

A black and white photograph of a man with long, light-colored hair, wearing a dark leather jacket. He is looking upwards and to the right, holding a large, vintage-format camera. The camera is a large, boxy model with a prominent lens on the left side. The background shows a building with a grid-like window pattern. The text "THE FILMS OF ANDY WARHOL" is overlaid in the center of the image.

THE FILMS OF
ANDY WARHOL



THE FILMS OF ANDY WARHOL: An Introduction



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THE FILMS OF ANDY WARHOL: PRESERVATION AND DOCUMENTATION

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The Andy Warhol Film Collection, now being assembled at The Museum of Modern Art, contains the artist's original film materials, projection prints, and miscellaneous elements such as outtakes. Thus, even though most of Warhol's films have not been screened for many years, thousands of reels of motion pictures survive intact. A preliminary investigation indicates that there was a surprisingly large amount of variation in Warhol's films, with different versions of the same film having been released at different times and for different purposes. In addition, the collection contains films which have never been released or have had only limited exhibition and are thus not part of the usual canon of Warhol's cinematic work. The retrieval of these films for a new public and for those audiences and scholars who have not seen them since their original release will permit a reexamination of Warhol's film career from a historical perspective and a more accurate critical reassessment of his works. To keep the films permanently available for future generations of scholars and the public, a major preservation project has now begun in conjunction with this 1988 exhibition.

Time takes its toll on all films. Until the early 1950s, theatrical movies and newsreels were made on an unstable nitrate base that eventually disintegrates into a powder. Moreover, color films made since the early 1950s, when less expensive color technology replaced the more durable Technicolor process, have already begun to fade. In addition to nitrate decomposition and color fading, deterioration of films has occurred through shrinkage, brittleness, mold, the residual chemicals from processing, and exposure to light or pollution.

Problems of preservation and restoration affect not only early films and classic Hollywood films, but also

American avant-garde films. Independent films frequently survive only in the form of 16mm camera originals or single prints that were struck on demand directly from these originals. It was often too expensive for independent filmmakers to produce internegatives, from which quality prints can be made. Often, artists also reworked the same film, creating different versions which must be evaluated in order to accurately document the artist's working process. Saving these early avant-garde films is an urgent priority. Films made by important independent filmmakers have already disappeared or deteriorated because of inadequate storage conditions or insufficient printing facilities, especially for 16mm black-and-white films. The role of a film archive is to protect and preserve this national heritage. The process is lengthy and expensive, requiring a professionally trained and



Viva and Andy Warhol at the Factory, 1968.

experienced staff to search out, identify, and catalogue the films, to transfer them onto more stable film stocks, and to properly house the preservation negatives and masters in special climate-controlled vaults.*

The project of analysis, which will be completed for the Whitney Museum's future retrospective, is already well underway. The preservation component of the project, which complements the analysis, will extend beyond the exhibition. The bulk of the Warhol collection, once stored in commercial film vaults and laboratories as well as at the Factory, has now been brought together at The Museum of Modern Art. Each reel of film has been inspected, and the original materials are now safely stored in the museum's archives, with prints previously generated for showing in the 1960s and 1970s housed at the Factory. Important technical information for each inspected reel of film—especially the original camera material (i.e., the type of film used in the camera) and the existence of a projection print, along with lengths and conditions—has been recorded on a card specially designed for this project. From the cards we can easily ascertain which Warhol films have extant projection quality 16mm prints; these are being used for the 1988 exhibition. Such prints will also serve as guides for the image quality (e.g., the density and contrast) of preservation negatives and prints made from the camera originals.

The analytic data yielded by the card system has facilitated the selection of a core group of Warhol films for the first round of preservation and exhibition. At the same time, a separate set of negatives and prints, whose use will be governed by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc., will be generated for third-party access, re-release for commercial purposes, and for loan to other museums and cultural institutions. In this way, the sometimes competing demands of preservation and access can be met.

The internegatives and new prints to be generated from the original camera materials will replace dupe prints that are poor shadows of the originals. Warhol's films, in all their rich tonalities, will thus be available for fuller study and appreciation. These copies will then

serve as the basis for the comprehensive research project of the retrospective and catalogue raisonné.

The course of Warhol's filmmaking activities is difficult to document. The existing filmographies are incomplete, contemporaneous documentation has been difficult to assemble coherently, and the films themselves have been largely inaccessible. Moreover, Warhol's filmmaking efforts, especially from 1965 to 1967, were at once prolific and elusive. He regularly shot 35-minute reels on 16mm sound film; these reels were assigned numbers, at times given titles, then assembled for public exhibition. During some showings reels were superimposed from three projectors or projected simultaneously and shown side by side; some films were incorporated into subsequent films, and reels were also changed from showing to showing.

The planned filmographic and technical catalogue raisonné will therefore trace, for each reel of film photographed, the conditions surrounding production, distribution, and exhibition. Production annotations will include: the reel numbers and various titles assigned to a given film; dates and places of shooting; production and cast credits (including Warhol's role in the making of each film); technical production data, such as the type of camera used, the original camera material shot (frequently 16mm reversal positive), and length. The distribution and exhibition history will document post-production work, films shot but not released, changes in length of versions, censor restrictions, alterations caused by shifting projection conditions, and the interim between the shooting and exhibition of a film.

The catalogue raisonné will also record the printing history of the films and their distribution patterns—the flow of materials to various sites and repositories. For each reel of film, a synopsis will provide objective notations on the action as well as on the use of the camera and edits. Relationships between films will also be cited. Information and critical assessments will be gathered from contemporaneous film reviews, published books on Warhol, interviews with actors, associates and friends, gallery and film exhibitors, historians and scholars, the films themselves, and internal Factory records.

* See Jon Gartenberg, "Preserving Our Film Heritage," in *American Federation of Arts Newsletter*, October 1983, pp. 2-3.



Contact strips of stills from the production of *Flesh*, 1968, with Candy Darling, Joe Dallesandro, Jackie Curtis.

Through the inventory of the Warhol estate made after his death in February 1987, pertinent documentation regarding his film career has emerged: storage and laboratory lists of films, film rental figures, scripts by Ronald Tavel that were used for some films in Warhol's sound period (including *Screen Test #2* and *The Life of Juanita Castro*, as well as some unrealized projects), and contracts, scrapbooks, and production stills. This material augments some fascinating discoveries already made in the inventory of the film collection itself. There are films in different versions and lengths, such as *Kiss*; sound remakes of silent films (such as *Blow Job*, remake

as *Eating Too Fast*); hundreds of reels of short films in their original cartons (portraits, for example, dating from the period around the end of 1965); tests from *Kitchen*; outtakes from *I, a Man*, *Lonesome Cowboys*, and *Flesh*; unprinted reels from ****, sound-on-tape tracks (for example, from *Tarzan and Jane Regained . . . Sort of*); unfinished and unreleased films such as *Surfing Movie*; production footage from *Lonesome Cowboys* that reveals the production roles of various Factory associates; films on Warhol's career by American and foreign filmmakers, including some interviews with Warhol; and films Warhol himself collected.

The catalogue raisonné filmography will reconstruct the Factory's working methods as fully as possible. These entries, read consecutively, will trace the evolution of Warhol's film career through the shifting processes of production, distribution, and exhibition. Warhol employed a transient stable of actors, among them prominent figures from the art and film world such as Henry Geldzahler, Marisol, Robert Indiana, Jack Smith, and Dennis Hopper, as well as "Superstars" such as Edie Sedgwick, Ingrid Superstar, Viva, Gerard Malanga, Ondine, Mario Montez, and Joe Dallesandro. He also involved numerous associates in the filmmaking process—Gerard Malanga, Billy Linich, Buddy Wirtschafter, Chuck Wein, Ronald Tavel, Paul Morrissey, and Vincent Fremont—who served at various stages as technical assistants, cameramen, writers, and directors.

This pioneering project of inventorying, screening, and preserving the Factory films forges a dynamic relationship between exhibition and preservation activities. It will also create, for the first time, a well-documented foundation for the critical analysis of Warhol's films, an analysis that can now be based on original sources and research materials which have been largely unavailable to historians, critics, and the general public.