



Andy Warhol

was a sickly kid who stayed at home in bed and wrote to the Shirley Temple fan club for signed photos; he was awarded a prestigious art scholarship to Carnegie Mellon Institute (now Carnegie Mellon University), and by 1956 he was regarded as one of the most celebrated graphic designers in the US. His Bonwit Teller window displays were so unusual and inventive that customers came for them alone, and he was forever emblazoned in American cultural history as the platinum-wigged poster boy of so-called Pop Art (a movement he made famous though it actually began a decade before in London).

Warhol convinced the world that soup cans, coke bottles and stunningly clever rip offs in oil and silkscreen of famous movie stills showing Marilyn Monroe, James Dean and Liz Taylor counted as fine art. And he managed, if unwittingly, to extend his substantially more than fifteen minutes of fame by being shot and nearly killed in 1968 (seven hours of surgery saved him) by Valerie Solanas, one of the many sycophants that hovered around Warhol's famously kinky studio, the Factory.

What else can possibly be said or seen in regards to Andy Warhol that has not already been seen or said?

"Warhol: Headlines," a show at the National Gallery in Washington, DC, features Andy Warhol's lesser-known works of manipulated newspaper headlines. Left: *Daily News*, ca. 1967. All images: The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh; contribution The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. © 2011 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc./Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.



uite a lot, according to Molly Donovan, Curator of Contemporary Art at the National Gallery, in Washington, DC, who has mounted an unusual exhibition of Warhol's slightly less well-known "Headline" works. Notoriously taciturn, Warhol called himself a mere replicating "machine," as if to caution us against reading too much into what he had to say via his zany persona and oh-so-groovy work.

The artist, above, in Edward Pfizenmaier's 1970 portrait (detail), courtesy of Jackson Fine Art, [click image to view on 1stDibs](#). Right: As the ringleader of the New York art scene, Warhol collaborated with such art stars of the 1980s as Jean-Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring, with whom he created *Untitled*, 1985, right. Additional credit © Keith Haring Foundation







Nowhere does this take of Warhol as mere surface seem more writ large — no pun intended — than in works featured in “Warhol: Headlines,” which runs through January 22, 2012. Here are works the artist made from 1962 until his death in 1987, in which he copied in paint or in prints scandalous images and text from the front pages of daily rags: Eddie Fisher betrayed by Liz and Dick, a recall of contaminated canned tuna where Warhol transforms the paper’s headline “Did Leak Kill?” into a comment on spurious newsroom tactics.

Copyist as this seems, Donovan suggests that we ought not be fooled. This show and this particular body of work present a tremendously complex side of Warhol, suggesting that nothing is quite what it appears. Selective and subtle visual alterations in his so-called “copies” spoke multitudes about this complicated, somewhat pained fellow and his remarkably provocative art. As Donovan points out, Warhol both desperately sought celebrity and was one of its earliest and most insightful critics. The one cautionary you will grasp from this excellent show is that whenever Warhol is concerned, simple is simply not.

129 Die in Jet, 1962. Courtesy of Rheinisches Bildarchiv Köln.

Are these atypical for Warhol? They are certainly not the big poppies and Brillo boxes?

They are only atypical to me in the sense that they have never been well defined; the theme has never been discussed thoroughly. In terms of what they address and what I see them saying, they are totally consistent with the whole career.

What connects them to everything else?

Well, these works are pointing out that news is commerce, that information is a consumer product and like all other products it is presented to get us to buy it — we are invited and prone to consume scandal.

And I guess that in the early '60s this idea that news "facts" were, well, not factual, pretty fluid and often tweaked was very ahead of the curve. But would you agree that the tone and coloration is different here? I just cannot see the public finding these to be typical Warhols.

I really don't think it is a question of mood or coloration so much, it is just that these include more text; these works are language based and I think he is playing with words and using them graphically in ways that he does not in other works that are just big celebrity portraits.

The Princeton Leader, 1956. Courtesy of The Brant Foundation, Greenwich, Connecticut

Native To Head of Egypt, Botany Department

Dr. Arthur H. Merrill, son of Thomas A. Merrill, of the Eastern Kentucky University, arrived August 24, from New York, where he was the U.S. Consul for Egypt. He will be in charge of the department of botany at the University of Cairo, one of the nations of the world.



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UNDERGOES SURGERY
Bill Price, son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Price, of the country, underwent surgery at the Baptist Hospital at Nashville Tuesday.

Playground To Be Open Next Summer

The opening of the playground at the school will be held on August 28, 1956.



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Little League Pennant Is Won By Rotary Reds

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Miss Travis Graduates From School of Nursing

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Press Box To Be Built At The Butler Stadium

The Caldwell County School Board has approved the construction of a press box at the stadium on the west side of the stadium.

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Local Man Completes Appren- ticeship As A Plumber, Steam Fitter

Charles A. Lindsay, an employee of B. N. Luby Co., recently received a certificate of completion of his apprenticeship as a plumber and steam fitter from the Kentucky Apprenticeship Council.

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FINAL

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Stories on Page 75



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Vol. 43, No. 238

Printed and Published by the

New York 17, N.Y., Thursday, March 29, 1945

WEATHER: Mostly Fair, 44 to 62

EDDIE FISHER — BREAKS DOWN

In Hospital Here; Liz in Rome



Can you be more specific?

Well, for example, the very famous one we have on view that is titled *129 Die in Jet*. It is no accident as I see it that this headline came from the front page of the tabloid called *The Mirror*. The word figures prominently in the piece and of course mirrors are reflective surfaces where we see ourselves. To me it is almost as if Warhol is suggesting, with his famous dry wit, this idea that we seek or see ourselves in racy headlines and in the stardom we're so fascinated with.

Most people think that these so-called disaster or scandal themes were infrequent, an anomaly from Warhol's otherwise glam-fab-fun content. From the show's selections, it looks as if this is not the case.

When I began to build the show, I was shocked to find that Warhol did them throughout his career, starting with the very famous *A Boy for Meg* that was donated to the National Gallery by Mr. and Mrs. Burton Tremaine.

A Boy for Meg [2], 1962. Courtesy of the National Gallery of Art



Does that work sort of mark the tenor of the theme.

Well, it's the copy of a headline announcing the birth of a boy to Princess Margaret in this really sensationalist way. When I was thinking about this show I found myself looking at tabloids, and the strategies have changed very little. You know, for the many years that this show was in the works and I was sensitized to what Warhol was doing, I'd check out tabloids and read that Jennifer Aniston was pregnant — she has been pregnant for years! It is just our inescapable fascination and identification with the dramatic lives of the famous. And I think that Warhol wasn't just celebrating this, he was looking closely at what it says about us.

You are showing what may have been his first headline work that Warhol took from a 1956 Kentucky weekly. In the work, Warhol seems to be copying selected articles from the front page, but he does not just copy, he makes clever shifts you have to watch out for to see. Under the words *Local Man Completes Apprenticeship as a Plumber, Steam Fitter, Warhol stuck in the name of his well-to-do pal Charles Lisanby, who, like many of the jet-set attracted to him, probably never did a day of hard labor.*

That is one example but there are so many intentional alterations that follow a pattern of messages too clear to be coincidental. These works, more than any Warhol did, indicate that he had a real social awareness, of things like class and race and the idea that we may be addicted to viewing disasters in media because these oddly affirm our own survival.

How many works are in the show and how did you organize it?

We borrowed eighty major works from museums and collectors and that is not a small fleeting theme — it is actually quite a lot. The only way to do this sort of an exhibition is chronologically, but we did play around with how to show and compare the artwork by Warhol to the actual source material he used — the actual clips. The comparison is key but the idea was tossed around that both the clippings and Warhol's interpretations should be mounted on the wall together. I absolutely did not want this. There is wonderful source material to put the theme in context but it is contained in vitrines placed in the middle of the galleries. I for one am uncomfortable mixing up the record with the work; I felt that undermined what sets these two apart.

Writers Sandra Hochman and Donald Barthelme posed for Warhol for the *Harper's Bazaar* feature "New Faces, New Forces, New Names in the Arts," June 1963. The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh





Were you a Warhol scholar when you started?

I certainly knew a good deal but I discovered so much and realized there is so much Warhol work and so much Warhol information that has not yet been studied. I do not think we know Warhol yet.

You are also screening his films, which can get pretty hard-hitting and were ahead of their time as experimental cinema. How do you see the relationship between these headlines works and the Warhol films?

In the screen tests that we have on view, there is the same selectivity, the same subtle, careful decisions to crop or slow a frame, to pull in or pull back from a face. It's the same mastery and selection you see in the wall works that tell you over and over this was not just an artist copying pop clichés as is; these were the decisions that make art art.

Warhol's silkscreened take on the founder of *Look* magazine, Gardner Cowles, 1977