

1-1-2006

Andy Warhol, Marilyn, 1967

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Published version. "Andy Warhol, Marilyn, 1967," in *Perspectives on Art at the Haggerty Museum*. Milwaukee, WI: Haggerty Museum of Art, 2006: 48-49. [Publisher link](#). © 2006 Haggerty Museum of Art, Marquette University. Used with permission.



Andy Warhol
American (1928-1987)
Marilyn, 1967
Color serigraph print
36 x 36 in.

Gift of The Reverend Ronald Owen Crewe
In Memory of Kenneth and Marie Kersten Crewe, 2001.23

Images are worth repeating,” sings Lou Reed on the album *Songs for Drella* (1990), a commemorative “fiction” about the life of Andy Warhol, composed and produced with John Cale. Reed, Cale, Maureen Tucker, and Sterling Morrison were charter members of the Velvet Underground, a legendary rock and roll group patronized and produced by Warhol. In the mid-1960s, the “Velvets” were part of the art scene in Warhol’s “Factory” and his party spectacular known as the “Exploding Plastic Inevitable.” Reed and Cale understood that Warhol/“Drella” (their name for Andy, a combination of Dracula and Cinderella) should not be circumscribed in one genre—pop art. For example, Warhol shared Monet’s fascination with changing color upon an object resulting in numerous images of the same subject. But instead of a cathedral, a haystack, or a pond, Warhol was fascinated by portraiture and especially the public receptivity and imagination of celebrity.

After Marilyn Monroe died in August 1962, Warhol produced multiple photo-silkscreen images of this quintessential star using a publicity photograph from the film *Niagara*, 1952. Each iterated portrait is slightly different, a nuanced ambivalence of Marilyn’s inimitable yet irresolvable identity, perhaps a representation of her public’s inability to reach a consensus or to reconcile the movie star’s life and legacy. Warhol returned to Marilyn in 1967 and produced another edition of serigraphs. Unlike the more naturalistic and vivid 1962 “golden” group, the 1967 collection featured a spectral silver metallic sheen with subdued though saturated colors. There is another disturbing difference. In the 1967 production, Marilyn’s mouth is now unshapely, even grotesque, smeared in a ghastly red, perhaps expressing Warhol’s fascination with the “aesthetics of death” (as pointed out by John Loscuito, in a conversation with the Haggerty’s registrar/collection manager). The dazzling *Marilyn* of 1962 has deteriorated by 1967. Glamour and glow are merely ephemera; but thanks in part to Andy, Marilyn’s fame has lasted more than fifteen minutes.

Warhol prided himself as a social observer. His manifold talents also as an entrepreneur, journalist (*Interview*, a magazine he began in 1969), photographer, filmmaker, record producer, and archivist (see his *Time Capsules* at the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh) illustrate an American artist of extraordinary intelligence and breadth. Furthermore, his multiple interests display a man fascinated with recording his times, whether they be repeated images, taped telephone calls, or accumulated sundries. Andy was an exceptional historian as well as an artist of popular and material culture.

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