

Why the work of Andy Warhol is still very appealing until these days?

The Pop art movement

Pop art movement is known to have start in Great Britain in 1952, when a group of artists began to meet regularly to discuss topics about mass culture place in fine arts. They were called: The Independent group. They found interest in imagery such as western movies, comic books, billboards, automobile design and rock and roll music. Pioneers such as Eduardo Paolozzi, with his work “I was a rich man’s plaything” and Richard Hamilton with “What is it that makes Today’s homes So Different”, depicted a slightly different message in comparison to American Pop art since in the Post War times, Great Britain was facing a different situation than America going through difficult economic conditions and in contrast, America was coming out with what would be perceived for the years to come as “The American dream”, optimistic, generous and naive. The term “Pop” has several possible origins but the first use was in writing, incorporated in Paolozzi’s work “I was a rich man’s plaything”, and credited for the launching of Pop art movement.



Just what is it that makes Today's homes So Different
(by Richard Hamilton - 1956)



I was a Rich Man's Plaything
(by Sir Eduardo Paolozzi 1947)

Andy Warhol



“Don’t think about making art, just get it done. Let everyone else decide if it’s good or bad, whether they love it or hate it. While they are deciding , make even more art.” (Andy Warhol)

Andy Warhol was an American artist, film maker and producer who became a leading figure in Pop Art movement that emerged in the United States in the 1960'. He started his career as an commercial illustrator for Glamour magazine, illustrating advertisements for shoes to start with, and very soon he succeeded with his style and his ability to work with colours .His draughtsmanship, and his

blotted line and printing techniques enabled him to work with repeated images as well as his stamps and hand cut stencils, but photography would be the next step in a near future. Warhol was an ambitious artist, he wanted to be famous from the very beginning of his career. His breakthrough arrived as a new form and look for Pop art with his first exhibition, "Campbell's soup cans" in 1962, at the Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles. From that moment it was clear the Warhol had found his signature in his art form of expression. His interest in depicting everyday objects with his artistic perception, translated the cultural moment America was living in post-war times. America was dominating the world. By

observing the mass consumption society, he created what people wanted to see; their desires. Eventually, Warhol decided to send one of his drawing for the process of photo mechanical silkscreening, using the process of silkscreen, and photography. This process was easy, simple and yet, the repeated images would never be one identical to another, bringing an intriguing feature to his work. Andy started series of popular products's images such as coca-cola, vacuum cleaners and hamburgers. It was the first time that photography was embed in painting. Warhol had created a new art language. Working with silkscreen process became his way of working until his death in 1987. After his Campbell's soup iconic images, the next series known by Warhol are the portraits of Marilyn Monroe and other celebrities. Monroe's portraits were made just after two weeks she had committed suicide depicting the glamour and an almost holiness idolisation in the same way he depicted Liz Taylor when she was gravely ill. These portraits feel almost as a reminder of the impact these celebrities had in American society, with their beauty and talent, adored by their fans in an immortal, saint-alike beings and nevertheless they were real people, that existed not only in the fame scene. His portraits were a contradiction of superficiality, with mechanical, quick and easy method with the aid of photography, and an insightful under layered meaning. However, Andy Warhol's art is not only about popular goods images and celebrities. In 1963, 'Death and disasters' series, presented images such as an electric chair, car accidents, suicide and riot. They are all powerful and insightful pieces of work that was not as appealing as his other images but definitely a protest bringing attention to society's problems rather

than only its pleasures. In his Rorschach paintings, there is the abstract expressiveness side of Warhol. His interest was not in doing it to be analysed by some Rorschach method expert. He was more interested in exploring another seriality of spontaneous expressive patterns in which also resulted in repetition with its symmetrical results. Warhol knew that whatever he did, with his name on it, would become profitable. He saw art as business and knew the business of art.

Warhol is ... suggesting that we are *redeemed by representation*, that our inner lives, insofar as they exist, are less important than we imagine them to be, that we live best and most happily in the external, social world among our fellow citizens, in the theater of democratic public life. So our job (and Andy loved jobs) is not to *be* ourselves, but to *perform* ourselves for one another and, ideally, for the camera or the microphone, because these devices socialize us; they make us *aware* of our performance and of our audience. We mitigate our narcissism by expressing it, because self-expression, when it is being recorded, breeds self-consciousness, and self-consciousness puts things into proportion by transforming inner drama into the congeniality of public theater.
(Dave Hickey, art critic)¹

In his 'Last Supper' monumental work proposed in 1984 by Milan based galleries Alexander Iolas, Warhol created over 100 versions before completing the work of 60 pieces in 1986, a year before his death. Another work with insightful under layered meanings, raising again questions of artistic appropriation and originality, as it was in his entire career. For some art critics this last work of Warhol was a representation in the modern age, of capitalism for religion.



Andy Warhol had an upfront vision, his art fits the 21st century. He broke rules, reinvented ways of doing his work. We live in an even more consumerist world. Technology has come a long way comparing to Warhol silkscreen method. Images of mass consumption products are still very attractive to consumers's eyes and the more people see, the more they want. The fascination for celebrity's life and their images has grown even bigger due to access of endless social media channels. Art and artists are able to become an instant celebrity within minutes. Andy Warhol worked for the future as if he could see what art would still look like in the 21st century.

“In the future everyone will be world famous for fifteen minutes” (Andy Warhol)

Inspired by the life and work of Andy Warhol's work, Katia discovered that her interest in ordinary objects in domestic life , had more to do with domesticity. House hold appliances and other objects in a house brings a sense of efficiency and security. They became essential to our modern lives living style. Similar to Andy Warhol, she seems to equally face a paradox with the need and interest in everyday domestic life objects and subjects, and the feeling of disapproval of living in a materialistic and consumerist society where people seem to consider these objects more valuable than relationships with nature and people. We fill our houses with objects compulsively as they give us a sense of belonging and status. The presentation of domestic objects in seriality with busy patterned background, represents our consumerist society, overwhelmed and busy, having constant temptations to consume more. We seem to need all these objects around, distracting us from connecting with simpler things in life. They are ornaments, gadgets or essentials that keep a system growing. We buy them, they broke, we replace them, we give and receive as gifts. The banality and easy method to execute her work, could be compared with Andy Warhol's , lacking hard labour and draughtsmanship. Andy Warhol work, despite the fact that he

enjoyed fame and money, one of the reasons he started to produce big amounts of works, not even executed by him contradict a religious and sensitive person, someone who presented meaningful pieces of work without worrying that they all seemed to be just superficial and purely with the intention of making money . In Katia's work also, under the superficiality and the naive manner lies the message of her struggle in having to repeat the same routine over and over, day by day, without having a choice and yet she decide to see the bright side of it. She presents her everyday life objects in a colourful and playful way, showing that it is all a reflection of how we perceive things in life. Rather we love or hate what surround us, there will always be a choice of how to react to them. Using Pop art in her own colourful and playful version, helped to represent this concept. This project has enhanced her ability to explore a new method, linking her work to an Artist she developed deep interest. Initially ,there was a concern to achieve similar visual without using silkscreening methods. Nonetheless, mono printing, inkblot and stencils were more feasible approaches within her limitations of space and materials. One of the most helpful tools for this project was the daily record of images in her Parallel Project sketch book. It was the investigation for the whole process by exploring, planning, recording and reflecting her ideas that resulted in her final decision . It became clear how crucial is to research the work of other artists as it helps developing her own voice and skills. She has gain more ownership, turning some of her work more interesting and intriguing by demonstrating her ability in combining bold colours, with simple objects of her interest. The use of repetition in art has taken many forms according to some artist's personal style. Japanese artist, Yayoi Kusama known by her polka dots trademark has first developed this method to help her cope with psychological matter. She found relief in doing what she was experiencing in her own mind. Louise Bourgeois has a series os repeated patterns that was created in a phase of severe insomnia, which is also the title of her drawing series. Allan MacCollum known by his 'Plaster surrogates' work, 408 plaster casted frames, created over 10 years, questions us the idea of paintings and other collectables which could also be seen as another statement for consumerism. Damien Hirst with his series of 'spot paintings', for whatever reason he did, Mr. Hirst just can, among others. In her case, using repetition for her final work for the

Parallel project, entitled '9 cups of tea', she is proposing the need to slow down and try to resist our consumerist society without denying we like and want some objects, however we can find a balance between objects and other valuable things. '9 cups of tea' carries a message to slow down, take time out, (with a clock replacing the tea bag tag), get back to basics, traditions and enjoy something simple in a busy and overwhelmed world of technology that has invaded our homes. The cup itself in pagan belief symbolises the womb of the Goddess as in our mother earth, in Christianity is what carries the blood of Christ in baptism. A cup of tea is recognised in most cultures and most cultures consumes tea for different rituals or out of enjoyment. A cup of tea is for her a personal symbol of home, comfort and warmth. It is a gesture to welcome someone to a home, it is soothing when offered to someone ill and accommodates a hot liquid, subconsciously similar to a woman's womb accommodating an unborn child. The side perspective has the similar shape of a woman's breast. It is a very feminine object. In popular culture there is the saying of a cup half full or half empty as an indicator of seeing things positively or negatively. For these reasons, a cup of tea was the object chosen by Katia to represent the feeling of "Home". Home to her is the sacred place, the nest, the memories of childhood with her mother and her motherhood experience. Home is where you allow who you want in. It is where she shows how she cares within her own space and time.

In Conclusion, art in the 21st century can be expressed in a variety of mediums such as sculpture, painting, drawing, installation, video art and performing arts. There are an enormous number of materials and tools available for artists in an era where art can be hard to define. It might be more sensible to state here that a work of art today has a better definition in evaluate 'the work' itself. The process, concept and execution, without judgment and challenging rules has become a workable space for artists. Andy Warhol had shown it in many ways, it all depends in how the viewer perceives his work. An artist today has to believe in what he does because that will be his best part in his work. The art of Andy Warhol could have been seen as superficial and purely commercial. He was clearly a business man but his art can also be defined by glamour camouflaged with so many layers of meanings

underneath. In 1960' and today, Warhol's work is appealing for the simple reason that it relates to our lives and tastes because popular culture imagery will always appeal to people for as long as society exists.

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