

Andy Warhol

“I’d prefer to remain a mystery. I never like to give my background, and, anyway, I make it all up different every time I’m asked.”

Born on Aug 6, 1928 to Slovakian emigrants in Pennsylvania. His father first came to America in 1912 worked on construction sites and as a coal miner. He died when Warhol was 13, probably on a mining job site. His mother followed his father to America in 1921. Strangely, Warhol never would discuss if and when his mother died; although as late as 1978 he remarked that she was sick in bed a lot and didn’t leave the house.

Warhol is described as a shy, quiet boy who didn’t particularly excel at school. He did however graduate from high school and then Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh.

Following graduation he moved to New York City and began a career in advertising. He became rather famous as an illustrator, focusing primarily on women’s shoes.

During the 1950’s Warhol was a book illustrator and held his first solo exhibit at this time. He was not particularly popular at this time.

He began to break away from advertising in the late 50’s and 60’s. He began to create art based on society’s increasing obsession with images. The artwork he created was called “Pop Art”. While working in advertising, Warhol’s images were created to slip into the consumer’s unconscious and evoke feelings of want and need (like when your watching a commercial for new sneakers and suddenly realize that your really need the same shoes as Michael Jordan). In opposition to this, his new art was meant to make the viewer actually stop and look at the images that had become so familiar they went unnoticed. He wanted people to look at things longer than they normally would.

His favorite themes included: comic strips (like Dick Tracy and Superman) and seemingly common objects like Coca Cola bottles, Campbells Soup Cans and dollar bills. He is quoted as saying the reason why he created the coke paintings is that it is amazing to him because a coke is a coke. The president drinks the same coke as his. He created artwork at an amazing rate during the 50’s and 60’s, primarily due to his method. He created his artwork in a studio he named “The Factory”. Many artists and celebrities used to congregate at the Factory for art and all-night parties.

Warhol also experimented in film. He directed and produced numerous films. Including an 8 hour movie featuring a poet friend of his sleeping. The film, called “Sleep” and rarely seen now, had been edited to 5-12 hours for DVD. This tied in with his art in that he wanted his art to encourage people to look at things longer than they normally would have. Who’d watch this movie?

As his following got larger and larger, so did people who wanted to be famous with him. And in 1968 a woman who had submitted a play for Warhol's approval got upset with him due to his lack of interest and shot him. He was declared dead; but later was revived.

It was around this time that Warhol coined the phrase, "In the future everyone will be famous for 15 minutes." And when he began his paintings of living superstars...like the one we have here. Around the time of this painting and the many many more he created like it, Marilyn Monroe was a tremendous star.

Warhol spent the last years of his life in New York, wildly popular and very rich. He was often spotted wandering the streets of New York carrying a plastic full of \$100 dollar bills and buying nik-nacks at local antique shops.

He died of heart failure on Feb.22, 1987 at the age of 58.

<http://webexhibits.org/colorart/marilyns.html>