

MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

St. Petersburg, Florida

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA CONTACT:

David Connelly, david@fine-arts.org

“Everybody winds up kissing the wrong person good-night.”

--Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again)*

MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS PRESENTS MAJOR WARHOL EXHIBITION

Andy Warhol (1928-1987), dubbed the Pope of Pop, is one of the most influential artists of the twentieth century. The MFA is proud to spotlight his work in *Andy Warhol Portfolios: Life and Legends* from May 16-August 16. This exciting exhibition is made possible by Bank of America’s Art in Our Communities Program. The *St. Petersburg Times* is the media sponsor of all Museum exhibitions.

All 72 works are screenprints, except for Robert Mapplethorpe’s dramatic photograph of Warhol one year before his death. Screenprints were a Warhol specialty. The exhibition features such classic Warhol images as *Marilyn*, *Campbell’s Soup I (Cream of Mushroom)*, *Superman*, *Muhammad Ali*, *Mickey Mouse*, *Uncle Sam*, *Santa Claus*, *Howdy Doody*, and many more. There is also a haunting self-portrait, *The Shadow* (1981), from the *Myths* series. Of course, Andy considered himself a myth.

Warhol’s signature *Flowers* and *Space Fruit: Still Lifes*, as well as *Ten Portraits of Jews of the Twentieth Century*, enhance this stellar exhibition. There also three *Hand Colored Flowers*, and six diamond-dusted *Grapes*. Warhol’s diamond-dusted paintings and prints are known for their sheer beauty. Similarly striking are four colored screenprints, *Sunset*, which are intensely vivid. Warhol was a master of color.

Ronald Feldman Fine Arts commissioned the portfolios, *Ten Portraits of Jews of the Twentieth Century*, *Myths*, and *Endangered Species*. Among the Jews honored by Warhol are the actress Sarah Bernhardt, Albert Einstein, Sigmund Freud, a young Franz Kafka, George Gershwin, the Marx Brothers, writer and art collector Gertrude Stein, and Golda Meir, the great prime minister of Israel. These portraits had their premiere in a 1980 exhibition, *Jewish Geniuses*, at the Jewish Museum in New York.

Warhol’s *Endangered Species* had their first exhibition at the American Museum of Natural History in 1983. Unusual juxtaposition of color dominates. Some of the animals look directly at the viewer and some are quite majestic. Though Warhol was an animal lover, he was always reluctant to express political views, though he did contribute artworks for charity. In this series, it is difficult not to detect his concern for these noble creatures.

“We are deeply grateful to Bank of America for enabling us to share these extraordinary works with the the St. Petersburg community,” said Museum Director Dr. John Schloder. “This is the first time that the Museum of Fine Arts has presented an Andy Warhol exhibition. It is long overdue and we are thrilled that we can feature some of his very best work.”

Through its Art in Our Communities Program, Bank of America has converted its corporate art collection into a unique community resource from which museums and nonprofit galleries may borrow complete or customized exhibitions. By providing these exhibitions and the support required to host them, this program helps sustain community engagement and generate vital revenue for the nonprofits, creating stability in local communities. From 2008-2010, Bank of America will have loaned more than thirty exhibitions to museums nationwide.

ABOUT ANDY WARHOL

Warhol began his career as a highly successful commercial illustrator, earning attention in the 1950s for his whimsical drawings of shoes. Later he would garner much more money for his paintings and prints of shoes, some with diamond dust. Like other pop artists, Warhol was inspired by advertising and mass culture. He turned the Campbell’s soup can and the Brillo box into icons. In the process, he challenged conceptions of what actually constitutes art. His work shattered many barriers.

He was on the fringes during his early career. His Factory during the 1960s was marked by drugs, sexual openness, and high drama. Though the Factory was synonymous with Warhol, he usually remained in the background observing, as he would throughout his life. He compulsively took Polaroids and tape-recorded conversations. Films like *Chelsea Girls*, *My Hustler*, and *Lonesome Cowboys* secured a cult following. He did not really discover his “superstars,” some of whom were transgender. They usually found him.

Along with Paul Morrissey, Warhol managed the avant-garde band, The Velvet Underground. They created one of the first multimedia performance art pieces, *The Exploding Plastic Inevitable*, which was a hit on college campuses. Lead performers Nico and Lou Reed became stars in progressive music circles. Warhol had many musician friends throughout his career and designed album covers for first, The Velvet Underground and later, The Rolling Stones (*Sticky Fingers*) and Diana Ross.

The freewheeling Factory days took a tragic turn when Warhol was shot and nearly killed by Valerie Solanas in 1968. It understandably made him paranoid about people who were obsessed with him. Exhibitions of his work were usually packed, and Warhol was concerned about some of the people who could be lurking about.

At the height of his career, Warhol, with his wild wigs, was part of an international social swirl that would have caused most people to crash and burn. Andy, the outsider, became Andy, the insider. He was at Studio 54 nearly every night and became a celebrity among celebrities, a dream come true for a shy man who grew up reading movie

magazines. Though his portraits of the rich and famous were very lucrative, he worried about losing his edge and becoming passé.

Similarly, when he co-founded *Interview* magazine in 1969, it was more of a pop art publication. Later it became very establishment, with its glossy, expensive ads and articles on celebrities and fashion designers. Warhol himself sold ads to luxury retailers and distributed copies around town, often to people on the street. He was always trying to drum up business and increase subscribers.

Seeking new inspiration and concerned about growing older, he began to collaborate with younger, emerging artists like Francesco Clemente, Keith Haring, and Jean Michel Basquiat. The last two were graffiti artists who quickly entered the mainstream art world. This exhibition includes four impressions of Keith Haring's inventive *Andy Mouse*. Warhol so loved these prints, which presented him as a cultural and commercial force—like Mickey—that he signed them as well.

A man of many contradictions, Warhol enjoyed being viewed as a rebel, in part because he knew that image would help sell his work. But at his core, he remained surprisingly conservative. Though he drank a lot, he avoided cocaine and many other fashionable drugs of the time. True to his immigrant roots in Pittsburgh, he worked incredibly hard, late into the night and frequently on holidays. He rarely missed mass on Sunday and sprinkled holy water around his home for protection. Warhol's final series, *The Last Supper*, was inspired by Leonardo da Vinci's great painting and reflects Warhol's deep Christian beliefs.

The artist's death in 1987, following routine gallbladder surgery, shocked the world. He left a fortune, most of it willed to establish The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, "focused primarily on supporting work of a challenging and often experimental nature." The man who recorded every cab fare proved to be supremely generous, yet another contradiction. Through his art, his expansive interests, and ultimately his altruism, Andy Warhol has left a towering legacy.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Saturday, May 23, 3 p.m.: Gallery Talk by Chief Curator Dr. Jennifer Hardin, a specialist in American art.

Two Warhol Fridays, June 5 and July 17, Lunch with Drella and the Director: Some of Andy Warhol's friends called him Drella, a combination of Dracula and Cinderella. Museum Director Dr. John Schloder will offer insights into Drella's life and art as he takes visitors on a private tour of the exhibition.

Lunch in the Bayview Room will feature dishes inspired by *Wild Raspberries*, a campy cookbook for New York's beau monde, by Warhol and his socialite friend Suzie Frankfurt. Cost is \$35 per person. Seats are limited and are first come, first served. For reservations, call Ellen Rivera at 727-896-2667, ext. 221.

Saturday, June 13, 1 p.m.: *Artists of the Twentieth Century—Andy Warhol*; Movie is free with regular paid MFA admission. Free popcorn!

Saturday, Fourth of July, 6-10 p.m., All-American Andy: See the exhibition. Hamburgers, hot dogs, and apple pie for sale. Watch the fireworks. 1960s and 1970s music and more.

Sunday, August 2, 1-4 p.m.: Warhol Family Day; Be inspired by the Warhol exhibition and some of the most inventive art ever produced. Create gigantic images with stencils, art sneakers, and a large 3-D sculpture. Fully accessible for all.

WARHOL MANIA IN THE MUSEUM STORE

The Store is popping with Andy Warhol gifts. You can buy the Andy doll, with his signature wig, along with the Salvador Dalí doll. Warhol enjoyed spending time with Dalí. David Bourdon's acclaimed book, *Warhol*, is available for art lovers, and *Andy Warhol: Pop Art Painter* by Susan Goldman Rubin is designed for young people. Warhol posters, magnets, note cards, stationery, and many more surprises will provide the perfect keepsake.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

The MFA has the only comprehensive art collection, extending from antiquity to the present day, on the Florida west coast. The collection of more than 4,600 objects includes important works by Monet, Gauguin, Renoir, Morisot, Cézanne, Rodin, Bourdelle, Hassam, Henri, Bellows, O'Keeffe, and Andrew Wyeth. The MFA has been repeatedly named the best museum in the Tampa Bay area by *Tampa Bay Magazine*, *Creative Loafing*, and *Tampa Bay metro*.

Hours are 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday and 1-5 p.m. Sunday. **Admission is \$12 for adults, \$10 for those 65 and older, and \$6 for students seven and older with current I.D. Children under seven and Museum members are admitted free. Groups of 10 or more adults pay only \$8 per person with prior reservations.**

The MFA Café is open from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday and serves special brunches on the second Sunday of the month. Don't miss the holiday brunches for Easter (April 12), Mother's Day (May 10), and Father's Day (June 21). For café reservations, please call 727-822-1032. The Museum Store has been named the best in the Tampa Bay area by the *duPont Registry*. For more information on the MFA, call 727-896-2667 or check out the web site at www.fine-arts.org.

BANK OF AMERICA AND THE ARTS

Bank of America is a major supporter of the arts and heritage of the United States. The program represents a combination of responsible business practices with good corporate citizenship. As a financial institution, Bank of America is accountable for serving its shareholders, customers, associates, and the communities it serves. The bank's

support of the arts and arts-related nonprofit organizations is an effective way to serve stakeholders, in the short term, by driving positive business results through support of local economies. Over the long term, this support helps fuel innovation, drive the nation's progress and shape its future.

Through its unique program, Bank of America shares exhibits from its corporate collection with the community through museum partners as part of its Art in Our Communities Program. Bank of America also offers customers free access to some of the nation's finest cultural institutions through the acclaimed Museums on Us® program. In addition, the Bank of America Charitable Foundation provides strategic philanthropic support to museums, theaters and other arts-related nonprofits to benefit underserved populations and increase access to the arts.