

BASTIAN

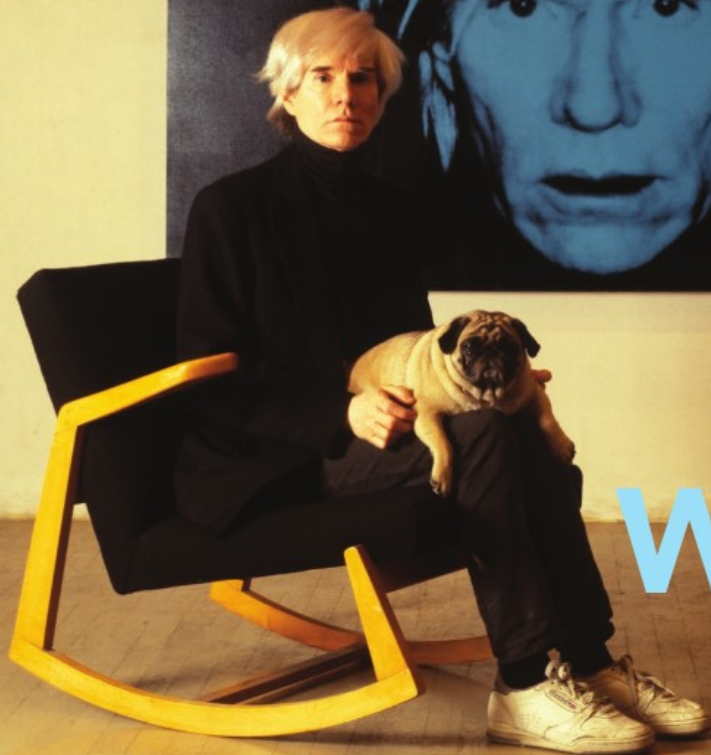
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ART AND CULTURE FROM THE MIDDLE EAST AND ARAB WORLD



WHAT WOULD ANDY DO?

ON ANDY, FAME AND THE VIRTUAL AFTERLIFE

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Andy Warhol. *Self-Portrait in Fright Wig*. 1986. Polacolor ER. 10.8 x 8.5 cm. © 2018 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. Licensed by DACS, London. Image courtesy of Bastian, London



HE WHO MAKES THE IMAGE HOLDS THE POWER

Berlin-based Bastian Gallery marks the opening of its new London space with a beguiling exhibition of Polaroids by Andy Warhol. Seldom seen without his camera, the visual magician chronicled the celebrity world of his day in ways prescient of our own Smartphone-snappy and Insta-obsessed times.

James Parry takes a look.

A picture means I know where I was every minute. That's why I take pictures. It's a visual diary.

Andy Warhol

REVIEW

Andy Warhol. *Jane Fonda*. 1982. Polacolor 2. 10.8 x 8.5 cm. © 2018 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. Licensed by DACS, London. Image courtesy of Bastian, London

Andy Warhol. *Georgia O'Keeffe*. 1980. Polacolor 2. 10.8 x 8.5 cm. © 2018 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. Licensed by DACS, London. Image courtesy of Bastian, London



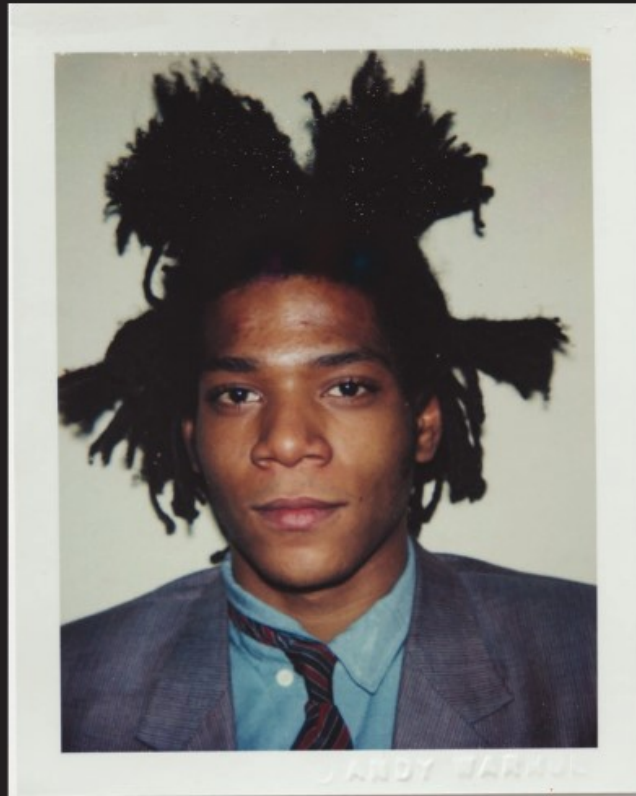
He must have been everyone's party nightmare. Wandering around with his Polaroid camera raised like a weapon, Andy Warhol would snap away even when celebrity revellers might not be looking their best or were caught off guard. His squeaky voice and mad wig only served to underline the potentially unsettling nature of the encounter. "He always carried this stupid camera," remembered his art collector friend Hanford Yang. "Everyone wanted to talk to Andy, but Andy was busy taking photographs."

Fixated by photography and inseparable from his camera, Warhol obsessively documented the world he inhabited and the people in whose midst he moved. More tellingly, the value to him of the images he took is made clear by the fact that he rarely handed any of them over to his subjects. Out of the camera the shiny prints came, and straight into his pocket. So much so, that by the time of his death in 1987 he had amassed more than 66,000 images.

The centrality of photography to Warhol's art is brought into aptly sharp focus by the exhibition *Andy Warhol Polaroid Pictures*, at Bastian Gallery in London (until 13 April). Almost all of the great man's works – from drawings to paintings and prints – had their genesis in an image, either borrowed or created by Warhol himself. He first became interested in photography while studying at the Carnegie Institute of Technology in his home city of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and developed his use of it further once working in New York as a commercial illustrator.

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Andy Warhol. *Jean-Michel Basquiat*. 1982. Polacolor ER. 10.8 x 8.5 cm. © 2018 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. Licensed by DACS, London. Image courtesy of Bastian, London



The best thing about a picture is that it never changes even when the people in it do.

Andy Warhol

Warhol loved the manufactured reliability of photography, which provided the ideal canvas for his own idiosyncratic take on a wide range of subjects. Foremost among these was the cult of celebrity. The portraits in the show speak volumes about the type of crowd that Warhol enjoyed consorting with and, indeed, gathered around himself at his celebrated studio The Factory and in New York generally. "Warhol was a collector, both of images and celebrities," says gallery director Aeneas Bastian, "and looking at these photos is rather like opening a drawer

in a museum. You get a fascinating insight into a very particular world and moment in time." Over 60 Polaroid works are on display, all acquired by the gallery from the Andy Warhol Foundation.

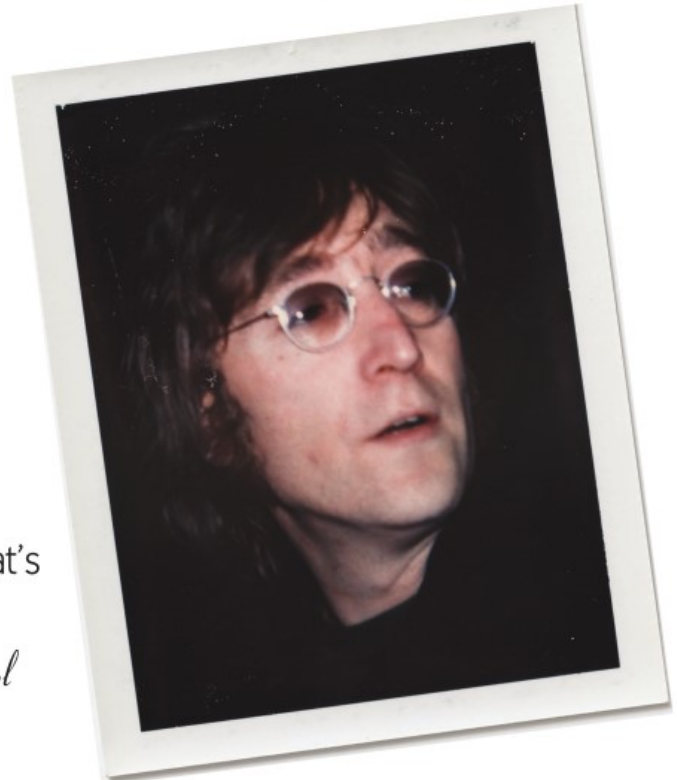
Art historian and curator Robert Rosenblum famously described Warhol as the "court painter" of the 1970s and, as this show demonstrates, it's hard not to see him as a latter-day Louis XIV parading at his very own celebrity version of Versailles. Instead of oil paintings of kings and queens, Warhol gives us Polaroids of actors, artists,

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Andy Warhol. Yoko Ono. ca. 1971. Polaroid. 10.7 x 8.5 cm. © 2018 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. Licensed by DACS, London. Image courtesy of Bastian, London

Andy Warhol. John Lennon. 1971. Polacolor Type 108. 10.7 x 8.5 cm. © 2018 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. Licensed by DACS, London. Image courtesy of Bastian, London



My idea of a good picture is one that's in focus and of a famous person.

Andy Warhol

sportsmen, musicians and even politicians, the American 'royalty' of their time. Many were his personal friends. He lived and breathed celebrity, its oxygen not only intoxicating on a personal and creative level but also practical in terms of providing the raw material for his art and for the dollars that flowed from that. No one enjoyed the links between celebrity, art and money more than Warhol.

From the early 1970s until his death, Warhol generally used a Big Shot Polaroid camera (designed specifically for portrait use) and loved how it took much of the seriousness and long-windedness out of photography. "He clearly liked the instant nature of the image," says Bastian, "and also the fact that with a Polaroid there was very little room for the photographer to adjust to light and distance. It's a preconceived, automatic process over which the 'artist' has hardly any control." Perhaps as importantly, the lack of a negative meant that each print was a Warhol original.

Warhol's Polaroids – mostly taken in his studio, but with some in more casual, social settings – now seem curiously dated, perhaps a result of the Polaroid method, so retro to modern eyes. Yet they are also timeless. Here are images of personalities still very much in the public eye – Jane Fonda, Liza Minelli, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Yoko Ono – juxtaposed

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Installation view of *Andy Warhol Polaroid Pictures* at BASTIAN, London, 2 February – 13 April 2019. Photography by Luke Walke. Image courtesy of Bastian, London

with snaps of now deceased icons – John Lennon, Yves Saint Laurent, Georgia O’Keeffe and Truman Capote, all frozen in time. None more so perhaps than the enduringly eye-catching Jean-Michel Basquiat, with whom Warhol enjoyed a complex friendship. “Jean-Michel thought he needed Andy’s fame, and Andy thought he needed Jean-Michel’s new blood,” Warhol’s erstwhile studio assistant Ronny Cutrone once said. Many of the Polaroids served as preparatory works for Warhol’s celebrated silkscreen portraits.

In addition to the celebrity and society portraits that Warhol churned out, he also enjoyed taking pictures of himself. There are several in the show, the standout being *Self-portrait* (1979), one of the few large-scale Polaroids he produced. It can easily be seen as an unflattering image, with Warhol’s strained, oversized face bearing down, but it says much about how its creator viewed the levelling quality of visual media.

For Aeneas Bastian the show has a particularly personal dimension. His parents, Heiner and Céline, met Warhol in New York during the 1970s and on a visit in 1981 were invited with six-year-old Aeneas to The Factory. There, somehow inevitably, Warhol snapped each of them with his Polaroid. “He was very kind,” recalls Bastian, “hardly speaking at all and it only took a few minutes. I remember waiting for him to come into the photography room, where I sat next to an actor dressed as Mickey Mouse. At the time, I believed that Andy must be a close friend of Mickey, which I was really impressed by.” The results of the family shoot, handed over personally by Warhol, are in the downstairs gallery in the exhibition, alongside one of his last self-portrait drawings and two examples from his iconic *Death and Disaster* series.

Warhol readily undertook photographic commissions, so that anyone with the required amount of fame and money could have their very own Warhol portrait. Beyond being a chronicler and artist, he was also a “camera for hire” – a reinforcement perhaps, however unintentional, of his admiration for the egalitarian ethos of the US. “I never met a person I couldn’t call a beauty,” he once said, as if to underline how he was both generous but also calling the shots. Literally.