

SuperWarhol **From July 16th to August 31st, 2003**

The exhibition

The Grimaldi Forum Monaco is putting on an Andy Warhol exhibition, *SuperWarhol*, to be inaugurated on 15 July. The exhibition curated by Germano Celant with display design by Matali Crasset aims to spotlight the chronological development of Andy Warhol's imaginative process, with a special focus on the monumental aspect of his artistic output and his largest works.

"Sizing is a form of thinking," the Pop artist wrote, and his focus on the macroscopic dimension of imagery, as repeated in hundreds of examples of historic motifs from *Marilyn Monroe* to *Monna Lisa*, the electric chair to Christ, emphasises the spectacular and unique value of his later works produced from the 70s through to his premature death.

By focusing on the monumental proportions of the works, some over ten metres long, the exhibition offers a totally new perception of his research from the 60s through to 1986, from his astonishing wallpaper installations, helium-filled silver cushions and major cinematographic experiments through the *Oxidation* (1978) and *Camouflage* series to the *Last Supper* series (1986) dedicated to Leonardo da Vinci.

Celant's aim is to show an ensemble of spectacular pictures through which Warhol turned huge surfaces and spaces into a material on which he could project or spread out the world of popular icons he had treated and highlighted individually during the 60s. In his creative universe of a few years later, these icons have turned into huge wallpapers, totally superficial, polished entities devoid of any spiritual or dramatic content, now purely decorative.

The exhibition therefore focuses on a totally new synthesis of Warhol's approach, first looking at traditional oil painting techniques, then at the mechanised silkscreen process that produced the consumer images of Coca-Cola and Campbell's soup as well as the faces of Marilyn Monroe and Jackie Kennedy, before continuing through the proliferation of industrial flowers and the car crashes to the abstract qualities of images such as *Eggs* and *Diamond Shoes*, the ubiquitous presence of *Dollar Signs* and the new cultural myths of *Ladies and Gentlemen* and *Kings and Queens*. All this was expressed with spectacular, worldly elation in the most varied languages – *Interview* magazine, cinema, advertising, television (*Andy Warhol's TV*) –, a rich multiplicity that centred on Warhol, the originator of The Factory myth.

The central and final parts of the exhibition are devoted to the endless replication of Warholian motifs composing canvases that take over the walls and become monuments of iconography, such as *Christ* and *Monna Lisa*. These are virtually repetitive visual flashes that replicate and multiply through inertia to become the hoardings of a faith or culture.

We start with the *Oxidation* paintings, the first of the works in which Warhol temporarily renounced the basic technique of photography that had been his reference since the start of his career. The artist produced the works in this series, all tending to a large-scale format, by coating canvases in copper metallic pigment then "treating" them by having people urinate on them, thereby creating irregular patterns in the metallic pigment and altering and changing the colours.

The same tendency towards abstraction and the use of unusual materials can be seen a little later on in the *Rorschachs* series, in which the artist treats the shapes in the personality test used by psychologists and psychiatrists as purely functional. He thus highlights the arbitrary utilisation of shapes in works of art, abstract shapes that additionally echo an attempt at codified scientific interpretation.

Also displayed are Warhol's large works from the late 70s devoted to a rereading of his artistic past, such as *Big Retrospective* (1979) and the *Reversal* series plus the subjects

that most contributed to his fame, the portraits of Marilyn Monroe through to his version of Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*, by reworking them in "negative" colour.

Warhol's last decade of activity, the 80s, began partly with another series in which large-scale proportions still prevail, the *Zeitgeist* paintings of monuments and emblematic architecture which immediately revoke and synthesise the significance of a historical era. To conclude this exploration of the monumental, the exhibition presents examples of the work Warhol produced in collaboration with artist Jean-Michel Basquiat, the large-scale reworkings of themes explored in the commercial illustrations so important in the artist's early production (*Double Be A Somebody With A Body*, 1985-1986), and the *Camouflage* series based on an enlarged photo of a piece of military camouflage recopied and reproduced in various colours including fluorescent. Last comes the series devoted to Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper*, the final emblematic work he produced in which the example of classical art is reconstructed in an infinite number of variations by mixing photomechanical and manual processes, devout painting with the most profane symbols of the present, the uniqueness of the art work with its infinite capacity for reproduction. In addition to these monumental paintings, the Grimaldi Forum Monaco exhibition presents a selection of the artist's historic works that through series of linked sections reveal the iconographic references that inspired his work and his interest in a different aspect of the monumental devolving from mass consumerism. From advertising imagery (Campbell's soup cans and Brillo boxes), the professional milieu from which Warhol started out, to his obsession with the images of Jackie Kennedy and Marilyn Monroe, passing over the years through the symbols of mass society violence (*Suicide*, 1962-63, *Guns*, 1981-82); from the myths of show business (Elvis Presley) and the international jet set (portraits of Ethel Scull, Marella Agnelli and many others) to the art world (Robert Rauschenberg, Joseph Beuys, Jean-Michel Basquiat) and Warhol himself in his many *Self-Portraits*; from sexuality and sexual identity (*Torsos*, 1977, *Ladies and Gentlemen*, 1975) to the emblems of libertarian culture (*Printed Dollar # 3*, 1962, *Dollar Sign*, 1981) and of revolution (*Mao*, 1973, *Hammer and Sickle*, 1976); plus the more general imagery building process and his constant experimentation (*Flowers*, 1964).

Insatiably creative, Warhol utilised every possible type of support and left us a colossal artistic legacy including cinema, photography, video, print (magazines and journals), design and television; a most extraordinary global vision for an artist who believed that "quantity is the best gauge of anything".

Visitors can also relive this relationship between art and popular culture by watching a selection of the artist's films – including *Kiss*, 1963-64, *Kitchen*, 1965, *I, a Man*, 1967-68 – and a video anthology of his television appearances, some taken from the famous series, *Andy Warhol's Fifteen Minutes*, 1985-87; a section is likewise devoted to photographers and film directors such as Nat Finkelstein, Christopher Makos, Gerard Malanga, Fred McDarrah, David McCabe and Billy Name who worked closely with Warhol and documented the events and people that stimulated life at The Factory, that place where, as exhibition curator Germano Celant observes, "the height of artificiality (...) the acme of dehumanisation" took concrete shape and developed.