

## Wild about Warhol: Pop artist's work featured in two exhibitions

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By Abby Luby

Special Correspondent

Posted: 02/21/2009 11:56:45 PM EST

The public never really knew where Andy Warhol stood politically. Art historians tell us America's most famous pop artist didn't want to go on record favoring one party over another for fear of putting off the heads of state who might commission him for a portrait.

But there are clues to Warhol's politics in the new show "Andy Warhol: Pop Politics" at the Neuberger Museum of Art at Purchase (N.Y.) College.

Curated by Sharon Matt Atkins, exhibition curator at the Currier Museum of Art in Manchester, N.H., the show -- one of two on display at the museum -- reflects Warhol's political leanings that were tucked in with his illlusioness.



"He always would say he was neutral if asked. He never wanted to offend anyone and (would say) that he had no convictions to be in either party," says Atkins.



But in the show, the portrait of a pasty-mouthed Richard Nixon with "vote McGovern," scrawled at the bottom is very politically charged, says Atkins. "It's known that all the money from the sale of these prints went to the McGovern Campaign."

Warhol clearly wanted to be the official portraitist of the world's leaders and he would take every opportunity to mingle with political figures, networking for the next

big commission and taking an apolitical stance was to his advantage. But behind the scenes he could more openly express his views.

"He told his art assistants that if they promised to vote democratic he would give them the day off," says Atkins. "Also, he is quoted as saying that he knew he should be a Republican because he hates paying taxes but that he grew up in the Depression era eating salt and pepper soup and it just wouldn't be right."

The large gallery space holds 55 pieces and is anchored with a long span of Mao Zedong wallpaper that Warhol created for a gallery presentation of his work in 1974. The Mao wallpaper is overlaid with 10 Mao portraits, each print in a different color.

Filling the walls are John F. Kennedy, Queen Elizabeth II, Jimmy Carter, Nelson Rockefeller. Smaller works such as six silk screens of Happy Rockefeller also are represented.

Atkins says she picked special archival materials to accompany the prints in the show such as newspaper and magazine clippings, photographs and correspondence that Warhol collected throughout his career.

These show that Warhol was perhaps not directly political or engaged, but very socially aware and involved."



In one display case, a copy of the New York World Telegram from Friday, Nov. 22, 1963, brandishes the bold headline "President Shot Dead."



Other magazine articles from the 1960s include one from Life magazine with the headline "Cuba Debacle."

The adjacent show, "Andy Warhol: Snapshots" was curated by Michael Lobel, Ph.D., associate professor of art history at Purchase College.

"It's been fun putting this show together," says Lobel, who chose images from the 150 photographs, including Polaroids and gelatin silver prints, in the museum's permanent collection.

The snapshots are formally matted in thick, white-on-white frames; we see such notables as Dorothy Hamill,

Tom Seaver, Diana Ross, Dolly Parton and Yves Saint-Laurent.

Lobel was able to get two of the same type of cameras Warhol used, the "Big Shot," a Polaroid camera and the very tiny Minox.

"The cameras give a connection to the photographs," says Lobel. "The Big Shot was used for portrait use and he would slip the Minox into his pocket whenever he went out."

It's estimated that Warhol took between 60,000 and 100,000 snapshots in his lifetime, actively living his message of how mass-reproduced images weigh in on our perception of the world.

To further that philosophy, Lobel chose a picture of Warhol sitting on the edge of a bed; laid out beside him are 60-70 photographs of the same person.

"This photograph shows one session and the numerous Polaroids of the sitter. He would select one of those images for the final silkscreen."

Lobel said his students see pop art as part of American art history and images of Jackie Kennedy and Marilyn Monroe have little historical significance.

"Yet, it was very prescient of Warhol to show contemporary culture, with the focus on celebrities. His insights about the powerful forces of mass media in our culture have only been heightened and are still as relevant today as when it was started in the 1960s."

"Andy Warhol: Pop Politics" runs to April 26; "Andy Warhol: Snapshots" runs to May 17.

The Neuberger Museum of Art at Purchase College is at 735 Anderson Hill Road, Purchase, N.Y. Call (914) 251-6100 or visit [www.neuberger.org](http://www.neuberger.org).