MUSÉE
D'ART
MODERNE
DE LA VILLE DE PARIS

« *Warhol Unlimited* »

October 2nd, 2015 – February 7th, 2016

Shadows, 1978-79, Dia Art Foundation, Photo Bill Jacobson
© 2015 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc.
© ADAGP, Paris 2015

PRESS KIT

SUMMARY

Press release	page 3
Exhibition layout	page 4
Sponsors and partners of the exhibition	page 8
Practical information	page 9

Warhol
Unlimited
October 2nd, 2015 – February 7th, 2016

Press preview: Thursday, October 1st 11am – 2pm
Opening: Thursday, October 1st 4:30 - 9pm

As a setting for the first European showing of *Shadows* (1978-79) in their entirety, the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris is devoting a remarkable exhibition to Andy Warhol (1928-1987).
Comprising over 200 works, *Unlimited* highlights the serial side of the Warhol oeuvre – a crucial aspect of his work – and his ability to rethink the way art should be exhibited.

Housed at the Dia Art Foundation, *Shadows* is a striking group of 102 silkscreened canvases of 17 different colours whose length totals more than 130 metres. These works are a commanding reminder of Warhol's flouting of art's conventions, from the conception of works through to their presentation. Asked if these pictures were art, Warhol said: "You see, the opening party had disco. I guess that makes them disco décor." His art represents a challenge which the Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris extends to include series like the *Electric Chairs* (1964–1971), the *Jackies* (1964), the *Flowers* (1964–1965) and the *Maos* (1972–1973).

The often controversial way Warhol staged his own work is a core part of the concerns driving this exhibition. Here we find a constant engagement with space and time as means of reshaping our modes of perception. *Unlimited* invites viewers to let themselves be submerged by the sheer quantity of works ranging from the *Brillo Boxes* (1964) to the *Self-portraits* (1966–1967, 1981), from the *Screen Tests* (1964–1966) to the *Cows* wallpaper (1966) and from the *Flowers* groups to the *Mao* friezes, not to mention experimental film (the famous eight-hour *Empire* of 1964), the *Silver Clouds* (1966) and the spectacular environments created for concerts by the Velvet Underground (*Exploding Plastic Inevitable*, 1966).

As lauded as he was criticised, Warhol – despite the virtually permanent media overkill he was subjected to – never lost his ability to destabilise the viewer. And notwithstanding his superficial "King of Pop Art" image, he endlessly reinvented the interrelation between spectator and work. Constantly breaching the codes he was saddled with, he compelled recognition as a master of excess: in all the many forms he explored, his relationship to the artwork always tended towards the breaching of boundaries.

With the support of:

With the participation of Groupe Bel

Shadows, 1978-79, Dia Art Foundation, Photo Bill Jacobson

© 2015 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc.
© ADAGP, Paris 2015

Museum Director
Fabrice Hergott

Exhibition curators
Sébastien Gokalp
Hervé Vanel

Visitor information
Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris
11 Avenue du Président Wilson
75116 Paris
Tel: +33 (0)1 53 67 40 00
www.mam.paris.fr

Open Tuesday–Sunday
10am – 6pm
Late closing: Thursday 10pm

Admission
Full rate €12
Concessions €9

Catalogue published by Paris Musées

Cultural activities
Information and bookings
Tel: +33 (0)1 53 67 40 80

Press Officer
Maud Ohana
maud.ohana@paris.fr
Tel: +33 (0)1 53 67 40 51

Follow MAM on

#expoWarhol

Exhibition layout

“You go to a museum, and they say this is art and the little squares are hanging on the wall. But everything is art, and nothing is art.”
[Andy Warhol, Newsweek, 7 December 1964]

Shadows, a single painting in 102 parts, defies all the rules. Its serial treatment of an abstract pattern generates a pulse, not unlike a series of film frames. Our perception of space must therefore embrace a temporal dimension, as Shadows has to be addressed simultaneously in space and time, without beginning or end. The whole prevails over the individual parts to create a sense of place and an atmosphere of its own. Accompanied here by a selection of earlier works, this radical gesture calls on us to rethink Warhol’s art: whether painting, sculpture or film, his art disrupts all normative categories. By the mid-1960s, Warhol expressed his desire to give up painting in order to move his art beyond all constraints and limitations. When he returned to it in the 1970s, it was to pursue a thorough subversion of the codes and conventions of the medium. To this end, he never ceased to use the exhibition itself as a means of expression, experimenting throughout his career by relentlessly subverting the standards and practices of art display. Saturating space, mixing genres, disrupting hierarchies, walking the line between too much and not enough—these were all ways of challenging museums and visitors to go beyond seeing his art as mere “little squares.”

Cult object

“If you want to know all about Andy Warhol, just look at the surface: of my paintings and films and me, and there I am. There’s nothing behind it.”
[Interview with Gretchen Berg, The East Village Other, 1st November 1966]

When Warhol first showed 32 paintings of Campbell’s Soup cans in 1962, many critics felt offended. Had he at least taken the trouble to idealize such everyday banality, paintings of such a vulgar consumer product might have been acceptable. To the contrary, their cold and dispassionate manner indicated an intolerable absence of emotion. In 1969 the portfolio of 10 Campbell’s Soup II signaled a nostalgia-free return to what had already become a cult image, with Warhol simply updating the flavors and carefully echoing the evolution of the cans’ design. By 1966, Warhol had become a brand in his own right. Turning out self-portraits at the rate of soup cans, Warhol questions the singularity of the subject. His own image becomes a pretext for colored variations whose superficial quality undercuts the desire to extract psychological meaning. “Some company recently was interested in buying my aura,” reported Warhol in 1975. “I never figured out what they wanted. But they were willing to pay a lot for it.” Society, it seems, may deem art invaluable; yet even the ineffable has a price.

Shooting Stars

“I did this because people usually just go to the movies to see only the star, to eat him up, so here at last is a chance to look only at the star for as long as you like, no matter what he does and to eat him up all you want to. It was also easier to make.”
[Interview with Gretchen Berg, The East Village Other, 1st November 1966]

Between 1962 and 1968 the Factory—as Warhol’s studio was known—remained an open house: a haven for people ranging from underground dropouts to members of the art world glitterati, from penniless geniuses to wealthy idlers. Everybody was a star in this alternative society and, over a few years, most characters passed Warhol’s Screen Test. The artist was utterly fascinated by filmmaking—its mechanics, its technique, its magic—and the principle of these “film portraits” is rather simple: models posed for the camera and were “shot” for the time span of a standard 16mm reel. Shot at 24 frames per second, the films were screened at 16, which imperceptibly stretched their duration. Steering clear of traditional editing and avoiding the artifice of commercial filmmaking, Warhol preserved the perforated, overexposed leader strips and welcomed accidents like blurs, scratches and dust. For him the very texture of the movie image was as much imbued with sensuality as the faces captured and devoured by the eye of the camera. Digital transfer, now standard practice for the

preservation of film, cuts the viewer off from this vital physical dimension. As a result, the video projections here should be seen as reproductions.

Short-circuit

— O'BRIEN: Do you believe in capital punishment?
— WARHOL: For art's sake, of course.
[Interview with Glenn O'Brien, High Times, 24th august 1977]

Encapsulating the "subject matter" of Warhol's painting is a tricky business: does it lie in the image he has selected or in the way he deals with it? When he began his Death and Disaster series in the early 1960s—including the motif of the electric chair—Warhol opted for an advertising strategy. Talking to a journalist in 1966 about Electric Chairs, he explained: "They come in all these different colors. Blue, green, red—everything. It's like merchandising, we just do as many as we can." For his retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1971, he covered all the rooms with his flashy cow wallpaper, so that Electric Chairs had to be confronted on exactly the same level as other series like Flowers or Self-portraits. Such nonchalance may be regarded as insensitive. Still, Warhol can hardly be accused of being tactless when the number of "death warrants" signed by various American state governors is sometimes used for political one-upmanship. Beyond the social, moral or ethical questions, the death penalty then becomes a sales pitch. A fine art, as Warhol suggests.

The personality of the artist

"I don't think art should be only for the select few, I think it should be for the mass of American people and they usually accept art anyway."
[Interview with Gretchen Berg, The East Village Other, 1st November 1966]

Advertised under the title The Personality of the Artist, Warhol's second solo show opened at the Stable Gallery in New York in April 1964. In lieu of personality, however, visitors were confronted with three to four hundred wooden replicas of Brillo, Mott's Apple Juice, Del Monte Peaches, Kellogg's Corn Flakes and Campbell's Tomato Juice boxes, stacked or laid out in grids on the floor. Warhol had seemingly turned the gallery into a warehouse. As artist Robert Indiana later recalled, "You could barely get in, and it was like going through a maze. The rows of boxes were just wide enough to squeeze your way through." This installation was as ephemeral as it was arresting: sold individually or in small batches, these boxes were soon fetishized. The loss of the original exhibition context allows for the return of traditional values of uniqueness and rarity. Reproducing the scale of his 1964 exhibition would prove difficult, and for his 1970 retrospective Warhol had to authorize copies of what were already facsimiles. By then, though, the Moderna Museet in Stockholm had come up with its own solution: in 1968 they went direct to Brillo and ordered 500 "real" cardboard boxes for their exhibit.

American Way of Death

"The United States has a habit of making heroes
out of anything and anybody, which is so great.
You could do anything here. Or do nothing."
[Interview with Gretchen Berg, The East Village Other, 1st November 1966]

In the early 1960s Jackie Kennedy set the standard for a successful political accessory: the media-friendly figure of the "first lady." The proliferation of press photos that came in the wake of JFK's assassination on 22 November 1963 mustered the core features of Warhol's art of the period: glamor, death, and repetition. Cropping various photos to home in on Jackie's radiant or devastated face set against golden, blue or white backdrops, the series exploited the unpredictability of the silkscreen process: uneven inking and varying saturation of the blacks gave rise to striking, incidental surface effects. Defying expectations about such high-profile subject matter, Warhol worked only perfunctorily on the series during 1964, and it was never exhibited in its own right during his lifetime. Meanwhile he stepped up his film output—Blow Job, Empire, Couch, etc.—and set about working on his Flowers

series, which was shown in the fall. During that exhibition 42 Jackies were hung in the Leo Castelli gallery's back room.

Melting pot

"Now it's going to be flowers—they're the fashion this year. They look like a cheap awning. They're terrific!"
[Andy Warhol, Newsweek, 7 December 1964]

First exhibited in 1964-1965, Flowers were instantly compared to a form of wallpaper—some collectors even considered covering their walls with them. Warhol himself, stressing the series' fragmentary, open-ended nature, described them as "one big painting that was cut up into small pieces." The proliferation of paintings, their different sizes, and their decorative quality also gave him the chance to experiment with the way they were hung. He arranged them in more or less compact grids that saturated the exhibition space—rotating the paintings arbitrarily or placing big pictures close to the floor and "miniflower" friezes higher up. This series of Flowers also marked an end for Warhol. He exhibited them in Paris in 1965 where he announced his retirement as an artist and his intention to devote himself fully to filmmaking. Of course, he would later return to painting, but Flowers nonetheless preserved a utopian thread that ran through his art: "I like painting on a square because you don't have to decide whether it should be longer-longer or shorter-shorter or longer-shorter… You see, I think every painting should be the same size and the same color so they're all interchangeable and nobody thinks they have a better painting or a worse painting."

Maonotony

"They are so nutty. They don't believe in creativity. The only picture they ever have is of Mao Zedong. It's great. It looks like a silkscreen."
[Andy Warhol cité dans David Bourdon, Warhol, 1989]

Each of these "Mao" paintings combines two apparently conflicting styles. On the one hand, the technique Warhol described as "sloppy and fast" is not so much suggestive of "action painting" as of a gimmicky version of it. His "Expressionism" is a deliberately mechanical response to what had become a conventional aesthetic, perpetuating the ideal of a free and sovereign individual expressing one's self. Hardly a surprising move coming from a painter who had rejected the standard requirement that the artist should express some (preferably suffering) part of himself. "Why should I be original?" he asked in 1963. "Why can't I be non-original?" On the other hand, Warhol daubed paint over the official portrait of Mao Zedong, spiritual father of a cultural revolution for which the "personality of the artist" was no more than a bourgeois remnant. Hence, the presumed values of action painting are discredited while the cult of personality is diluted across the "Mao wallpaper." Warhol enjoyed pointing out that the idea of this series — like so many others — was not his. Property, even intellectual property, was not something Warhol seemed to value.

New Religion

"–We've got a new religion.
–Andy, Andy, what is it?
–Nothing
–Nothing?
–Well the glorification of Nothing."
[Andy Warhol, Detroit Magazine, 15 janvier 1967]

Warhol's dream of an immaterial art form — generating a truly ephemeral experience— found its vehicle in 1966. It was at this time that he devoted himself to designing a kind of total work of art. It embraced the music of the Velvet Underground, films and slides, a light show using strobes and a disco ball, and dance (including the infamous "whip dance"). The Exploding Plastic Inevitable (EPI), as the project was called, provided a sadomasochistically inflected multisensory experience that the audience was free to take part in—or not. Ronald Nameth's short film, shot during a series of gigs in

Chicago in 1966, was not meant to literally document the EPI but rather to explore experimental film techniques (superimposed layers of film, slow motion, stroboscopic effects) in order to immerse the viewer into the show's hallucinogenic environment. Nameth's eagerness to saturate the senses and envelop the viewers echoed the EPI's intensity, which—as worried critics warned their readers—manipulated audiences and reduced them to simple cogs in a machine. Delighted with all the negative feedback they received, Warhol and the Velvet Underground reproduced some of these on the sleeve of their debut LP.

Eyewash

"I thought I was really really finished, so to mark the end of my art career I made silver pillows that you could just fill up like balloons and let fly away . . . But then the Silver Space Pillows didn't float away and my career didn't float away, either."
The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again), 1975

The silver coating on the walls of Warhol's Factory in the 1960s was characteristic of an urban, industrial psychedelic art light years away from the spirit of the nascent West Coast hippie communes. Additionally, Warhol appreciated the shimmering effect of the silver to dissolve the materiality of their environment and "make everything disappear." His Silver Clouds were in line with sixties architectural utopias, opposing gravity, weightiness and permanence in favor of the modular and the disposable. Ideally hovering in midspace, the clouds mark a threshold: barely tangible, they were intended—before disappearing—to celebrate the end of art as object. The room off the gallery where they were shown in 1966 contained nothing but cow wallpaper; bovine gazes reminding viewers of their required unquestioning passivity. The inflatables and the wallpaper are among a number of Warhol items that are still available on request.

Space-time

"When I look at things, I always see the space they occupy. I always want the space to reappear, to make a comeback, because it's lost space when there's something in it."
The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again), 1975

Dating from 1978, Shadows was the outcome of a commission from art patrons Heiner Friedrich and Philippa de Menil. Warhol actually exceeded the initial request for a set of 100 paintings and made 108, of which 102 now form the ensemble at the Dia Art Foundation. The piece presents itself as a single painting in 102 parts, which one's gaze cannot grasp all at once. Much like Empire in this regard, Shadows is a gigantic fragment without beginning or end. It may be examined bit-by-bit or browsed absent-mindedly, yet the sheer number of pictures prevents any synthesis. Like other Warhol ensembles, this one calls for an unconventional display: the pictures are hung edge to edge and stretch out in space like a reel of film. Shadows, therefore, is to be grasped both in time and space. Its enigmatic image has led some commentators to wonder about the meaning of "abstraction" in Warhol's work and others to ponder the referent of the motif: An erect penis? A flame? The artist himself seems to have been rather oblivious to such concerns. When asked if he thought Shadows was art, he just answered in the negative before adding: "You see, the opening party had disco. I guess that makes them disco décor."

Sponsors and partners of the exhibition

With the support of:

With the participation of Groupe Bel

Practical information

Information and bookings: +33 (0)1 53 67 40 80 / 40 83
For Tours, workshops and lectures around the exhibition visit www.mam.paris.fr, under “tours” and “events”

Musée d’Art moderne de la Ville de Paris
11, avenue du Président Wilson
75116 Paris
Tel: +33 (0)1 53 67 40 00 / Fax : +33 (0)1 47 23 35 98
www.mam.paris.fr

Transportations

Subway : Alma-Marceau or Iéna
RER : Pont de l’Alma (line C)
Bus : 32/42/63/72/80/92
Station Vélib' : 3 av. Montaigne or 2 rue Marceau
Station Autolib’ : 24 av. d’Iena, 33 av. Pierre 1er de Serbie or 1 av. Marceau

Opening hours

Tuesday to Sunday from 10am to 6pm (ticket desk closes at 5:15pm)
Late opening on Thursdays until 10pm only for special exhibitions (ticket desk closes at 9:15pm)
Closed on Mondays and during bank holidays

The exhibition is accessible to people with motor and reduced mobility disabilities.

Admission

Full rate €12
Concessions €9

Ticket desk

No-queue tickets available on www.mam.paris.fr

The museum also presents

Co-workers - Le réseau comme artiste at the ARC from October 9th, 2015 to January 31st, 2016
Apartés 2015 presentation in the collection until December 13th, 2015
Sturtevant, *The House of Horrors* installation in the collection until May 15th, 2016

Press officers

Maud Ohana
Tel: +33 (0)1 53 67 40 51
E-mail maud.ohana@paris.fr

Alix Bassi
Tel: +33 (0)1 53 67 40 76
E-mail alix.bassi@paris.fr