

Docent Notes for the Warhol Exhibit (Bob Schneeweiss)

ENDANGERED SPECIES (10 animals 1983)

By 1983 Andy Warhol was at the top of the Cultural/ Art world. Having led the Pop Art movement he was recognized and highly saleable.

In a conversation with Ronald and Frayda Feldman (gallery owners, and longtime collaborators) on the beach at Warhol's home in Montauk NY the idea of the Endangered Species was proposed. The conversation was initially about beach erosion and ended with general ecological concerns.

Warhol was an animal lover was intrigued with the possibility of the portfolio, the species were all chosen by Warhol himself

Andy's Arc

Bald Eagle, Black Rhino, African Elephant, Big Horn Ram, Giant Panda , Grevy's Zebra, Orangutan, Pine Barrens Tree Frog, Siberian Tiger, San Francisco Silverspot.

Rachel Carson Silent Spring = Andy Warhol Endangered Species Red List

About the Images

"Warhol's trademark silkscreen is the primary technique in these prints, he used an overhead projector to trace the source image for the silkscreen and there is a captivating interplay of this hand-drawing and the ready-made image he retains underneath. Warhol's skill as a colorist is on full display in these works, which are almost psychedelic some disturbing hues.

The images were composed on Lenox Museum Board. Each is 38'x38'. This is a bright white 100% cotton fiber neutral tone board, it is acid and lignin-free and incorporates alkaline or neutral sizing. All boards are buffered with calcium carbonate. This ensures protection from the destructive effects of acid migration from the matted work and from pollution. I believe that the size 38x38 board was made for Warhol... these dimensions' are not available to the buying public. In the lower center of each painting, they are signed and numbered. That being said that the images were reproduced there exists an argument as what is considered "authentic". Honestly Warhol was very aware of his ability to sell and commercialism.

Each of the animals is on a background without image, a solid color. This parallels the treatment he gave the celebrity portraits. The square "Polaroid SX70 camera format" was most likely used; if not another camera with the square format would have been employed. The format of the image is indeed reminiscent of the Polaroid or Instamatic prints. The animals were lifted in the viewers mind to the same status of stardom. This was an intentional statement by the artist. . (*Of note the Marilyn Monroe and Mao series are 36X36 on the Lenox Museum boards.*)

If the eyes are the windows to the soul, then the eyes of the animals in the series, depicts souls that entreat the viewer to have sympathy of its impending extinction. It would be hard not to look at the **Giant Panda**, and the **Orangutan** and not see a plea.

Each of the images are in colors that are not natural to the animals, there is a level of disturbing in each of the images.

The familiar black and white **Panda** is depicted with a red body, yellow spots on its legs and blue sad eyes surrounded by red. The head of the Panda remains white. A native of China perhaps the yellow and red are reference to the Chinese flag.

The posture of each of the animals also calls one to see the plight of the animal. The mighty **Orangutan** has slumped shoulders. The **Giant Panda** has been memorialized as “happy” and “cuddly”. This Panda is contracted and appears sad. The **Rhino**, who is most often thought of as charging at its prey, is in a resting position. As big as a Rhino might be, this one looks like it would like to negotiate its fate. What might the Rhino be saying, “look can we talk business”.

Partnering On Endangered Species

Dr. Kurt Benirshke’s book *Vanishing Animals* (1986) is illustrated by Warhol. Benirshke was the Director of the San Diego Zoo and started what is known as the Red List (prior to the publishing of the book). The List in 1986 had 76,000 organisms as endangered on it. It is estimated by 2020 the list will have 160,000 animals on it. The images that Warhol produced for this book represent another group of endangered species.

Of the 10 images in the Endangered Species only the **Bald Eagle** is off the Red List. I suspect that the patriotic linkage to the Eagle moved its protection.

Recently the **Trump** administration denied protection of endangered species that includes hunted African animals. One might imagine what Warhol might produce in answer to such action. *(I don't know if this is an idea to present, without causing trouble)*

Lady Gaga wants to be the next Warhol. Gaga’s famous meat dress could easily be reference to the Endangered Species.

Warhol once said, “ Making money is an art, working is an art, and good business is the best art”.

BANANA (1966)

Warhol’s used the banana many times in his work. First assigned to the Velvet Underground album cover. The VU may be the most influential underground bands and contains the history of almost all-alterative music. The music was hard edged and one cannot ignore the phallic symbolism of the banana.

The Yellow Banana in the exhibit lies side-by-side with a pink banana.

Banana CA. 1966, screenprint on styrene, 24 x 53 1/4” (sheet), 17 x 36” (image, approx.) The banana skin, printed on laminated plastic, 17 7/8 x 36 1/4”, can be removed and placed

anywhere on the sheet, edition approximately 300, some have a stamped signature on recto; some signed on verso; some stamped AP on recto; some dated.

T SHIRTS

The silk screen process originated in China around the year 1000; and has been use on [a]er, and text;e a;ike thru the mileniums. The **process became democratized** in the late 1960s when the T Shirt became a fashion statement and the personal bumper sticker for the wearer.

The shirts in the exhibit comment on major brands of consumables Brillo, Campbell Soup, Coca-Cola and Hershey's chocolate. Of particular interest is the Self-Portrait with Fright Wig (Andy always creating a self image or hiding his true self), and the Art \$15.

Much of what happened in the 1960s including the anti-war movement would not have occurred without the T shirt.

LOVE TORSOS (1977)

Andy was fascinated with the naked body. He delighted in the observation that every organ of every body varied in shape, form and color. He said "every torso or face tells a different story." Warhol took hundreds of photos of "sex parts" for the Love Torsos.

While nude figures and homoerotic sexuality has been dominant in art since classical times, Warhol's artsy crotch-shots evoke the Polaroid porn that was gaining popularity in the '70s. According to The Warhol Museum, the artist was inspired to capture the male sex organ uncensored when a stranger approached him and bragged about his well-endowed anatomy. Warhol photographed the parts in question and then put the snapshots in a box simply labelled "Sex Parts."

Gay men were being recruited to the Factory to offer up their genitalia for **15 minutes of fame**. Warhol's explicit close-ups contrast beautifully with his aesthetic ironic distance, as even the most taboo of images becomes kind of boring when repeated in such impersonal, rapid succession. This Warholian doubling of fascination and boredom seems to dominate contemporary photography today, whether looking at Nobuyoshi Araki's bondage photos or the latest Urban Outfitters catalogue.

While Warhol was all about photographing the intimate zones of others, he kept his own notoriously under wraps. "Everything is sexual to Andy without the sex act actually taking place," according to the "legendary cultural catalyst" Charles Henri Ford. "He doesn't like to take his pants off or for anybody to touch him."

