

July 5, 2017

Andy Warhol: Lips

July 22 – August 19, 2017

Opening Reception Saturday July 22nd, 4-6 pm

Andy Warhol's fascination with the features and shape of women's lips can be traced back to his earliest personal work in addition to his work as a commercial illustrator. It flourished in his most iconic works of Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor, and even Chairman Mao, where Warhol would highlight his subjects' lips, outlining and coloring each pair of lips in ways that made them the focal point of each painting. As if to prove this point, in 1962 he made the painting "Marilyn's Lips"– a diptych that isolated and repeated Marilyn Monroe's lips 168 times. The painting is now in the collection of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden.



Andy Warhol *Lips*, c. 1975
Unique screenprint and tape collage
8 x 8.5 in (20.3 x 21.6 cm)

For four decades, the depiction of lips was a touchstone for Warhol – a signature trademark that he returned to again and again in varied forms. It is tempting to read into this. Were his renderings of lips an expression of the artist's sublimated need for love, or sex, or communication? Was he interested in the individuality of each pair of lips? The form? The suggestiveness? All of the above?

While Warhol had started doing occasional commissioned portraits in the 1960s, by the 1970s it had become his main source of income and a relentless focus of his attention. To make these portraits he would take a Polaroid picture of the sitter which was then transferred to an enlarged silkscreen. Tracing simple outlines onto the canvas first, Warhol would underpaint the mouth and eye area so that when the silkscreen was applied on top those features would stand out. As always, it was his subject's lips that interested Warhol the most, so much that in 1975 – always the avid bookmaker – Warhol created three different unique albums printing and/or collaging images of more than 60 different pairs of lips onto the album pages. *Andy Warhol: Lips* showcases twenty-five works from one of these books; of the other two, one is in the collection of The Warhol Museum and the other remains with the Warhol Foundation.

The process is unusual. The lips are silkscreened onto various different tapes, from masking tape to packing tape to scotch tape, and then placed and adhered on to the 8 x 8 1/2" page. Because of the thin width of most of the tapes the substrate tape is laid down in layers. Sometimes the tape is laid down roughly and unevenly, other times the tape is trimmed to the outer edges of the lips. Most of the pairs of lips are hastily filled in, with clearly outlined edges. Color saturation is such that sometimes they look like black shapes, here and there fading into grey. They become simple forms, and the original photograph disappears beneath the pattern. The very handmade nature of each collage stands as an interesting counterpoint to Warhol's proclaimed interest in the machine-made and the hands-off approach he adopted throughout his career.

Until one of the "Lips" albums was exhibited in *Warhol: By the Book* at The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh (October 10, 2015 – January 10, 2016) and the Morgan Library and Museum, New York (February 5 – May 15, 2016) and reproduced in part in the extensive monograph "The Warhol Look" (1997), these particular types of work were virtually unknown. However, we now can see these unique collages as pure Warhol – isolated, mysterious, and glamorous. Repeating and varying in form, hovering between figurative and abstraction, each singular piece tells its own story and presents its own seductive identity in true Warhol fashion.

For additional information, please contact Camille Weiner: 323.549.0223 and camille@robertsandtilton.com

Gallery hours are Tuesday – Saturday, 11:00am – 6:00pm.

Roberts & Tilton is located between Fairfax Avenue and La Cienega Boulevard.

Parking is available on the street and at Dunn Edwards located 1/2 block east of the gallery.