

INSTANT WARHOL

A selection of Photographs and Polaroids
by Andy Warhol

OPENING

Tuesday 07.09.2021, 11 am – 7 pm

DATES

08.09 – 23.10.2021

*"A picture means I know where I was every minute.
That's why I take pictures. It's a visual diary."*

Andy Warhol

Galleria Tommaso Calabro is pleased to present *Instant Warhol*, an exhibition dedicated to a selection of photographs and Polaroids by **Andy Warhol (1928–1987)**, which the artist executed during the last twenty years of his life. The show is an opportunity to delve into a lesser known, yet integral aspect of the practice and personal life of the most iconic artist of the twentieth century.

Andy Warhol created some of the most recognized images in our culture, experimenting with a variety of media that include painting, printmaking, video, cinema, music, and photography. This mechanical technique was a natural medium for an artist whose research was dedicated to the process of objectifying the subject and divesting the work of authorial intention. But, at the same time, Warhol's instant, unique Polaroids and gelatin silver prints allow us to look through his own eyes via the camera's lens, visualizing his gesture. They reveal a deeply personal vision in his oeuvre and show how the artist engaged with both the glamour and ordinariness of the world around him.

Andy Warhol used photography since the earliest stages of his career, when he was appropriating photos from magazines, commercials, and the news to create his famous silkscreens. After legal action was taken against him for using a photograph by Patricia Caufield published on the June 1964 issue of *Modern Photography* as the base of his *Flowers* paintings, Warhol began taking pictures assiduously to create original compositions. Everywhere he went, he always carried a **Polaroid camera**, a tireless companion, which he referred to as "his date" and defined as "**a good reason to get up in the morning.**" It was a tool for instantly engaging with his subjects and, simultaneously, a distancing mechanism. In 1971, Warhol started using the Polaroid Big Shot, an inexpensive fixed-focus instant camera that revolutionized his artistic output. Designed specifically for taking portraits, the Big Shot perfectly synthesized in a single object the two defining features of Warhol as an artist: his **obsession with celebrity** and the **mass production of art**. During an average portrait sitting – which could take place in his studio, hotel rooms or private homes – Warhol could take dozens of Polaroids, to eventually pick one that he would use as the starting point for enlarged silk-screened paintings.

The exhibition at Galleria Tommaso Calabro brings together a **selection of Polaroid and gelatin silver print portraits featuring friends from Warhol's inner circle**,

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movie stars, celebrities, and members of the international jazz set, such as the entrepreneur Gianni Agnelli, actress Bianca Jagger, singer Grace Jones, and fashion designers Halston, Gianfranco Ferrè and Diane von Furstenberg. A few of **Warhol's self-portraits** are included, where he is captured in drag or wearing his legendary fright wig. Warhol's investigation of gender and identity is exemplified in the show through Polaroids from the explicit series ***Sex Parts and Torsos***, where he explores the nude body in pieces, focusing on the waist, and the ***Ladies and Gentlemen*** series, commissioned by Turin-based art dealer Luciano Anselmino in 1975. Originally asked to create 105 paintings of cross-dressed men, Warhol eventually produced more than twice that number based on some five hundred Polaroids of fourteen black and Hispanic drag queens recruited from the streets of the West Village, the environs of the Chelsea Piers, and bars such as the Gilded Grape in Hell's Kitchen. Finally, some Polaroids featuring **Warhol's iconic shoes and snapshots of city life** reveal the breath of subjects he engaged with through his camera.

To Warhol, photographs were artworks, experimental tools, and biographical documents, while the camera was his personal recording device. The variety of subjects, which Warhol objectified, glamorized, lampooned, or heroicized, illuminate the artist's attitude towards fame, his notion of collaboration and friendship, as well as his ongoing investigation into ideas of originality, authorship, and genre. With this exhibition, **the gallery aims at underlining the crucial role of photography in Warhol's life and work for the definition of a distinctively Pop aesthetic.**

The exhibition is organized in collaboration with James R. Hedges, IV, who currently owns the largest private collection of Warhol's photographs worldwide.

OPENING TIMES

Tuesday – Saturday / 11 am – 7 pm

Monday / by appointment

PRESS REQUESTS

Galleria Tommaso Calabro

Elena Caslini | elena@tommasocalabro.com | +39 02 49696387

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@tommasocalabrogallery

WEBSITE

tommasocalabro.com
