Pop Portraits

Grades: Adaptable for all ages
Discipline: Art/Visual Art
Time Frame: 1-2 class sessions

Students will explore and critique fame in America, focusing on image and mass media. This lesson outlines Andy Warhol's two-layer silkscreen process which he used to create some of his most famous iconic portraits. Based on an adaptation of this process, students will use collage techniques to create variety in their own mass produced images.

Warhol Images needed for this lesson:

Andy Warhol, **Mick Jagger**, 1975
Two prints from a portfolio of ten screen prints on paper, 43 ½ x 29 in. each.
The Andy Warhol Museum,
Founding Collection
Contribution The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc.
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Andy Warhol, **Mao**, 1972-73
Silkscreen ink and synthetic polymer paint on canvas.
104 x 77 in.
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Andy Warhol, **Princes Caroline of Monaco**, 1983
Silkscreen ink and synthetic polymer paint on canvas.
40 x 40 in.
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POP Portraits

Historical/Topical Information:

In the early 1960s Warhol explored the fame of everyday objects with paintings of Campbell Soup cans, Coca-Cola bottles, and three-dimensional Brillo boxes. The movement of Pop Art was ushered in when these symbols of popular culture entered the realm of fine art. Pop artists used all aspects of American consumer culture as the subject matter for their artwork, including: magazine advertisements, newspaper headlines, car crashes and portraits of famous movie stars.

Andy Warhol was particularly fascinated with the glamour and fame of Hollywood. Even as a young boy, Andy loved to go to the movies and started collecting glamour magazines and autographed photographs of movie stars such as Shirley Temple, Mae West and Carmen Miranda. As an adult, Warhol continued to collect fan magazines as well as publicity stills of Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor, and Bridgette Bardot. He used clippings and photographs from these collections as the source material for some of his most famous portraits. This fascination with all things famous lasted throughout Warhol's life, even as he too became a sought after celebrity.

Andy Warhol used photographic silkscreen to create his portraits of Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley, Mick Jaggar, and Jackie Kennedy. This method of printing creates a very precise and defined image and allows the artist to mass-produce a large number of prints with relative ease. Warhol adopted the methods of mass production to make images of celebrities who were themselves mass produced. Elvis existed not only as a flesh-and-blood person but as millions of pictures on album covers and movie screens, in newspapers and magazines. He was infinitely reproducible. Similarly, Warhol could produce as many Elvis painting as he pleased, through use of the silkscreen printing process.

To make these portraits, Warhol would first choose a photograph of a famous pop icon. The original image would be sent to a photo lab where it would be transferred photographically to the silkscreen mesh using a film positive and light sensitive emulsion. Once this was complete, the silkscreen would be ready to print and sent to Andy Warhol's Factory (studio).

The process Andy Warhol used to create his portraits had two layers. First, the canvas would be under-painted. This means that before an image was silkscreened onto the canvas, colored paint was applied to that canvas. This color might be swipes of multi-colored brush strokes or very defined shapes. Warhol's portraits of Mao Tse Tung and Princess Caroline are good examples of this process. The silkscreened image of Mao was printed last, on top of the layers of green and yellow paint. Warhol was able to create diverse and interesting effects by using this technique of under-painting. In the portraits of Princess Caroline, Warhol not only incorporated a variety of dramatic colors for the background and skin tones, he also printed the screens with blue and black ink.

A variation of this technique was used on the Mick Jagger prints. Cut paper shapes were applied instead of paint to create a similar under-color effect. Our "POP Portrait" lesson is based on this idea of collaging torn and cut paper shapes. With this project, we are using photocopy machine acetates to replace the final silkscreened image. Students are encouraged to create more than one portrait of the same person using a variety of background colors and shapes.

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Pennsylvania Arts and Humanities Standard

9.2 Historical and Cultural Contexts

H. Identify, describe and analyze the work of a Pennsylvania Artist in the visual arts.

L. Students will be able to identify, explain and analyze common themes, forms and techniques from works in the arts.

Goal: Students will examine and understand different facets of fame in American culture through the creation of a contemporary pop portrait based on Andy Warhol's silkscreen printing technique.

Objectives:
- Students will recognize elements of Pop Art, such as the use of popular culture as subject matter.
- Students will understand the concept of under-painting as used by Warhol in his silkscreen portraits.
- Students will create their own acetate portrait using a combination of collage and drawing techniques.
- Students will explore the way in which a repeated image can be made unique through the use of under-coloring, employing the principle of variety.

Materials:
supplemental text
slides or printed copies of Andy Warhol's portraits (in this site)
acetates (specifically for a photocopy machine)
photographs/images of contemporary celebrities
white or colored background paper
scotch tape
scissors
colored markers
glue
colored construction paper
metallic markers
foil paper
stickers

Procedures:

1. Have students read the introductory information in this lesson about Andy Warhol's pop portraiture. Using the motivational questions, discuss Andy Warhol's work, pop art and contemporary connections.

Motivational Questions:

- What portraits do you see all the time? (E.g. family members, your principal, famous movie stars, the President and First Lady of the United States.) Why are portraits important to us? Why do you think artists have painted portraits through out the ages?
- How many times have you seen portraits or images of a famous pop star such as Britney Spears in the past year? Why are there so many images of her in the news and on TV?
- How does someone become famous? If it were your job to make someone famous, how would you do it? What steps would you take?
- Andy Warhol appropriated many of his images from mass media (meaning he did not take the photograph himself but found it and used it). If you were going to appropriate an image to make a portrait, where would you take the image from and why?
- After viewing the Mick Jagger, Princess Caroline and Chairman Mao prints, describe the effects created by the under-painting. How does Andy Warhol create variety in his portraits?

2. Choose a visual image of a pop icon: either a photograph or a magazine clipping. Example: Madonna, Britney Spears, The President of the United States, Tiger Woods, etc.
3. Using a photocopy machine, manipulate the image to the desired size.
4. Copy this image onto photocopy acetate. (Acetate can be ordered through any office supply store.)
5. Make 2-4 acetates of the pop icon for each student. If you reduce the image to 5 1/2" X 8 ½" you can get two images per one piece of 8 ½" X 11" acetate.
6. Connect each acetate sheet to a piece of background paper of the same size using a Scotch tape hinge. The background can be either white or colored paper. To make the hinge, place the tape on one edge of the acetate, and then fold it over to stick on the backside of the background paper. Once this is done your two papers should open like a book.
7. Now you are ready to "under-paint" your portrait. Warhol would paint on the canvas first, and then print the photographic silkscreen image on top. For this project the acetate will act as the final printed layer. The image on the acetate has certain see-through areas; whatever is underneath those areas will be visible. Using cut or torn paper, create a collage type pattern on the background paper so these colors show through the acetate, thus acting as the under-painted layer. Andy Warhol sometimes used torn paper under his prints too.
8. A variety of other materials: stickers, colored foil paper, stamps, and colored markers can also be used for the under-painting. Metallic or permanent markers can be used to write on the actual acetate surface.
9. Create variation among the 2-4 acetates by changing elements such as color and paper edges (ripped/torn edges vs. cut/smooth edges), by adding linear elements using markers, and by working with the background areas as well as the subject areas.

Wrap-up Questions:
1. What were you trying to convey in your portrait? Why did you choose certain colors and compositional elements? Were your artistic decisions influenced by contemporary trends? Explain how. (Students should explain their decision making process for each portraits.)
2. In your portrait did you create images that would promote this person's popularity in our culture or is your portrait more of a critique of the image that is already popular?
3. Who is more famous --a pop singer such as Britney Spears or a recent recipient of the Nobel peace prize? Why?
4. Are there different types of fame? Which is of more value?

Assessment:
After discussing the works in class and your students' ideas about fame and portraiture, have students pick one of their variations to write a short promotional or critical biographical sketch. Their writing should explain who the person is, their accomplishments, any special qualities they possess, and reasons they do or do not deserve to be famous.

Vocabulary:
Pop art
Portraiture
Collage
Mass-production
Appropriation
Fame
Consumer Culture
Icons

Suggested Interdisciplinary Connections:

1. English Language Arts/Social Studies/History/Civics and Science

"American Icon Family Tree"

Students will create an "American Icon Family Tree" using photographs of specific figures, objects, and inventions that have impacted our society during a certain era. A small written biographical sketch that explains the impact that person or thing has had on American culture should accompany each icon.

The class must first choose a specific time period or era that they want to research. Break the students into groups. Assign each group a particular category to research. Some category examples are:

Science and technology
Politics
Art and literature
Popular culture (film, music, fashion stars)
Sports

Each student is responsible for investigating one icon or personality per category; there should be at least four icons for each category to represent it in its entirety.

Students will then create their "trees" using the time period to connect the different icons from each category. Additionally, students may want to interview their parents, grandparents or someone who was alive during the specific era who could add a personal perspective on the icon.

- Some 1950s icons for Science and Technology might be:
  Dr. Jonas Salk
  Jet airline passenger service
  Sputnick
  Television

- Some 1950s icons for Politics might be:
  Harry Truman
  Julius and Ethel Rosenberg
  Rosa Parks

2. Math

Take separate polls of your peers, a group of older students, a group of younger students and finally, a group of adults asking whom they consider to be icons. Then graph the results. Some questions to answer: What are the significant differences between the groups and within the groups? What are some of the hypotheses about the reasons for the differences?