EXHIBITION CHECKLIST
ALL PHOTOGRAPHS ANDY WARHOL

1. (Ladies and Gentleman) Monique, 1974, Polacolor Type 108, Gift of the Andy Warhol Foundation, 2008.6.96


17. Martha Graham, 1979, Polacolor Type 108, Gift of the Andy Warhol Foundation, 2008.6.3


46. Andy Warhol, selected Screen Tests, 1964–1966, as produced for the film 13 Most Beautiful...Songs for Andy Warhol’s Screen Test, with newly commissioned soundtracks by Dean Wareham and Britta Phillips, © 2008, The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA

FURTHER READING


ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts
Production photography by Andrew Bale
Graphic design by Catherine Siegel
Cover: Lucio Amelio, after August 1975, Polaroid Type 108.
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THE TROUT GALLERY/DICKINSON COLLEGE
Photographs by Andy Warhol focuses on a selection of Polaroids donated to The Trout Gallery, Dickinson College by the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. as part of the Andy Warhol Photographic Legacy Program. Initiated in 2007 on the twentieth anniversary of Warhol's death, the Photographic Legacy Program distributed over 23,500 photographs by Warhol to 180 educational institutions across the United States.

Warhol routinely worked with found images throughout his career. During the 1960s, he began to base his silkscreen paintings on photographic reproductions and photographs. This procedure would continue for the rest of his career. Warhol's first portraits, beginning with his 1963 portrait of the Pop art collector Ethel Scull, were made using timed exposures in a photobooth, and coincide with his growing involvement in filmmaking. These photobooth strips may be considered to be Warhol's first photographs. Likewise, Warhol's flourishing portrait practice during the 1970s and 1980s was a function of his photographic practice.

Warhol had owned a Polaroid camera as early as 1962, but when he acquired a Polaroid Big Shot camera a decade later—either in late 1971, shortly after the camera became available, or in early 1972—he found his first camera of choice. Although Polaroid stopped producing the Big Shot after 1973, Warhol always found a means of obtaining spare Big Shot cameras throughout his career—often with the help of Polaroid's representatives. Vincent Fremont, who began working for Warhol in 1971 has described the Big Shot as follows:

...The Big Shot is a funny-looking camera, made mostly of gray plastic with no buttons to push and no settings to adjust, except for a ring on the lens which, when turned, makes the photograph lighter or darker. Unlike most of the slick, well-designed Polaroid cameras of the 1970s, the Big Shot has a non-retractable extension that attaches to a rectangular back that doubles as a handle and viewer. A ten-inch gray plastic module extends from this handle, which contains the flash cube. Because the Big Shot is a close-up camera with a fixed focal length of three feet, it is ideal for portraits. The only tricky part in using the camera is focusing the subject. When using the Big Shot, Andy would move forward and backward while looking through the viewer to make the double image become one. Once the subject was "locked in," Andy would trip a simple lever at the end of the camera to make the exposure. The flash would go off, the film would be pulled out and, after a wait of sixty seconds, the picture could be seen. Instant photography was important to Andy for this reason."* The Big Shot, in fact, was designed and marketed as a portrait camera. Its fixed focal length of 39 inches, flash system, and peel-apart instant color film, called Polacolor, soon established the basic conditions that would govern Warhol’s portrait practice during the next two decades: instantaneity, artificial light, and a relatively close but absolutely fixed distance between artist and subject. In late 1972, Polaroid introduced an integral film system as an alternative to peel-apart Polacolor film, called SX-70 Land film. The SX-70 Polaroid camera could focus on objects at close range, as close as 10½ inches from its lens, freeing the photographer from fixed poses and setups, making action shots possible for the amateur. Warhol availed himself of the SX-70’s capabilities to record social events. He reserved the Big Shot for portrait sittings, using the SX-70 as a back-up camera, when he ran out of Polacolor film.

Warhol made all of the photographs in this exhibition using a Big Shot camera, and almost all are portrait studies, except for the six male nudes, which Warhol slyly referred to as “landscapes” in The Andy Warhol Diaries, and which are studies for his Toro series. The earliest Polaroid in this exhibition, Monique, is technically a portrait study, but the photograph is also an outtake from a much larger series of sittings that Warhol set up with a group of street transvestites, recruited from a bar called the Gilded Grape, in preparation for his 1975 series Ladies and Gentlemen.

The nine Polaroids of the Neapolitan art dealer Lucio Amelio on view vividly demonstrate the dramatic range and cinematic mobility of a Warhol portrait sitting. Amelio obligingly and elegantly disposes of the problem of his hands, and shifts the tilt of his head and orientation of his upper body within the fixed frame of Warhol’s Big Shot viewfinder.

From Monique to a beauty like Barbara Allen, a celebrity like Sylvester Stallone, a diva like Martha Graham, the couturier James Galanos, and the industrialist Max Weishaupt, Warhol’s Big Shot Polaroids and the brilliant paintings that he made using them offer us a portrait gallery of society, much as it might be seen by the Zurich gossip columnist Hildegard Schwaninger (also captured here by Warhol’s Big Shot), vivid and uneven, filtered through the light and shadow cast by the mass media of the late twentieth century.

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