Campbell's

CONDENSED

TOMATO

SOUP

ANDY WARHOL

working with

POP ART

american ICON

This cow looks as though it might have appeared in a milk commercial. Warhol made the image absurd by using garish colors and repeating it as a wallpaper pattern.

Cow Wallpaper, 1966. Silkscreen on paper, 44" x 30".
© Copyright The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. ARS, N.Y, N.Y.

Andy Warhol was perhaps the most famous American artist of all time. He was also a filmmaker, illustrator, art collector, publisher, author, and music producer. Warhol was fascinated by fame and, like the figures he admired, eventually became a celebrity himself. During the late 1970s, everyone who was famous attended his parties. The artist was pale and ghostly, and he usually wore a bright-yellow wig. But his favorite role was that of an impartial observer of all the glamour that surrounded him.

From early childhood, Warhol had been fascinated with the fantasy world of movies and celebrities. Andrew Warhola—the son of Czech immigrants—was born in 1928 in western Pennsylvania. As a boy, he collected pictures of movie stars and spent hours copying magazine illustrations. He dreamed of one day escaping the dreary industrial town where he grew up. In 1949, Warhol graduated from the Carnegie Institute of Technology, then left for New York City to seek work as a commercial artist.

Warhol showed up in advertising firms wearing dirty sneakers and carrying his work in a brown paper bag. He

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Warhol and other Pop artists took basic items from modern consumer culture and turned them into paintings and sculpture.

was painfully shy, but by the mid-1950s, he had a flourishing career as a commercial artist. However, he wanted a more permanent place in art history. He had shown his drawings in New York galleries, but with limited success. The artist then began to experiment, putting comic-strip characters and other commercial images on canvas.

Warhol rocked the New York art world in 1962, when he gave his first one-man show. Many people were outraged when they saw his paintings of Campbell's soup cans. Art was supposed to provide a retreat from the crass commercialism of television, movies, and advertising.

"If you want to know all about Andy Warhol, just look at the surface of my paintings, and me. There's nothing behind them."

— Andy Warhol
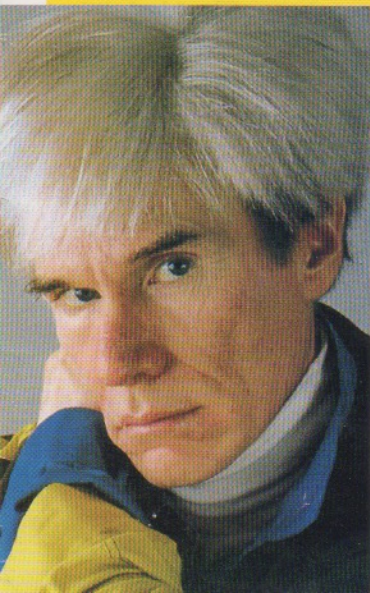
Why go to an art museum to look at soup cans?

Warhol's work was part of a larger movement known as Pop Art, which rebelled against the Abstract Expressionist style of painting that dominated the art world of the 1950s. Abstract Expressionists sought to convey moods and emotions through nonrepresentational shapes and colors painted with bold, expressive brush strokes. In sharp contrast to this style, Warhol and other Pop artists, such as Claes Oldenburg and Roy Lichtenstein, presented images taken unchanged from the commercial environment around them—comic strips, movies, billboards, fast food, and grocery-store shelves.

Pop-art images were often thought to be a negative commentary on the mass-produced quality of contemporary culture. But Warhol remained noncommittal, always the impassive observer. The soup can was just a soup can, he said. He painted it because it reminded him of his childhood, when he ate Campbell's tomato soup every day.

a world of STAR

"In the future everybody will be world fam

Can you recognize any of the faces on these pages? To this day, many years after Andy Warhol did *Red Elvis* (opposite page, below), Elvis Presley remains a superstar. And the image of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis (opposite page, above) has been instantly recognizable for just as long, most recently as the mother of John Kennedy Jr. Ironically, the face that is least familiar to us today is that of the artist (right).
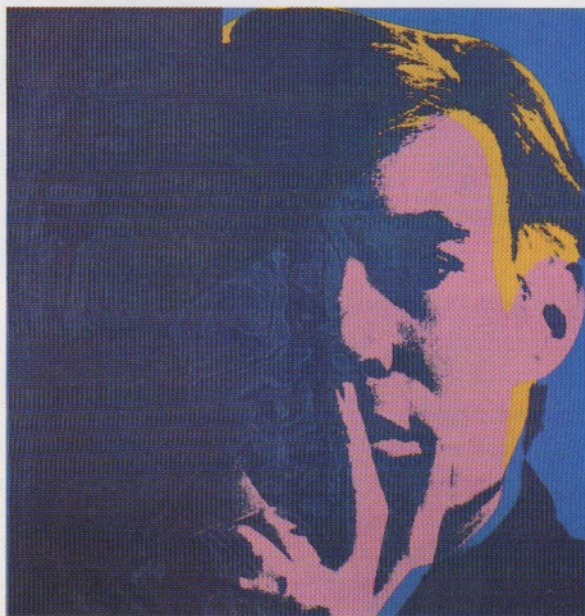
The *Campbell's* soup cans and *Brillo* boxes incorporated into Andy Warhol's art are examples of commercial packaging. Their brightly colored labels and distinctive logos were designed to make the products attractive to consumers. Although the images shown here are of people, they also represent a type of packaging—the marketing of entertainers and other public figures.

Notice that all the faces shown here have a **hard-edged, impersonal quality.** The colors are **flat, bright, and unrealistic**—these are not flattering portraits.

Like his other celebrity subjects, Andy Warhol presented himself as a cultural icon.

Self-Portrait, 1967. Silkscreen on canvas, __" x 72". © Copyright The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. AR___ Y., N.Y..

Warhol has used a mechanical silk-screen process to give them a mass-produced look. Silk screen is a stencil method of printing a flat-color design through a piece of silk or other fine cloth. The parts that are not to be printed are blocked out with a piece of film. By using this method, Warhol could print the same image in different color combinations. In Warhol's studio—known as "The Factory"—a team of assistants helped the artist produce his silk screens. Warhol called this operation a "human printing press."

In *Red Elvis*, Warhol has repeated the face of Elvis Presley in rows; the finished work resembles a sheet of postage stamps. The **black, high-contrast** images are printed on a bright-red background, making them hard to read. Seeing the same image over and over causes the viewer to become desensitized, as the images are difficult to focus on individually.

Warhol did not limit his celebrity portraits to entertainment "stars." Following the assassination of President

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ous for fifteen minutes."—Andy Warhol

John F. Kennedy in 1963, Warhol based several works on official photos of former First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy. *Jackie* shows Mrs. Kennedy as she appeared during her days in the White House, when she was idealized and admired for her gracious manner and fashionable appearance. Warhol created an image that became a **cultural icon**, or symbol, of the 1960s, as Princess Diana became an icon for the 1990s.

Warhol also presented himself as a star. His self-portrait shows the artist as a brooding, somewhat mysterious observer. His features appear to emerge from dark shadows and his hand is raised as if to silence the viewer. The masklike face emphasizes Warhol's impersonal quality. Like many of the celebrities he painted, Warhol experienced the dark side of fame. In 1968, a woman who had appeared in the artist's films shot him several times, nearly killing him. After recovering, Warhol continued to portray pop-culture legends such as Marilyn Monroe and Mick Jagger. Andy Warhol died in New York in 1987, following routine surgery.

In *Red Elvis*, Warhol wanted to capture the impact of Elvis Presley's performances in the early 1960s.

multiplying
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During the 1950s, Marilyn Monroe reigned as the ultimate symbol of Hollywood glamour. She played the beautiful—but not very bright—blonde. Her characters often wore tight, sequined dresses and spoke in a breathy, little-girl voice. In real life, Monroe was an intelligent and complex woman. Famous men fell in love with her, including baseball great Joe DiMaggio and playwright Arthur Miller. But despite her fame and success—or perhaps because of it—Marilyn Monroe's life ended tragically. In 1962, she was found dead from an overdose of sleeping pills. Andy Warhol recognized the role Monroe played in popular culture, and he began working on his "Marilyn" series a few days after the film star's death.

Marilyn Monroe began as a real person. But toward the end of her life, the advertising and publicity industry had turned her into a product. Few people would have recognized the real Marilyn in an ordinary setting, but everyone knew the *image* of Marilyn Monroe. To create these portraits, Andy Warhol chose a slick, retouched, superhumanly glamorous publicity shot of Monroe, then took it one step further. He increased the **contrasts,** substituted **bright, garish colors,** and exaggerated the **"off-register" edges** of the **flat color shapes.** By altering a familiar face in this way, Warhol forced people to look at it differently. Marilyn Monroe was no longer a person but a fantasy invented by the media.

In *Gold Marilyn* (left), the star's image is placed on a gold background that underscores its gaudiness. Monroe's face is printed in black ink on a gold circle. Next to this round, golden, coinlike shape, the artist has placed a similar shape, but without Marilyn's face on it. Perhaps this is a reference to the money to be made by promoting stars. Or maybe it suggests the underlying emptiness of the star's life. In *Reversal Series: Marilyn* (far left), Warhol further distorts the

Film star Marilyn Monroe was one of Andy Warhol's favorite subjects.

Gold Marilyn, 1962. Silk screen on metal, 18" in diameter. © Copyright The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. ARS, N.Y., N.Y.
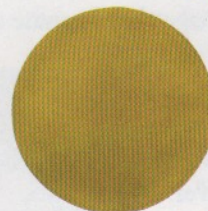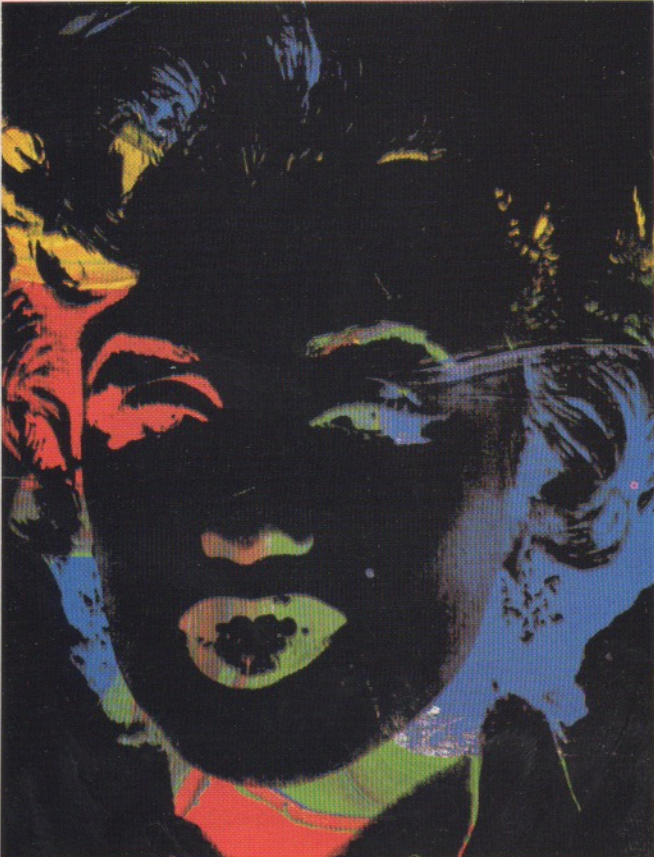
Image reversal gives this Marilyn the ghostly appearance of a photographic negative.

Reversal Series: Marilyn, 1979-86. Silk screen on canvas, 46" x 35". © Copyright The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. ARS, N.Y., N.Y.

"When you see a picture
an effect

LYNS

image by reversing the dark and light areas. **Positive shapes** have become **negative spaces,** increasing the face's grotesque, nightmarish quality.

In *Marilyn Monroe Diptych* (above), Warhol has **repeated** Monroe's face. He places these mass-produced images together in endless rows that resemble frames in a strip of film. As in *Red Elvis* (page 5), the repetition desensitizes the viewer, and the original image begins to lose its meaning. The black-and-white faces in the right panel start to lose definition and seem to be fading off the edge. With each new treatment of the Marilyn image, Warhol heightened its sense of superficiality and emptiness.

over and over again, it doesn't really have anymore." —Andy Warhol

SCHOLASTIC **ART**

MASTERPIECE OF THE MONTH #4

andy warhol's **100 CANS**

"I like boring things. I like things to be the same over and over."
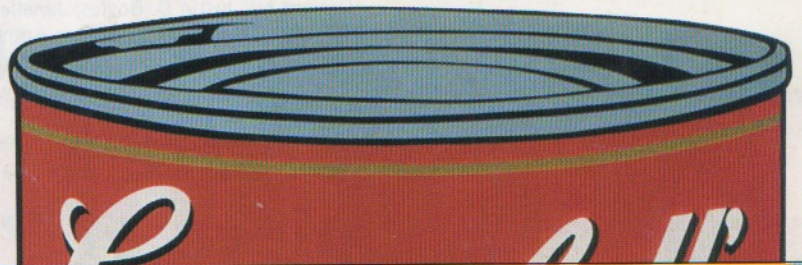— Andy Warhol

POP features

What makes each of these images a perfect example of Pop Art?

A

B

C

D

E

Perhaps you recognize some of the details on the right, taken from Andy Warhol's best-known works. Warhol's flat, simplified, hard-edged images based on popular culture have come to stand for the entire Pop Art movement. Can you identify the subject of each detail and the Pop Art characteristic it best exemplifies?

Next to each name or description that appears in the list below, write in the letter of the work that most closely corresponds. (In many cases, more than one answer may apply.)

___ 1. Unrealistic colors

___ 2. Self-portrait

___ 3. High-contrast images

___ 4. Negative shapes

___ 5. Three-dimensional image

___ 6. Realistic colors

___ 7. Off-register color edges

___ 8. Two-dimensional images

___ 9. Icon linked to tragedy

___10. Entertainment star

___11. Linear outlines

___12. Commercial product

___13. Unnatural colors

___14. Political star

___15. Positive shapes

___16. Images based on photos

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