IN LIVING COLOR
Andy Warhol and Contemporary Printmaking

FROM THE COLLECTIONS OF JORDAN D. SCHNITZER AND HIS FAMILY FOUNDATION
INTRODUCTION

Jack Becker, PhD
Executive Director & CEO
Joslyn Art Museum

In Living Color: Andy Warhol and Contemporary Printmaking is Joslyn Art Museum’s second partnership with Jordan D. Schnitzer. A consummate collector, passionate about art and artists, and warmly generous to institutions and audiences across the nation, Jordan has created one of the nation’s premier collections of contemporary American prints. Spanning eras, subjects, and styles, his collection is a treasure trove for anyone interested in art of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Jordan’s taste is comprehensive and broad in its scope, but he has also collected a number of artists in particular depth. In 2013, Jordan sponsored the exquisite two-volume *The Prints of Ellsworth Kelly: A Catalogue Raisonné*. The first publication to focus on the full body of Kelly’s printmaking practice, it is a gift to scholars and collectors alike. Andy Warhol likewise captured Jordan’s imagination. A household name, a brand, known to everyone and yet an enigmatic figure, Warhol is the master of pop and an icon of twentieth-century America.

It is only fitting that the curator of this exhibition, Karin Campbell, Phil Willson Curator of Contemporary Art, hails from Pittsburgh, Warhol’s first home. With a keen eye, Karin has organized an exhibition that explores how Warhol depicted the world with “the volume turned up,” challenging how we understand popular culture, politics, and consumer society. In Living Color examines the way that Warhol’s use of color impacts both subject and viewer, and how it established a model that influenced scores of fellow artists.

Joslyn Art Museum is delighted that this exhibition has met with enthusiasm from so many of our museum colleagues. We are pleased that audiences in Savannah, Tampa, Tulsa, Jacksonville, and Wichita will have a chance to experience this compelling view of Andy Warhol. Finally, a heartfelt thanks to Jordan for making his collection available to audiences in Omaha and beyond. We celebrate his generous and passionate spirit for the arts. Thank you.
Andy Warhol (1928–1987) once famously quipped, “I like boring things.” Indulging this affinity throughout his career, he depicted the mundane, the everyday, the obvious, and the overused. Yet Warhol also became one of the most influential and in-demand artists of the twentieth century. Spanning three decades of his career, In Living Color: Andy Warhol and Contemporary Printmaking from the Collections of Jordan D. Schnitzer and His Family Foundation examines how Warhol’s “boring things” came to life through his exuberant use of color. The exhibition features some of the artist’s most iconic screen prints, including his portraits of Marilyn Monroe and Mao Zedong, the splashy camouflage series, and the controversial Electric Chair portfolio. Each of the exhibition’s five sections—experimentation, emotion, experience, subversion, and attitude—places a significant body of work by Warhol in conversation with other artists in the postwar era who use color as a tool to shape the way viewers read and respond to images.

In drawing inspiration from the rapidly changing world around them, Warhol and his contemporaries pursued an approach to making art that was inclusive and more aware of the day-to-day conditions of contemporary life.

Mary Heilmann (American, b. 1940) Joaquin’s Close Out, 2006, edition 18/25, aquatint with spit bite and sugar lift aquatint, 40 x 30 1/2 inches, Publisher: Crown Point Press, San Francisco, ©the Artist
America’s involvement in foreign wars was one dominant aspect of life in the mid-twentieth century that became a theme in the work of many Pop artists, including Warhol. Modern camouflage originated during the First World War when the emergence of aerial and trench warfare necessitated concealment of troops and matériel on the battlefield. During the Vietnam War (1959–1975), protestors appropriated camouflage, turning it into a symbol of the unbridled power of the military-industrial complex and the hubris of the American government. For Warhol, the fact that camouflage was widely recognizable and had acquired new meanings over time made the pattern ripe for experimentation, and while he aimed to distance himself from Abstract Expressionism, he identified with the recent history of American painting—and camouflage provided a fascinating study in abstraction.

Warhol based the 1987 Camouflage series on cloth purchased at a military supply store in New York City. Applying a range of spectacular and inorganic colors to camouflage, the artist sought to nullify its function as a tool of disguise and deception while extricating the pattern from its associations with wartime. However, just as his celebrity portraits cannot truly be divorced from their subject matter, the camouflage prints are laden with sociopolitical implications. Despite Warhol’s radical color alterations, viewers are still reminded of the chasm that camouflage has signified in the United States.

German-born Josef Albers (1888–1976) was known for taking a scientific approach to color. In his book Interaction of Color (1963), widely considered the definitive text on modern color theory, the artist proposes that individual perception—along with more concrete factors, such as hue and saturation—is critical in determining one’s experience of color. Albers’ seminal Homage to the Square is one of the most significant bodies of work to address color experimentation. Executed during the last twenty-five years of the artist’s life, this extended series comprises hundreds of paintings and prints that use a simple compositional device—concentric squares—to investigate myriad chromatic interactions. Unlike Warhol’s interest in the broader cultural relevance of camouflage, Albers selected a neutral subject to act as a vehicle for the unadulterated experience of color. In Homage to the Square, he plays with color contrasts to create the illusion of depth of field on a flat surface, challenging the capacity of the human eye to "read" the picture plane.

Like Warhol, Dorothea Rockburne (b. 1932) is typically known for her energetic colors; however her 1972 aquatint series Locus is notably restrained, highlighting process over palette. To create these monochromatic abstractions, Rockburne ran folded sheets of paper through a printing press, resulting in embossed surfaces. Using aquatint, an etching technique that produces a watercolor-like effect, the artist applied subtle tonal variations, contributing further to the prints’ sculpted quality. By removing color entirely from the Locus series, Rockburne gives primacy to the inherent material properties of paper and her innovative approach to printmaking.
Pop artists were also known for their use of “ready-mades,” prefabricated objects isolated from their original functions and recontextualized as art. Warhol expanded the realm of the ready-made to include photographs, often sourcing material from mass media. The electric chair first appeared in his work in 1963, the same year that New York administered its final chair execution at Sing Sing State Penitentiary. Warhol returned to the subject repeatedly over the course of his career, responding to the contentious public debate surrounding the death penalty that emerged among grassroots social movements in the 1960s and eventually reached the Supreme Court of the United States. Capital punishment had been banned in America for eight years by the time Warhol completed the print portfolio on view in this exhibition. Made in 1971, these ten tightly cropped images feature a brash palette, bringing together neon yellow and pink, colors often associated with joy, with more sinister hues, such as crimson. This disquieting tactic leaves viewers to navigate their own conflicted responses to the images.

Warhol remained committed to his electric chair images long after the national conversation on the death penalty had subsided and his oeuvre had shifted to less grim topics. He claimed his objective was to divest the electric chair of meaning, arguing, “When you see a gruesome picture over and over again, it doesn’t really have any effect.” Known for making intentionally provocative statements, Warhol may or may not have truly believed that his images were capable of anesthetizing society to the horrors of capital punishment. His decision to use a photograph lifted from a print publication to create these series of prints is significant: in portraying a specific chair that was used to execute convicted criminals, and repeating that same image for more than a decade, the artist was making a political statement, not a passive observation. For viewers, faced with picture after picture of the empty chair—awaiting its next occupant or having just claimed another victim—it becomes impossible to ignore the lethal implications of the device. This impression may be especially poignant today, as recent botched executions in Oklahoma and Ohio have reignited a heated discourse regarding the legality and humanity of the death penalty.

As a young artist living in New York City in the 1980s, Ross Bleckner (b. 1949) witnessed first-hand the ravages of the AIDS crisis. Watching friends fight losing battles against the disease, Bleckner felt compelled to make art that reflected the disturbing reality of the epidemic but also projected a sense of hope. His work quickly garnered acclaim for its stunning use of light and color. Dream and Do (1997) calls to mind crowded petri dishes, objects that came to symbolize the pervasiveness of the AIDS virus and futile attempts to find a cure. In each print, vibrant hues—fuchsia, yellow, aqua—interject a field of cell-like forms as amorphous black clouds hover ominously. Despite its foreboding tenor, this series alludes to the potential power of beauty in times of darkness.

**Emotion**

**Andy Warhol** (American, 1928–1987)


**Louise Bourgeois** (French-American, 1911–2010)

*Bed #2*, 1997, edition of 10, lithograph on vintage cloth, 11 x 8 1/2 inches, Publisher: SOLO Impression, Bronx, NY ©The Easton Foundation / Licensed by VADA, New York, NY

**Ross Bleckner** (American, b. 1949)

*Dream and Do*, 1997, edition 50/75, 17-color screenprint, 33 x 42 inches, Publisher: Lococo Fine Art Publishers, St. Louis, ©the Artist
In 1964 Metropolitan Museum of Art curator Henry Geldzahler allegedly suggested to Warhol that he paint something "fun and joyous." Having spent the early 1960s feeding his predilection for the macabre by portraying fatal car crashes, assassinations, and race riots, Warhol took Geldzahler’s advice and shifted his attention to an entirely different theme: flowers. As he had done with the electric chair, Warhol turned to print media for inspiration for this new series, selecting an image from a June 1964 Modern Photography magazine article about a Kodak home processing system that allowed amateur photographers to manipulate color. After cropping and amplifying the contrast of the source image, Warhol applied a dizzying array of intense colors to the flowers. More psychedelic than naturalistic, these prints reflect the inauthentic experience of looking at an altered image, reminding viewers that a photograph, like any other art form, represents a specific point of view.

Warhol’s beach house in Montauk, New York, these vivid depictions of the moment the sun begins to dip below the horizon are not meant to mimic actual sunsets. Rather, they are the still equivalent of Technicolor film, intended to provide a heightened experience of a natural phenomenon.

Richard Diebenkorn’s (1922–1993) Ocean Park series, named for the Los Angeles neighborhood where the artist rented a studio between 1967 and 1988, comprises paintings, prints, and drawings inspired by the Southern California landscape. This body of work represents an important shift in Diebenkorn’s style. Having experimented with Abstract Expressionism and figuration early in his career, upon moving to Ocean Park the artist embraced his own brand of abstraction that married rigid organizing principles with the flexibility to explore line, form, and, perhaps most importantly, color. Pairing the rich hues of sea and sky with splashy shades of sunshine yellow, grass green, and Corvette red, these prints capture the flavor of the California coastline as the artist would have seen it through his studio window.


Sam Francis (American, 1923–1994)

Sam Francis relocated from his native California to Paris in 1960. While in France, he studied the work of modern masters including Claude Monet, Pierre Bonnard, and Henri Matisse, absorbing their aptitude for communicating color and light on canvas. Over the next decade, Francis traveled extensively, visiting the French coast, Mexico, Japan, and New York. In each new destination, his palette shifted subtly, reflecting the local quality of light, although his colors largely remained muted. In 1962, upon returning to California and its abundance of bright sunshine, Francis embraced the saturated jewel tones that would dominate his work for the next thirty years. Sulfur Sails (1969) is from a series in which the artist pushes his colorful splatters to the edge of the picture plane, opening up an entrancing white central void that consumes the viewer with its stark contrast to the print’s intense hues. White would become increasingly important in Francis’ work throughout the 1960s and 1970s. During frequent trips to Tokyo, the artist was introduced to the Japanese concept of ma, which dictates that spatial construction be based on the interplay of form and non-form. He encouraged Francis to think about his application of color to a white surface as a document of his actions at a particular moment in time.
Warhol was obsessed with how images associated with celebrity culture, commerce, and the entertainment industry become burned into the American psyche, where the distinction between reality and legend is often blurred. His portraits offer his most incisive commentary on contemporary culture. Warhol began depicting Marilyn Monroe just after her death in 1962, creating nearly fifty prints over a two-year period from a single publicity image of the actress. Arguably the artist’s best-known body of work, this series reflects on how society exploits celebrities. Employing a range of strident colors, Warhol dramatically yet dispassionately alters Monroe’s appearance, resulting in images that are at once feminine, garish, and larger-than-life. The actress appears nearly fifty prints over a two-year period from a single publicity image of the actress. Arguably the artist’s best-known body of work, this series reflects on how society exploits celebrities. Employing a range of strident colors, Warhol dramatically yet dispassionately alters Monroe’s appearance, resulting in images that are at once feminine, garish, and larger-than-life. The actress appears
remote, relying on pop-cultural imagery to cultivate beauty. Like Warhol, Thomas investigates definitions of female beauty and contemporary notions of womanhood. She is best known for creating richly layered paintings that incorporate rhinestones, a material the artist says reflects her interest in the role of adornment in cultivating beauty. Like Warhol and Baldessari, Thomas explores the tension between perception and reality in her series When Ends Meet. In this body of work, she turns her attention to notable black women and the personas that society assigns to them. The two prints included in In Living Color depict Condoleezza Rice, the first black woman to become Secretary of State, and entertainment industry magnate Oprah Winfrey. Taking a cue from Warhol’s celebrity screen prints, Thomas crops her portraits tightly, allowing each subject’s face to fill the picture plane. The artist has discussed the expectations that society places on influential African Americans due to the examples set by figures such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. By making skin color the dominant chromatic element in these prints, Thomas encourages viewers to consider what they assume to be true about Rice and Winfrey based on these standards versus what might actually constitute each woman’s unique identity or— as the artist says, “who they really are when they go home and they’re behind closed doors.”

three different ethnic groups—North American Indians, Eskimos, and Japanese—whose unique cultural traditions are often thought of in near mythological terms. Assigning each print a chromatic theme, Baldessari comments on the absurdity of a system that attempts to reduce large, diverse groups of people to a single color. As with Warhol’s Marilyns, these prints call attention to the capacity of collective imagination to warp the identity of others.

Drawing on the art-historical genres of portraiture, landscape, and still life, Mickalene Thomas (b. 1971) investigates definitions of female beauty and contemporary notions of womanhood. She is best known for creating richly layered paintings that incorporate rhinestones, a material the artist says reflects her interest in the role of adornment in cultivating beauty. Like Warhol and Baldessari, Thomas explores the tension between perception and reality in her series When Ends Meet. In

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first appeared in Warhol’s work in 1980, when the artist was commissioned to create a portrait as a campaign fundraiser for Kennedy’s presidential bid. In contrast to the Marilyns, Warhol’s images of Kennedy are stoic, although they retain some of the flamboyance of his other celebrity portraits. Set against the colors of the American flag, the senator is presented starkly in black and white, his features outlined in red, white, and blue to subtly reinforce his patriotism. The diamond dust on the print’s surface is Warhol’s nod to the glamour of politics and the tenuous divide between politician and celebrity that has been particularly true of the Kennedy family.

John Baldessari (b. 1931) repurposes found and appropriated images to explore political, social, cultural, and linguistic systems. The artist often blots out the faces in these photographs with brightly colored dots, a trope he uses to eliminate specificity from his work. Baldessari believes that, without the distraction of attempting to determine people’s identities, viewers can delve deeper into the underlying meaning of images. His Cliché series brings together photographs that either explicitly or implicitly speak to stereotypes attached to
SUBVERSION

Warhol’s fascination with the cult of personality is perhaps most clearly articulated in his provocative portraits of Mao Zedong (1893–1976). “Chairman Mao,” as he is often called, was the founding father of the socialist People’s Republic of China and head of the Chinese Communist Party from 1949 until his death. A lighten- ing rod in mid-twentieth-century global politics, he was lauded for transforming China into a modern, international power but justifiably condemned for committing egregious human rights abuses in the process. In 1972 President Richard Nixon visited China, a landmark trip that coincided with the United States’ controversial decision to open diplomatic relations with that country. Taking a cue from Hollywood portrayals of the Old West, Warhol’s Cowboys and Indians series (1986) continues his exploration into the way America’s collective consciousness skews reality. The Western film genre emerged in the early part of the twentieth century. Inspired by classic novels, such as Mark Twain’s The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1872), the mythologies of pioneers like Davy Crockett and Daniel Boone, and historical events such as the Battle of the Alamo, Westerns came to define Americans’ understanding of the landscape and lifestyle of the new nation. In Warhol’s hands, Mao’s likeness shifts from the embodiment of global power to a hackneyed commodity. The artist’s gaudy palette, better suited for a flashy advertisement than a formal portrait, subverts public perception of Mao and challenges his status as one of the most commanding political and cultural figures of the twentieth century.

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In little more than a decade, Keith Haring (1958–1990) created one of the most widely recognizable visual lexicons in contemporary art. His work owes much to Warhol’s portrayal of cultural icons, yet, unlike his Pop art predecessor, Haring conceived his own iconography, which included, among other elements, stylized stick figures, “radiating” crawling babies, barking dogs, and flying saucers. Although his cartoonish style—characterized by pure colors and thick black lines—may read as lighthearted, a dark undercurrent courses through Haring’s oeuvre. Coming of age at the height of the AIDS crisis, and eventually contracting the virus himself, Haring confronted head-on issues relating to illness, death, and homophobia. The candy hues of the Pop Shop V prints intentionally belie their disquieting imagery. Tracing the interactions between a human figure and an anthropomorphic dolphin-like animal, this series suggests the heaven/hell dichotomy that Haring explored in several other works. In one picture, the figure jumps into water where the dolphin awaits with its mouth open, as though it might devour the man. Another print captures the figure and the creature as they dance frenetically, although now the dolphin has legs, recalling representations of Satan as half man, half goat. In a third print, a mint-colored winged figure presides over two dolphins, indicating that the man has died and been resurrected as a human–animal hybrid. Presenting this narrative playfully, Haring rejects the conventional notion that serious content should be treated with gravity.

Reflecting a range of aesthetic concerns and conceptual underpinnings, In Living Color highlights artists who invest in the power of their palettes. Although not all of the work in this exhibition responds directly to Andy Warhol, his example reverberates throughout contemporary printmaking. Dispatching a seemingly endless array of colors, Warhol depicted the world with the volume turned up. With a mix of bravado and practiced deadpan, he dug below the surface of contemporary culture to uncover the absurdities, prejudices, fallacies, and incongruities that can be easily overlooked in favor of tacit acceptance of “the truth.” More than thirty years after his death, Warhol’s work continues to shape how we understand common images and objects.
I bought my first painting when I was fourteen years old, and since then, while I appreciate all visual and performing arts, my principal passion has been for contemporary prints. That initial acquisition was the start of a lifelong pursuit, because I wanted not only to be surrounded by art, but also to build a collection that could be shared with the public. After several museums borrowed works for exhibitions, I realized that if I were able to acquire a significant number of prints and multiples I could build a program to facilitate sharing these with broader audiences. During the last twenty-five years, I have organized more than eighty exhibitions from my collections, which are loaned without fees. I also help fund educational programs tailored to individual community needs.

When Curator Karin Campbell approached me with the theme for this exhibition I was delighted and intrigued. She has used the lens of color to reveal how contemporary artists like Andy Warhol, Josef Albers, Louise Bourgeois, Richard Diebenkorn, Sam Francis, and John Baldessari intentionally manipulate the viewer’s experience with color. It is through their entirely conscious artistic choices that works of art, often unconsciously, resonate with the viewer. Each of the works in this exhibition challenges our perceptions on a number of intellectual and emotional levels. What role is a particular color playing and how is it perceived or interpreted? Karin’s essay decodes the role of color in contemporary printmaking and thereby broadens our understanding of interpretation and message.

As a collector I know how art can inform, confound, elicit joy, and ultimately enrich our lives. Since, for me, waking up each day without art would be like waking up without the sun, I hope this exhibition inspires all its viewers to fill their lives with art.

Anish Kapoor
(British, born India 1954)
*Untitled, from the Shadow Portfolio*, 2007, edition 21/35, etching, 19½ x 25 ¾ inches each,

All images: Photographed by Strode Photographic, Portland, OR