

Press Release



Andy Warhol, Mao, 1972*

ANDY WARHOL *The Late Work*

28 January - 8 May 2005

Museum of Contemporary Art, Lyon (France)

Preview: Thursday 27 January, 8:30 pm

Andy Warhol was one of the most influential and charismatic personalities in 20th-century art. At the start of the 60s, he was an Icon of the Pop Art movement. But apart from the celebrated images of Marilyn Monroe and Elvis Presley, after 1972 he also produced a considerable number of works that have rarely been seen by the public.

The present selection of more than 200 pieces, many of which were loaned by the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh (USA), includes pictures and photographs not previously exhibited, but also videos and films; which makes this is a ground-breaking opportunity to discover the full depth of Warhol's late work. His skill in using a range of different media is brought out, and also his interest in abstract painting. The exhibition is co-produced with the Museum Kunst Palast in Düsseldorf, (Germany), the Kunstmuseum in Vaduz, (Liechtenstein), and the Liljevalchs Konsthall in Stockholm, (Sweden). After supposedly turning aside from painting, Warhol's 1972 Mao series represented the start of an intensive confrontation with the medium. He combined silk-screens with a freer pictorial quality and an expressive treatment of colours. During the 70s, with the Shadow and the Oxidation experiments, he was beginning to think of painting in terms of reflections on the surface of the canvas. Through colour and series, despite the abstract nature of his images, he succeeded in preserving their characteristic presence; and for the viewer, the charm was irresistible. This absorption of the viewer into the work typifies the Marilyn Monroe Reversals series and the Mona Lisa, as well as the Camouflage and The Last Supper. With their large dimensions (up to two metres in length), these works give the viewer a highly intense visual experience.

A new presentation of the Wallpapers, juxtaposed with the paintings, takes up several rooms. Warhol himself presented the Toys series, for example, on a fish-motif background, so as to produce a particular optical effect. And the exhibition also includes a world premiere of the Washington Monument wallpaper, which was never really put into production. These late paintings underline Warhol's abiding interest in the evanescence of beauty and the presence of death - major themes which belie the outdated view of his work as a mere Pop phenomenon.

In parallel with his pictorial innovations, Warhol was interested in photography, video and the cinema. And this exhibition presents, for the first time, a large number of his contact prints, which give a perspicacious, intimate vision of New York in the 80s, showing the artist once more in his role as a "social observer". His videos, produced for television, remind us of his interest in "trends" and social events. And with his later films, such as L'Amour, Women in Revolt and Heat, new light is cast on the neglected theme of genre and role images, which he took up on several occasions. In more biographical terms, the exhibition also includes books and interviews. In particular there are the Diaries, based on conversations with Pat Hackett, which give us a faithful account of the last ten years of Warhol's life. Then there are his discussions with various artists and celebrities for his magazine Interview, which complete our view of his entourage and his grasp of the period in which he lived.

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