

"A good picture is one that's in focus and of a famous person doing something unfamous." Andy Warhol

The *Andy Warhol Legacy Project* is an exhibition of 106 Polaroids and 50 gelatin silver prints the University of South Florida Contemporary Art Museum received as a gift in 2008 as part of the Andy Warhol Photographic Legacy Program. The portraits, celebrity snapshots, couples, nudes, painting ideas, party photos, still lifes, and outdoor scenes demonstrate the range of Warhol's aesthetic interests and the reach of his curious and far-roaming eye. Warhol often used these photographs as the basis for commissioned portraits, silkscreen paintings, drawings, and prints. The Polaroid portraits reveal the artist's profound and frank engagement with the personality in front of his camera—be it a celebrity, a beauty, a tycoon, or a socialite—while the gelatin silver photographs reveal his extraordinary compositional skill, his eye for detail, and his compulsive desire to document the time in which he lived. The gift from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts is displayed in its entirety in the exhibition.

The Andy Warhol Photographic Legacy Program was launched in 2007 in celebration of the Foundation's 20th Anniversary. This unprecedented program donated over 28,500 photographs by Andy Warhol to educational institutions across the United States. More than 180 college and university museums, galleries and art collections throughout the nation participated in the program, each receiving a curated selection of original Polaroid photographs and gelatin silver prints. The gift of this material to teaching institutions around the country was intended to spark interest, discussion and future scholarship about the essential role photography played in Warhol's artistic production, and to draw attention to the lifelong commitment he had to the medium.

The complete Warhol Foundation gift is available to browse online at http://www.ira.usf.edu/CAM/cam_collection.html, along with thousands of other works in the University of South Florida Collection.

Andy Warhol, Unidentified Woman #23 (Blonde Hair and Dog), 1986. Polacolor ER; 4-1/4 x 3-3/8 inches. © The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. All Warhol images: University of South Florida Collection, Gift of the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc., The Andy Warhol Photographic Legacy Program



The Andy Warhol Legacy Project



August 20 – December 15, 2012
USF Contemporary Art Museum



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The *Andy Warhol Legacy Project* is organized by the USF Contemporary Art Museum, Tampa. *The Importance of Being Photographed* is curated by Jane Simon; organized by the USF Contemporary Art Museum, Tampa. The Institute for Research in Art is recognized by the State of Florida as a major cultural institution and receives funding through the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, the Florida Council on Arts and Culture, and the National Endowment for the Arts. The USF Contemporary Art Museum is accredited by the American Association of Museums.



Above: Andy Warhol, Pia Miller, 1986. Polacolor ER; 4-1/4 x 3-3/8 inches. © The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc.
Cover image: Tina Barney, *Family Commission with Snake (Waterfalls)*, 2007
Inside cover image: Andy Warhol, Truman Capote, Unidentified Man and Jon Gould, 1982. gelatin silver print; 8 x 10 inches. © The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc.

The Importance of Being Photographed



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The Importance of Being Photographed

And now, for all this perennial Martyrdom, and Poesy, and even Prophecy, what is it that the Dandy asks in return? Solely, we may say, that you would recognize his existence; would admit him to be a living object; or even failing this, a visual object, or thing that will reflect rays of light. Your silver or your gold (beyond what the niggardly Law has already secured him) he solicits not; simply the glance of your eyes.
Thomas Carlyle from the *Sartor Resartus*¹

The Importance of Being Photographed takes its cues from the gift from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and Oscar Wilde’s seminal play *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Although separated by an ocean and almost a century, both Warhol and Wilde were interested in examining celebrity, beauty, sexuality, privacy, and despair. The American photographers in this exhibition continue to examine those themes in photographs taken in studio and landscape settings. For these photographers, the act of taking the photograph often reveals a rapport between the artist and his or her subject. Expanding on Warhol’s take on celebrity, Tina Barney, Dawoud Bey, Katy Grannan, Jason Lazarus, Malerie Marder, Ryan McGinley, Catherine Opie, and Alec Soth present traditional and alternative forms of glamour, community, and voyeurism.

Andy Warhol made his art a discerning mirror of our culture throughout the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, though he is perhaps best known for his painted portraits of American icons, such as Marilyn Monroe and Jackie Kennedy.² Warhol prepared for each commissioned portrait by first capturing his subjects with a Polaroid camera. Using bright lights and an assortment of drastic makeup, wigs, and other props, Warhol made his subjects pose for the camera.³ Although many of these staged photographs were never made into paintings, they nevertheless express what it meant to stylish, beautiful, and famous in the twentieth century. These diminutive Polaroids defined the “who’s who” in an American art scene that expanded to include socialites and party people—signifying what it meant to be a celebrity.⁴

Like the nineteenth century dandy, as defined above by Thomas Carlyle, the subjects of Warhol’s photographs crave the adoring gaze of the camera and viewers. Inherent in the elaborate self presentation of both fame and dandyism is a sense of superficiality and shallowness. As Guy Trebay laments, fame has very little to do with skill, wit, or talent: “When exactly in the Warholian arc of fame did we arrive at a point where we create celebrities of people so little accomplished that they make Paris Hilton look like Marie Curie?”⁵ Warhol’s infamous declaration that everyone will be famous for fifteen minutes rings true and



Above: Jason Lazarus, *Spencer Elden in his last year of high school (January 2008)*, 2008
Below: Ryan McGinley, *Yellow Marcel*, 2007; Ryan McGinley, *Luz*, 2010



seems to set up the fact that we cannot even discuss celebrity without referencing Warhol’s pervasive influence and legacy.

Before Warhol, in Victorian-era England, Oscar Wilde established his reputation by promoting a certain dandyism where style, clothing, and beauty were cherished above all else. His literary achievements, which explore superficiality, social status, and wealth, exemplify this aesthetic. The author’s most famous character, Dorian Gray, outlined in the novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, is a dapper young man who sells his soul to ensure that he will be able to sustain his physical youth and prowess. Wilde’s later work, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, calls attention to the constructs of class and status—a focus that is reflected in Warhol’s celebrity portraiture almost a century later.⁶

And, just as Warhol and Wilde paid close attention to the vagaries of style, celebrity, and self presentation, the artists in *The Importance of Being Photographed* craft portraits that allow viewers to examine and assess our contemporary culture. These artists also present new and nuanced forms of glamour, status, and voyeurism. While some of the photographers focus on the rich, famous, and beautiful, others scour rural communities and high schools to find new examples of beauty and fame. Regardless of one’s cachet or aesthetic, each subject opens up to the camera in mysterious ways, consciously presenting him or herself to the viewer and declaring parts of the portrait process as collaborative. Ultimately, these photographs tell us about individuals and communities around the country, revealing the attitudes and postures of our multifarious society.

Photographer Tina Barney focuses on the influential and powerful set of New York’s Upper East Side. Not so differently, Ryan McGinley, another New York-based artist, sets his photographic stage to capture beauty, youth, and style. Celebrity rises as a theme in the work of McGinley, Barney, and also Jason Lazarus, a Chicago photographer who found and photographed the boy from a seminal Nirvana album cover. Katy Grannan and Malerie Marder expose levels of intimacy and exchange when they capture their friends, lovers, and even strangers. At the same time, photographers Dawoud Bey, Catherine Opie, and Alec Soth examine people subtly marginalized by society—making their photographs part of broader American vernacular. Bey, Opie, and Soth are obviously informed by Warhol, but their drive to form alternative images develops as a kind of challenge to Warhol’s perspicacious take on American celebrity.

Jane Simon, Curator

1. I learned about this quote from an informative article by Carter Ratcliff about Dandyism and Abstraction. See Carter Ratcliff, “Dandyism and Abstraction in a Universe Defined by Newton,” *Artforum*, December 1988, pp. 83-89.
2. For more about Warhol’s art as a reflection of culture, see Arthur C. Danto, *Andy Warhol*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.
3. For an exhibition at the International Center for Photography in New York, curator Christoph Heinrich explains that there was a set ritual for how the Polaroids were taken. A late lunch started the event to break the ice, followed by Warhol himself taking the Polaroids. See http://museum.icp.org/museum/exhibitions/warhol/polaroid_celebrities.html
4. Christoph Heinrich, *Andy Warhol: Photography*. Hamburg: Hamburg Kunsthalle and Edition Stemmle, in conjunction with the Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, 1999.
5. Guy Trebay, “She’s Famous (And So Can You),” *The New York Times*, October 28, 2007.
6. It is also notable that the premier of this play in London happened just before Wilde was charged with gross indecency. Wilde could never be open about his sexuality the way Warhol and his friends could be, but it remains a strong corollary between the two artists.

About the Artists

Tina Barney

Born in 1945 to a wealthy New York family, photographer Tina Barney was given a camera at the age of 30 and began to focus her lens on her family and friends. Barney has developed a career probing the lives of the rich and famous, penetrating their world through her contemplative and non-confrontational approach. Both formal and informal, her photographs are praised for their insight and aesthetic quality. Today, her work and her process mirror much of what Warhol created with his portrait studio. Barney attended the Sun Valley Center for Arts and Humanities, 1976-1979. She lives in New York and Rhode Island. Her work is represented by Janet Borden, Inc., New York.

Dawoud Bey

Bey was born in 1953 and raised in Queens, New York, and when he began his career as a photographer, he wandered the streets of Harlem capturing the faces and postures of individuals who interested him. Like many of the photographers in the exhibition, he has expanded his repertoire to include studio-based portraits that, in his own words, “gauge the culture of our times.” He often photographs teenagers because they function as arbiters of future tastes and style. Above all, he sees his photographs as a kind of collaboration between himself and the sitter, where the subject forms a sense of himself or herself for the piercing gaze of the camera. Bey received his MFA from Yale University in 1993; he also attended the School of Visual Arts, New York and Empire State College. He lives in Chicago, IL. Bey’s work is represented by the Stephen Daiter Gallery, Chicago.

Katy Grannan

Defiance and class are two recurring subjects in Katy Grannan’s portrait series. For these photographs, the artist recruited her subjects through local advertisements placed in upstate New York newspapers. By photographing each individual in a location of their choosing, Grannan created an intimate collaboration between artist and subject. Inevitably, many people chose to be photographed in the nude or partially dressed in clothes that were not their own. Through hints of sexuality and taboo, each individual’s fantasy is exposed, resulting in images that are simultaneously haunting and gripping. When asked about her artistic influences, Grannan explains that her own life creeps into the fabric of her images as much as other artists’ work, as if “the gutter, misunderstandings, memories, sex, dreams, and books matter less than forebears do. After all, in terms of influences, it is as much the guy who mugged me on Tenth Street, or my beloved dog who passed away much too early, as it was Giotto or Diane Arbus.”¹ Grannan was born in Arlington, MA in 1969. She

received her MFA from Yale University in 1999 and her BA from the University of Pennsylvania in 1991. She lives in Berkeley, CA and Brooklyn, NY. Her work is represented by Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco, CA and Salon 94, New York.

Jason Lazarus

Jason Lazarus’s photographic work responds to the contemporary culture of his surrounding environment. For the works in the exhibition, Lazarus photographed both famous individuals and close friends. Central to this series is a portrait of Spencer Elden. In the image, the teenager’s shy demeanor contrasts with the celebrity he inadvertently achieved as a baby when a photograph of him—naked in a pool—was chosen by the band Nirvana to grace the cover of their 1997 *Nevermind* album. By showing us Elden now, in the awkward stage of his life, but with the title explaining the source of Lazarus’s interest in the adolescent, we are reminded of the fleeting nature of celebrity. Lazarus was born in 1975 in Kansas City, MO. He received a BS in Marketing from DePaul University and a MFA in Photography from Columbia College. He lives in Chicago and is represented by the Andrew Rafacz Gallery.



Alec Soth, *Odessa, Joelton, Tennessee*, 2004

Malerie Marder

Malerie Marder’s nude portraits of family and close friends are staged in locations ranging from hotel bathrooms to minimally furnished living rooms. Despite the ostensibly generic settings, each image captures a palpable intimacy. The artist’s interest in portraiture lies in the moment when her subjects open up to the camera and reveal a glimpse into their lives that would normally remain private. Although the people in the photographs seem to welcome the gaze of the camera, the scenes remain hushed and secretive in tone. Marder was born in Philadelphia, PA in 1971. She received her MFA from Yale University in 1999, and a BA from Bard College, in 1993. Marder is based in Los Angeles, CA.

Ryan McGinley

Ryan McGinley has lived in Manhattan for over a decade. In 1998, he began photographing the youthful extravagances of his friends living on the Lower East Side: tagging buildings, rolling joints, partying, and having sex. A departure from these earlier, candid shots, McGinley’s more recent photographs are staged portraits—though his friends still double as subjects and his images continue to read as celebrations of youth culture. Speaking of his current work, McGinley explains that time has become a necessary ingredient in his art practice: “Photography is usually

a waiting game. You can only direct someone so much before their personality takes over and they offer me something I never expected.”² Like Warhol, McGinley is drawn to vitality, beauty, and style, and he has succeeded in capturing the essence of his generation. In 2000, McGinley received a BFA in Graphic Design from the Parsons School of Design, New York. He is represented by Team Gallery, New York, Ratio 3, San Francisco, and Alison Jacques Gallery, London.

Catherine Opie

Catherine Opie rose to prominence with a series of photographs documenting marginalized queer individuals in San Francisco and Los Angeles. She explains, “The underlying basis of all my work has been about the structure of urban and suburban space and how communities begin to form.” In her most recent work, she captures the football culture of various high schools across the United States. These images show young men figuring out who they are and what they stand for in a world of competing messages. By focusing on adolescent football players, the quintessential celebrities of American high school, Opie explores how teenagers present themselves to the photographer and, by extension, the world at large. Opie was born in 1961 in Sandusky, Ohio. She received her MFA from CalArts in 1988 and her BFA from the San Francisco Art Institute in 1985. She resides in Los Angeles. Opie’s work is represented by Stephen Friedman Gallery, London and Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York.

Alec Soth

Alec Soth is a Minnesota-based photographer who has traveled around the country capturing images of landscape, detritus, and individuals. To create his layered and probing images, Soth often uses a 4 x 5 camera. The process of checking multiple settings with old-fashioned equipment can sometimes take hours, and because of this time, Soth’s subjects retreat back into themselves. Therefore, the individuals presented to us from Missouri, Tennessee, and elsewhere, appear as tense, introverted, and yet aware of the camera. Soth was born in 1969 in Minneapolis, MN. He received a BA from Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, New York in 1992. His work is represented by Sean Kelly Gallery, New York, Weinstein Gallery in Minneapolis, and he is a member of Magnum Photos.

1. Seth Curcio, dailyserving.com, January 20, 2011. <http://dailyserving.com/2011/01/boulevard-an-interview-with-katy-grannan/>
2. Gerald Matt, *Interviews*. Vienna: Kunsthalle Wien, 2006.

The Importance of Being Photographed Exhibition Checklist

Tina Barney
Family Commission with Snake (Waterfalls), 2007
chromogenic color print
48 x 60 inches
Edition 1/10
Courtesy of the artist and Janet Borden, Inc., New York

Tina Barney
Marina and Peter, 1997
chromogenic color print
60 x 48 inches
Edition 10
Courtesy of the artist and Janet Borden, Inc., New York

Tina Barney
Michael Stipe, Room 100, 2008
chromogenic color print
48 x 60 inches
Edition 1/10
Courtesy of the artist and Janet Borden, Inc., New York

Dawoud Bey
Kali-Ashet Amen and Geshe Ngawang Phende, 2010
pigment print
40 x 50 inches
Edition of 4 + 2 APs
Courtesy of the artist and Stephen Daiter Gallery, Chicago

Dawoud Bey
Randall Burkett and Kevin Hatcher, 2010
pigment print
40 x 50 inches
Edition of 4 + 2 APs
Courtesy of the artist and Stephen Daiter Gallery, Chicago

Katy Grannan
Brian, b.1976, 2004
archival pigment print on cotton rag paper mounted to Plexiglas
28-5/16 x 35-1/2 inches
Edition 1/6
Courtesy of the artist; Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco; Salon 94, New York

Katy Grannan
Ken b.1961, 2004
archival pigment print on cotton rag paper mounted to Plexiglas
28-3/8 x 35-1/2 inches
Edition 1/6
Courtesy of the artist; Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco; Salon 94, New York

Katy Grannan
Meghan, Saw Kill River, Annandale, NY, 2002
chromogenic print mounted on Sintra
48 x 60 inches
Edition 3/6
Courtesy of the artist; Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco; Salon 94, New York

Katy Grannan
Paul, b.1969, 2004
archival pigment print on cotton rag paper mounted to Plexiglas
28-3/8 x 35-1/2 inches
Edition 1/6
Courtesy of the artist; Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco; Salon 94, New York

Katy Grannan
Roberta, b.1981, 2004
archival pigment print on cotton rag paper mounted to Plexiglas
28-3/8 x 35-1/2 inches
Edition 3/6
Courtesy of the artist; Fraenkel Gallery, San Francisco; Salon 94, New York

Jason Lazarus
Claire awaiting 15 minute HIV test result (Chicago), 2010
archival inkjet
14 x 20 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Rafacz Gallery, Chicago

Jason Lazarus
Spencer Elden in his last year of high school (January 2008), 2008
archival inkjet
30 x 40 inches
Collection of the Museum of Contemporary Photography at Columbia College Chicago

Jason Lazarus
Wolfgang Tillmans with his eyes closed, 2008
archival inkjet
16 x 20 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Rafacz Gallery, Chicago

Malerie Marder
Untitled, 2004
archival pigment print
47 x 68 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Malerie Marder
Untitled, 2004
archival pigment print
47 x 68 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Malerie Marder
Untitled, 1998
archival pigment print
40 x 32 inches
Courtesy of the artist

Ryan McGinley
Dylan, 2010
gelatin silver print
18 x 12 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Team Gallery, New York

Ryan McGinley
Marcel Driftwood, 2009
c-print
30 x 40 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Team Gallery, New York

Ryan McGinley
Yellow Marcel, 2007
c-print
20 x 13 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Team Gallery, New York

Catherine Opie
Conor, 2008
c-print
40 x 30 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York

Catherine Opie
Dusty, 2007
c-print
30 x 22-1/4 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York

Catherine Opie
Erin, 2003
c-print
30 x 22-1/4 inches
Edition 4/5
Weatherspoon Art Museum, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Museum purchase with funds from the Ketner Family Acquisition Endowment and the Weatherspoon Art Museum Acquisition Endowment, 2007

Catherine Opie
Leon, 2008
c-print
40 x 30 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York

Catherine Opie
Rusty, 2008
c-print
30 x 22-1/4 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York

Alec Soth
Lenny, Minneapolis, MN, 2002
digital print mounted on Dibond
24 x 20 inches
Edition EP
Courtesy of the artist and Sean Kelly Gallery, New York

Alec Soth
Odessa, Joelton, Tennessee, 2004
c-print mounted on Sintra
48 x 40 inches
Edition 1 of 5
Courtesy of the artist and Sean Kelly Gallery, New York

Alec Soth
Sunshine, Memphis, Tennessee, 2000
digital chromogenic print mounted to Dibond
40 x 50 inches
Edition 1 of 5
Courtesy of the artist and Sean Kelly Gallery, New York