

POP PICTURES PEOPLE

STARTING 30 JUNE 2017

Press talk: 29 June 2017 | 11.00 a.m.

Andy Warhol (1928–1987) is back at the Museum Brandhorst. Alongside solo exhibitions by Kerstin Brätsch (until 17 September) and Seth Price (starting 21 October 2017), this new exhibit offers a fresh, in-depth look at the legacy of the Pop Art icon. “POP PICTURES PEOPLE” presents around 60 pieces, juxtaposing works by Andy Warhol from the 1960s through the 1980s with those of such artists as **Alex Katz** (b. 1927), **Cady Noland** (b. 1956) and **Jeff Koons** (b. 1955). These collection highlights and several new acquisitions by **Michel Auder** (b. 1945), **Monika Baer** (b. 1964), **Keith Haring** (1958–1990), **Louise Lawler** (b. 1947), **Elaine Sturtevant** (1924–2014) and **Christopher Wool** (b. 1955) – now on show at Museum Brandhorst for the first time – illustrate Pop Art’s influence and importance from the 1960s to the present.

Mass-produced images from magazines, newspapers, music and television formed the starting point for Andy Warhol’s art. Through his work, he posited that art, culture and commerce in post-war Western society are mutually permeable – a perspective that would influence contemporary art and the very term “Pop Art” more strongly than any other.

The exhibit opens with Warhol’s literally “iconic” silkscreen paintings. In “Round Marilyn” (1962) he placed a photographic reproduction of the archetypal popstar Marilyn Monroe on a gold ground, which, in medieval painting, represented the sublime and exerted an auratic power on the viewer. By undermining the status of the unique work of art, represented by painting, with clichéd and repetitive pictures of stars, political unrest and advertisements, Warhol carved out vibrant new terrain for generations of artists to explore.

The question of individuality and superficiality was also raised by **Alex Katz**, another Pop Art pioneer, with his serial portraits of his wife Ada. But it became especially apparent in Warhol’s carefully crafted persona and public image, which extended into all areas of his life. His humorous interplay with the very culture that shaped him centered on the representation of the human figure.

The “Ladies and Gentlemen” series (1975) depicts a dark, inescapable masquerade of identities. Photographs of drag queens taken by Warhol were printed on transparencies and superimposed on compositions of torn strips of coloured paper. These collage portraits reflect not only a carnivalesque and grotesque game with the transvestites’ identity but also speak to a conflicted popular culture.

Warhol's studio, the legendary "Factory", was a centre for experimenting with different models of identity. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Michel Auder documented Warhol's eccentric coterie with his camera. Focusing especially on the "stars" of the scene like Brigid Berlin and Viva, he created an unpretentious homage to the free lifestyles of pop culture.

However, in the 1960s the lifestyles of many ethnic and social groups in the USA were far from free. In Warhol's two-panel painting, "Mustard Race Riot" (1963), one half is a monochromatic mustard-colour, while the other panel of the exact same size and colour bears repeated images of police attacking African-American civil rights activists with police dogs. In this work, Warhol challenges the autonomous, self-reflective discipline of modern painting – the epitome of aesthetic freedom, also understood as a means of the transcending quotidian experience – with explicitly political images that John F. Kennedy said had the power to describe gruesome acts more eloquently than any number of words. A drastic form of expressive power that **Bruce Nauman** (b. 1941) saw as the goal of all good art. As the title of Nauman's large-scale work on paper "Beating with a Baseball Bat" (1986) would have it: art should be like getting hit in the back of the neck with a baseball bat. This tension between the power of abstract art and the worldly (political) subjects of visual culture and its surface – and superficiality – is the common thread that unites "POP PICTURES PEOPLE".

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