



Andy Warhol Biography

Andy Warhol was born Andrew Warhola in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1928. In 1945 he entered the Carnegie Institute of Technology (now Carnegie Mellon University) where he majored in pictorial design. Upon graduation, Warhol moved to New York where he found steady work as a commercial artist. He worked as an illustrator for several magazines, including Vogue, Harper's Bazaar and The New Yorker and did advertising and window displays for retail stores such as Bonwit Teller and I. Miller. Prophetically, his first assignment was for Glamour magazine for an article titled "Success is a Job in New York."

Throughout the 1950s, Warhol enjoyed a successful career as a commercial artist, winning several commendations from the Art Director's Club and the American Institute of Graphic Arts. In these early years, he shortened his name to "Warhol." In 1952, the artist had his first individual show at the Hugo Gallery, exhibiting Fifteen Drawings Based on the Writings of Truman Capote. His work was exhibited in several other venues during the 1950s, including his first group show at The Museum of Modern Art in 1956.

The 1960s was an extremely prolific decade for Warhol. Appropriating images from popular culture, Warhol created many paintings that remain icons of 20th-century art, such as the Campbell's Soup Cans, Disasters and Marilyns. In addition to painting, Warhol made several 16mm films which have become underground classics such as Chelsea Girls, Empire and Blow Job. In 1968, Valerie Solanas, founder and sole member of SCUM (Society for Cutting Up Men) walked into Warhol's studio, known as the Factory, and shot the artist. The attack was nearly fatal.

At the start of the 1970s, Warhol began publishing Interview magazine and renewed his focus on painting. Works created in this decade include Maos, Skulls, Hammer and Sickles, Torsos and Shadows and many commissioned portraits. Warhol also published The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (from A to B and Back Again). Firmly established as a major 20th-century artist and international celebrity, Warhol exhibited his work extensively in museums and galleries around the world.

The artist began the 1980s with the publication of POPism: The Warhol '60s and with exhibitions of Portraits of Jews of the Twentieth Century and the Retrospectives and Reversal series. He also created two cable television shows, "Andy Warhol's TV" in 1982 and "Andy Warhol's Fifteen Minutes" for MTV in 1986. His paintings from the 1980s include The Last Suppers, Rorschachs and, in a return to his first great theme of Pop, a series called Ads. Warhol also engaged in a series of collaborations with younger artists, including Jean-Michel Basquiat, Francesco Clemente and Keith Haring.

Following routine gall bladder surgery, Andy Warhol died February 22, 1987. After his burial in Pittsburgh, his friends and associates organized a memorial mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York that was attended by more than 2,000 people. He remains one of the most influential artists of the 20th century.

—The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts