day life and creating new icons. Pop art – derived from the word popular – was embraced by the public in ways never seen before. “Here is what the people had suspected all along, that they could understand vanguard art if it were not so opaque, so willfully unrecognizable. The world that people knew, that they worked in and looked at every day, was the subject of the most contemporary painting and sculpture again” (Steven Henry Madoff, *Pop Art: A Critical History*, 1997, p. xiv).

In 1966 Lucy Lippard wrote that “It is rare that collectors and general public, *Life and Ladies Home Journal* accept a new art before many critics and museums. Pop Art has given rise to a cult of liking that obscures the contribution it has made. Because it is easy to look at and often amusing, recognizable and therefore relaxing, Pop has been enjoyed and applauded on an extremely superficial level” (*Pop Art*, 1966, p. 80). She goes on to note, “Pop chose to depict everything previously considered unworthy of notice, let alone of art: every level of advertising, magazine and newspaper illustration, Times Square jokes, tasteless bric-a-brac and gaudy furnishings, ordinary clothes and foods, film stars, pin-ups, cartoons. Nothing was sacred, and the cheaper and more despicable the better” (p.82).

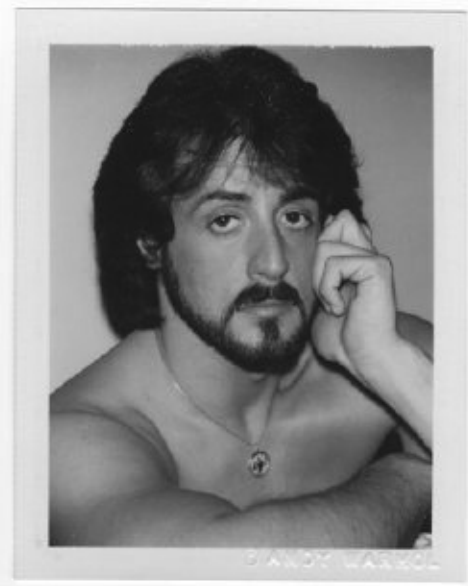
Looking back, David McCarthy points out that “it is deceptive to suggest that Pop art was fully opposed to previous modern or modernist art, or that it was designed to be understandable to anyone who happened to see it. It was a thoroughly learned movement with a keen sense of its historical precedents” (*Pop Art*, 2000, p.15). McCarthy traces Pop art’s roots back to the early 20th c. Cubist artists and Futurists, then to the Surrealists and Dadaists. “For all of its historical indebtedness, though, Pop was – and remains – a movement inextricably intertwined with the sixties. Like Minimalism and Post-painterly Abstraction, Pop was simple, hard-

edged, flat, anti-gestural and pre-meditated in its style” (*Pop Art*, 2000, p. 24).

Andy Warhol became synonymous with Pop art. “Perhaps more than any other Pop artist, Warhol understood the necessity of easily recognizable and endlessly repeatable images for establishing fame through the mass media.” (David McCarthy, *Pop Art*, 2000, p. 41) Pop artists realized that mass media and celebrity went hand in hand. Television and popular magazines promoted people, goods and services, reinforcing worldwide America’s growing abundance. At the same time, it became clear that almost anyone or anything could become famous through repeated promotion in the media. Warhol and other Pop artists explored “pre-existing sources originally manufactured for mass consumption. Among these sources are newspaper photographs, color advertisements, commercial signs, comic books and movies. The process by which the art is made is sometimes abbreviated in the sense that the artists forgo the traditional preparation of sketches,

Andy Warhol (American 1928-1987), *Unidentified Woman, Plaid Shirt*, 1980, Polaroid, 4 x 3 inches, University of Wyoming Art Museum, gift of the Andy Warhol Foundation of the Visual Arts, Inc., The Andy Warhol Photographic Legacy Program. Copyright 2010 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York





Andy Warhol (American 1928-1987), *Sylvester Stallone*, 1980, Polaroid, 4 x 3 inches, University of Wyoming Art Museum, gift of the Andy Warhol Foundation of the Visual Arts, Inc., The Andy Warhol Photographic Legacy Program. Copyright 2010 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

studies, underpainting and finishing, for a direct transfer of imagery through collage and silkscreen” (David McCarthy, *Pop Art*, 2000, p. 25).

“...Pop proposed a new art open to the many. In doing so, it helped relegate a narrow definition of modernism to the past by proposing that the present needed something more” (David McCarthy, *Pop Art*, 2000, p. 76).

LESSON OVERVIEW

In examining *Iconic Mass Culture* the students will begin to think about how mass media has shaped contemporary American culture and how that informs our view of ourselves and our communities.

During their time in the gallery, students will be asked to use a sketchbook or journal. For classes/students without journals, sketch paper will be provided. Students will be asked to respond to the exhibit by building word lists, writing down thoughts or questions, and by sketching artworks on

display. These journals will be used as reference to create art in the Shelton Studio.

In the Shelton Studio, students will extend their knowledge of the Pop Art Movement by thinking about our culture and how it is shaped by mass media. Art projects in the Studio (or back in the school classroom) will reflect this discussion. Students will be asked to illustrate their own identity, community, or culture through iconic imagery. This can take many forms and will be determined through discussions between the museum educator and the classroom teacher.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

GRADES K-6

- What is an icon?
- Define identity.
- What is culture?
- What is mass media?
- What is Pop Art?
- Can you name cartoon characters, toys, and people that are popular today because they have been promoted in the media (TV, internet, movies, etc.)? Why do you think they are popular?

GRADES 7-12

- How did mass media influence the Pop Art movement?
- Why do artists work in series?
- What do portraits tell us about an individual? A community? A country?
- How does Pop Art use iconic imagery?
- Who are the icons of our contemporary society? How did they get to be that way?

ART QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

GRADES K-6

- What do you see?

- Do you think these portraits of people are “posed” or “natural?” What clues do you see that help you decide?
- There are famous and everyday people portrayed in this exhibit. Can you tell the difference? Why or why not?

GRADES 7-12

- Why is repetition such an important part of Warhol's artwork?
- How would you use the same techniques to make something new in art?
- How does Pop Art use iconic imagery?
- What materials are used to create the works in this exhibit? What are the challenges of using these materials?
- If you were to create an iconic portrait, who (or what) would be your theme? What materials would you use?

PRE-VISIT ACTIVITIES

In order to prepare students for their museum visit and extend learning possibilities, we suggest that teachers and students consider the following activities:

- Read about the Pop Art Movement.
- Research the life and art of Andy Warhol.
- Investigate the impact of mass media on 1960's – 1970's American culture.
- Research the political and social events of 1960's and 1970's.

PREREQUISITE SKILLS/KNOWLEDGE

Museum educators will work with teachers to ensure that all projects are age and skills appropriate. Teachers may select words from the following vocabulary word list for students to look up and understand:

- Icon
- Identity

- Series
- Culture

The following art terms: Pop art, Cubism, Dadaism, Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism, Color Field painting, Assemblage, Collage

MUSEUM ACTIVITIES

These activities are suggestions. Museum educators will work with teachers to carefully tailor all classes to their students' needs, in support of classroom goals and district and state education standards.

PART 1

TIME FRAME: 30 - 45 MINUTES

(IN THE GALLERIES)

- Students will closely observe the artworks in *Iconic Mass Culture*.
- Students may be given worksheets or journals so that they may respond to the exhibit by recording their observations and impressions through sketching and writing.
- Students will create word lists about the

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exhibit that help them describe the art work or explain how they feel about it.

- Students will identify the materials used to create the works in the exhibit.
- Students will examine the purpose and subject of art in this exhibit.
- Students will discuss what they see with museum educators.
- Students will engage in discussions about their observations, sketches, and reflections with one another, teachers, and museum educators.

PART 2

TIME FRAME: 45 - 60 MINUTES

(IN THE SHELTON STUDIO)

The following projects may be considered individually, or combined, or museum educators will work with teachers to develop specific projects which support ongoing classroom work.

- Students will explore artistic devices used to create the works on exhibit, such as shape, balance, and composition.
- They may create their own portrait using these artistic devices. The works should take into account the expression of their own identity and experiences and students should be able to reflect on how their works are similar to or different than their peers and community.
- Students may create a collage or assemblage using contemporary images found in current magazines, newspapers, and on the Internet.
- Students may develop a contemporary iconic artwork. Classroom teachers and museum educators will work together to select the materials that students may use.
- Students should be prepared to discuss their artwork with their peers, teachers, and museum educators.
- Students may write a reflective paper that

describes their favorite piece on exhibit in *Iconic Mass Culture*.

POST VISIT ACTIVITIES

We have found that students achieve maximum benefit from a museum visit when time is scheduled for post-visit activities. Here are some suggestions:

- Use individual sketches to produce a print or series.
- Use writing to reflect on the museum visit. What process was used to create your work? What was your intent as the artist? What does your artwork say about you?
- Research various artists of the Pop Art Movement.
- Pick a favorite artwork/portrait series in the exhibit and write a creative story about the piece(s). Who/what are the characters in this story? What do they have to tell us?

SUGGESTED CURRICULUM USE

Iconic Mass Culture will tie into a variety of curricular areas including, but not limited to the following:

- History
- Art
- Language Arts
- Graphic Design
- Psychology

Museum educators will work with teachers to address specific Wyoming Standards and align museum projects and activities with classroom lessons and assessments.

SOME RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

These are just a few of the many resources available. We welcome other suggestions that teachers and students find helpful which can be added to this list.

- University of Wyoming Art Museum website, <http://www.uwyo.edu/artmuseum>

- Exhibition materials such as the Cell Phone tour
- Andy Warhol Museum, www.warhol.org
- Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, www.warholfoundation.org
- *Pop Art*, Tilman Osterwold
- *Pop Art: A Critical History*, Steven Henry Madoff
- *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol: (From A to B and Back Again)*, Andy Warhol
- *Pop: The Genius of Andy Warhol*, Tony Scherman
- *Andy Warhol Portraits*, Tony Shafrazi, Carter Ratcliff, and Robert Rosenbaum
- *Pop Art*, Lucy R. Lippard, with contributions by Lawrence Alloway, Nancy Marmer, and Nicola Calas
- *Movements in Modern Art: Pop Art*, David McCarthy

MATERIALS TO BE SUPPLIED TO EACH STUDENT

Materials for selected Shelton Studio projects are provided by the art museum..

ASSESSMENT & DOCUMENTATION

In order to ensure that our museum tour program is meeting the needs of teachers and students, we may ask that participants help us assess the activities and learning that take place. Examples of evaluation tools include:

1. Students will self-assess using a quick survey that asks them to consider their response to the gallery discussions and explorations, and their studio experience,
2. Teachers will assess the overall visit by completing a quick-survey that asks for their observation and assessment of students' experiences, as well as assessment of the overall process of the museum visit.
3. Museum educators will record their observations and assessments.
4. When studio time permits, we will ask students to briefly discuss their art completed in the Shelton Studio.
5. Museum staff may take photographs of students and teachers to document the learning taking place and the work produced during a museum visit. These are available to teachers upon written request for use in teaching and student portfolios.