

This Day in History... August 6, 1928

Birth of Andy Warhol

Andy Warhol (born Andrew Warhola) was born August 6, 1928, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to Rusyn immigrants from Mikova (northeastern Slovakia).

Warhol was sick throughout most of his childhood and as a result, spent much of his time alone in his bed. He later credited much of his personality and skills to this time in his life, which he spent drawing and collecting pictures of movie stars.

After graduating from the Carnegie Institute of Technology with a degree in graphic design, Warhol moved to New York City, where he worked as a magazine illustrator. Throughout the 1950s, he also designed album covers and began experimenting with silk screening and other printmaking processes.



Stamp issued three days after Warhol's 74th birthday.



Warhol's repeated portraits of Monroe are among his most famous works.

Though Warhol had held group exhibitions in the 1950s, July 9, 1962, marked his first solo exhibit. Held in the Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles, California, he displayed 32 canvases on narrow shelves, appearing much like a grocery store, picturing 32 varieties of Campbell's Soup. That show is often considered the introduction of pop art to the West Coast. As the name suggests, pop art uses images from popular culture, such as advertisements and comic books, to challenge the traditions of fine art. At the time, Pop Art was controversial. Critics complained that artists were surrendering to consumerism.

Word of Warhol's exhibition spread quickly, with critics questioning why an artist would essentially paint a scene from a grocery store. Others were thrilled by his work, which he believed was a reflection of modern society. Warhol soon became one of the most recognizable figures in the pop art movement, with more solo shows to follow. He soon became known for his famed celebrity silkscreens of Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley, and Elizabeth Taylor.

Also in 1962, Warhol founded The Factory, his personal studio that he shared with other artists and filmmakers. In 1968, fellow Factory artist Valerie Solanas shot Warhol for misplacing one of her scripts. Warhol barely survived the attack, which would have a profound effect on the remainder of his life and work.

In the 1970s, Warhol embraced his business-side, producing a number of portraits on commission, including perhaps the most famous, of Chinese communist leader Mao Zedong. He also founded *Interview* magazine and the New York Academy of Art. Warhol was strongly criticized at the time for becoming a "business artist," though in later years he was commended for creating "the most brilliant mirror of our times."

Warhol died from a cardiac arrhythmia on February 22, 1987. In addition to his legacy of paintings, prints, films, books, sculptures, and more, there are two museums dedicated to his work.

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