

*Everybody has their own America, and then they have the pieces of a fantasy America that they think is out there but they can't see. . . . And you live in your dream America that you've custom-made from art and schmaltz and emotions just as much as you live in your real one.*

—Andy Warhol, *America*, 1985

Andy Warhol (1928–1987) is celebrated as an artist of a seemingly invincible America—one that he simultaneously extolled and skewered. During a career spanning nearly four decades, he produced thousands of commercial illustrations, paintings, drawings, collages, prints, photographs, sculptures, books, magazines, films, videos, television shows, and multimedia installations, radically redefining each medium in which he worked while also calling into question the symbols that reflected many of the aspirations and anxieties of life in the United States at the end of World War II.

Born and raised in Pittsburgh, the son of Byzantine Catholic, Czechoslovak immigrants, Warhol moved in the summer of 1949 to New York, where he quickly found success as a commercial illustrator. Uniquely attuned to the messages of advertising and highly cognizant of social codes, Warhol soon recognized the potential of the image—above all the photograph—to change meanings through manipulation, reproduction, and distribution. *Andy Warhol—From A to B and Back Again*, a title drawn from one of Warhol's memoirs, locates the foundations of his famous Pop art in the 1950s and challenges some critics' perception that Warhol's work later lost its vitality, particularly after the 1960s. It brings new emphasis to the 1970s and 1980s, especially Warhol's technological and pictorial experiments, collaborations, and works that surface his deep engagement with abstraction.

Best known for his ability to identify the icons of contemporary life, Warhol intuitively understood the inextricability of private and public meanings in consumer products, advertising, celebrity, tabloid headlines, and religious iconography, and the collective power these types of images could sustain. At the same time, Warhol's art was one of repetitions, distortions, camouflages, incongruous colors, subversive expressions of desire, and endless recyclings. Far from distilling the image into something fixed or intractable, he constantly questioned and even destabilized it. As such, his work anticipated the most profound effects and issues of the current digital moment, when we no longer know what images to trust. Throughout his career Warhol exposed the complications and contradictions of American culture, transforming its competing impulses and desires into a completely original art that is all the more vital today.

The exhibition continues on the third floor and in the lobby gallery.

Hear more about Warhol from artists and curators at [whitney.org/guide](https://whitney.org/guide), or rent a device in the lobby. / Escucha más sobre Warhol por artistas y curadores en [whitney.org/guide](https://whitney.org/guide), o alquila una guía en la recepción.