

The music of Andy Warhol

WAR

H

*Silver
Songs*

L

12.05 - 18.06.2017

*Can Trinxet
l'Hospitalet*

Silver Songs. The music of Andy Warhol

The *Silver Songs*. *The music of Andy Warhol* exhibition strives to demonstrate that music was one of the foremost emotional, iconographical and conceptual underpinnings upon which the artistic output of the father of Pop Art was built. In it, we discuss an often invisible albeit essential component when it comes to understanding his creative process as well as some of the most significant thematic focuses in his works.

Throughout his career, Warhol displayed an omnivorous musical culture that stretched from his soft spot for opera, dance or Hollywood musicals all the way to avant-garde music and pop ballads in all styles, ranging from Maria Callas to Elvis Presley, from John Cage to The Velvet Underground and from Count Basie to Michael Jackson, not to mention icons such as Nico, Mick Jagger, John Lennon or Debbie Harry, one of his last muses.

The starting point for this exhibition is what had been deemed a fringe facet of Andy Warhol's artistic output until recently: his contribution to the history of musical graphic design. Between 1949 and 1987, the artist crafted over 60 cover images for records in all musical genres. An analysis of these designs highlights the fact that many of these covers prefigure formal and iconographical solutions that he would later go on to include in his pictorial and cinematographic output; not only does this make them especially valuable for researchers, it also allows for transversal readings of the artist's work.

The exhibition is divided into several sections that are organized thematically and chronologically, and which allow visitors to retrace a genealogy of the relationship between art and popular music throughout the second half of the 20th century. Every chapter contains record covers displayed alongside works on different mediums: photographs, drawings, prints, books, magazines, posters, films, video installations, screen tests, musical video clips as well as numerous objects and documents crafted by Andy Warhol and artists from his circle including Ronald Nameth, Nat Finkelstein, Fred W. McDarrah, Christopher Makos, Hervé Gloaguen, Richard Bernstein and Dan Munroe, all of which provide insights into the feedback that took place between musical graphic design and the artist's plastic and audiovisual output over the course of nearly four decades.

WARHOL BEFORE WARHOL. THE ORIGINS OF MUSICAL GRAPHIC DESIGN (1949 - 1956)

Before becoming an acclaimed artist, Andy Warhol first worked as an illustrator, providing artwork for magazines and album covers. After graduating in commercial art at the Carnegie Institute of Technology, young Andy moved to New York in 1949, where he offered his talents as a designer to magazines such as Life or Harper's Bazaar, as well as record labels such as Columbia or RCA at a time when the LP format was just entering commercial production.

The first covers he designed were for: *A Program of Mexican Music*, by Carlos Chávez, and *Alexander Nevsky* by Prokofiev (1949). Both of these works are in the same style as his illustration work for magazines, but they also early examples of his tendency to create pictures out of pre-extant images: the illustration for the former was copied from a 16th-century Aztec codex, whereas the latter makes use of a still from Eisenstein's eponymous motion picture.

Between 1950 and 1956, Warhol designed several covers for classical music albums under the RCA label, including *Rhapsody in Blue* by Gershwin (1950), *William Tell Overture* by Rossini, directed by Toscanini (1954) or the *Nocturnes* by Chopin, performed by Jam Smeterin (1956), which he embellished with attractive drawings he executed using his trademark blotted line technique. The illustrations he made using the same technique for the covers of magazines such as *Dance Magazine* and *Opera News* as well as for the libretti of ballet music LPs, such as *Daphnis et Chloé* by Ravel and *Swan Lake* by Tchaikovsky (1955) are particularly worthy of note.

JAZZ SNIPPETS (1955 – 1960)

Jazz played a crucial role in the evolution of musical graphic design and in a reappraisal of LP album covers as a field for graphic experimentation. Moreover, by 1955, Andy Warhol's professional status had improved by leaps and bounds (he was one of the few artists who signed their designs) and he was often in demand among record labels specializing in jazz, such as Prestige and Blue Note, providing him with a good measure of freedom when it came to working on his designs.

Warhol acted accordingly and used album covers as a testing field in which he experimented with themes, techniques and styles which he would later expand upon in works of art in a larger format. In 1955, he designed the cover for an LP by jazz "celebrity" Count Basie and in 1956 he drafted covers for guitarist Kenny Burrell and clarinet player Artie Shaw based on photographs (using fragments for the most part), giving rise to a trend that he would later retake in his silk-screen printed portraits. One year later he designed the cover for the *The Congregation* album by saxophonist Johnny Griffin, in which he likewise started from a fragmented photograph and drew a number of greenish flowers on the musician's shirt that foreshadow his "Flowers" series from the sixties.

APPROPRIATION, REPETITION, SERIALIZATION... DEFINITIONS OF POP THROUGH THE MUSICAL AVANT-GARDE OF THE SIXTIES AND SEVENTIES

Andy Warhol was a great admirer of experimental musicians such as John Cage and La Monte Young and choreographers such as Merce Cunningham and Yvonne Rainer, with whom he worked on films and stage productions throughout the nineteen-sixties. In line with contemporary movements, such as musical minimalism and La Monte Young's droning music, Warhol experimented with processes of appropriation, serialization repetition, continuous frequency and randomness that would become the main distinguishing feature of his pictorial and cinematographic output in the sixties (*Sleep*, *Kiss*, *Empire*, *Blow Job*).

Moreover, from 1962 onward, Andy Warhol held the first exhibitions in which he defined the stylistic and iconographic component of pop art. His paintings and sculptures began to feature all kinds of consumer goods such as Coke bottles, Campbell soup cans or Brillo detergent boxes. In this sense, album covers, with their cheap, numerous print runs and their ability to reach all kinds of audiences, fulfilled the tenets of Andy Warhol's pop philosophy better than any other medium.

Even though he no longer made a living from graphic design, he accepted to create album covers, unfettered by commercial constraints, whenever a musical project interested him, as with the first LP by John Wallowitch (1964), which he designed based on the serialized repetition of photo booth portraits; a few months later, The Beatles would go on to copy this idea for the cover of *A Hard Day's Night*.

Some of the covers he designed between 1963 and 1968 feature some of the most common traits of pop art: one example is *Giant Size \$ 1.57 each!*, his design for a record with artists' interviews, which was edited on the occasion of the *The Popular Image* exhibition at the Washington Gallery of Modern Art (1963), and in which he appropriated a commercial announcing sales at a supermarket. His designs and content selection for the magazine *Aspen*. *The Magazine in a Box* (1966), which featured *Loop*, the most experimental piece ever recorded by The Velvet Underground throughout its entire career, and whose cover featured the appropriation of an ad for washing machine detergent, a reference to his famous *Brillo Boxes* (1964).

INTERFERENCES BETWEEN POP ART AND ROCK & ROLL

Pop Art and Rock and Roll were born at the same time, and the sixties gave birth to the first generation of artists who had grown up listening to rock and roll ever since they were children. We know that Andy Warhol authored a painting entitled *Rock & Roll* in 1956 (currently lost) on the occasion of the editing of Elvis Presley's first LP, and that, in his studio, he was surrounded by records and magazines featuring Elvis, Bo Diddley and other rock pioneers as he worked. It therefore comes as no surprise that, between 1962 and 1963, this singer became one of the most commonly recurring themes in his paintings: *Red Elvis* and *Silver Elvis* (1962- 1963).

We also suspect that his experiments with fourfold repetition and chromatic variations on a single motif, which appear in his painting *Elvis I and II* (1964) were likewise inspired by the splendid covers of the albums *Little Richard And Buck Ram* (RCA / Candem, 1958) and *Lightnin' Hopkins*, designed by Ronald Clyne for the Folkways label in 1959.

An example of the bewilderment caused by these paintings was the first time Bob Dylan visited The Factory to participate in a *Screen Test* (1965),—enshrined in a photo session by Nat Finkelstein—Andy Warhol gave him a huge painting from the *Silver Elvis* series as a gift; the painter, clearly unimpressed, ended up giving it to his manager in exchange for a couch.

ANDY WARHOL AND THE VELVET UNDERGROUND (1965-1967)

The two-year relationship between Andy Warhol and The Velvet Underground would determine the relationship between avant-garde art and rock music. In December 1965, Gerard Malanga put the artist in touch with the band, whose music, at the time, already featured a bold combination of experimental instrumentation, cacophonous noise and lyrics on the most sordid aspects of the underworld of New York. The Silver Factory became a second home for Lou Reed and John Cale's band from the moment in which Warhol became their manager.

The influence exerted by a "non-musician" like Andy Warhol on the work of The Velvet Underground has been the subject of much debate, not only due to his use of the band in his "*Exploding Plastic Inevitable*" multimedia performance art show (1966-67) but also due to the fact that he produced the recording of their first album and created the mythical cover for the album *The Velvet Underground & Nico*. It is particularly striking that the band accepted that its name should not appear on the cover of the album, which is commonly known as the "banana album" due to its iconic cover, which did not feature any references to The Velvet Underground but, rather, a banana that could be "peeled" signed by Warhol himself. This was highly unusual in the commercial graphic design of the time and it led to the record being perceived more as another of Warhol's extravagant projects rather than a recording by a rock band. Warhol was also the person behind the induction of Nico into the quartet; this mysterious, deep-voiced German actress and model was reluctantly accepted by the group. Nico sang three of the best songs in the album, "All Tomorrow's Parties", "I'll Be Your Mirror" and "Femme Fatale", at Warhol's behest.

ANDY WARHOL AND THE ROLLING STONES (1971 – 1977)

The professional relationship between Andy Warhol and The Rolling Stones began in 1971, even though the artist was already a fan of the band since the late sixties and their records were often played at parties in The Factory. In 1971 Warhol designed the cover for *Sticky Fingers*, which was as notorious and controversial as the one he designed for Velvet—more so, in fact, as, in Spain, the picture of a crotch with a real zipper was replaced by a picture of some sticky fingers emerging from a can of treacle, the resulting cover being even more obscene than Warhol's original one-.

The album covers and new "celebrity" paintings executed by Warhol starting in the seventies seem to be a reinterpretation of the Glam trend. Thus, in 1975, he carried out an exhibition in the Leo Castelli gallery in New York, in which he displayed ten portraits of Mick Jagger made from crayon drawings and Polaroid shots by the artist that were subsequently touched up with acrylics and silk-screened, and in which the singer's face was "feminized" with lively colors to the point that he appeared to be wearing extreme makeup (it is no coincidence that, at the time, Warhol was producing a series with drag queens).

In 1977, the Stones commissioned the cover, poster and inserts for their *Love You Live* double album, with portraits of the musicians biting each other, which were made using a similar technique, based on a unique series of Polaroid shots of all band members.

COURT PORTRAITS. FROM INTERVIEW TO MTV (1976 – 1986)

From the second half of the seventies up until the eighties, Warhol moved his creative ecosystem from the Factory to the parties held in punk clubs in New York, such as Max's Kansas City and the CBGB or—especially—the Studio 54 nightclub, where he had a permanent table. Owing to his contacts, he received dozens of commissions for celebrity portraits, which became his most lucrative source of income. The cover and inside photographs for the book "Andy Warhol's Exposures" reflect this "social illness" which the artist confesses he experienced every time he went out clubbing.

In the eighties, his portrait commissions would go on to include album cover designs. Nevertheless, Warhol had already experimented with this kind of cover for the LP by the diva Ultraviolet (1973), which was carried out by the team at The Factory, and with two portraits of Paul Anka for the sleeve of the album *The Painter* (1976).

At the height of the New Wave fever, under the glamorous and colorful influence of the MTV channel and his own magazine, *Interview*, whose cover never failed to feature the musical divas of the time, Warhol continued to craft "celebrity" portraits and designing album covers in a similar style for artists of all genres practically until the day he died: from Liza Minelli: *Live at Carnegie Hall* (1981) to Diana Ross: *Silk Electric* (1982), as well as *Billy Squier: Emotions in Motion* (1982), the soundtrack for the film *Querelle* by Fassbinder (1982), Miguel Bosé: *Made in Spain* (1983), Rats & Star: *Soul Vacation* (1983), Aretha Franklin: *Aretha* (1986) John Lennon: *Menlove Ave* (1986) or Debbie Harry (his last muse, 1986). To this we must add the fact that he directed and produced video clips for eighties bands such as The Cars (*Hello Again*, 1984) or Curiosity Killed The Cat (*Misfit*, 1986) and innovative television shows such as *Andy Warhol's TV* or *Fifteen Minutes* for the MTV cable TV channel.

The Factory alive!

Featuring LOS GANGLIOS — LAURA LLANELI — ESTER AGUILÀ — PLAUDITE — BERTA FONTBOTÉ — EINA, University School of Design and Art — EASD Serra i Abella — EMMCA Music School L'H Art Center — Associations linked to the Department of Health of L'Hospitalet

During the opening days of the *Silver Songs. The Music of Andy Warhol* exhibition, the former Can Trinxet textile factory will temporarily become The Factory, Warhol's studio-workshop and the epicenter of New York underground culture during the sixties. Here in Can Trinxet musicians, artists, students, citizens and associations from L'Hospitalet will be invited to participate in a relational art project based on artistic concepts that can be found in the exhibition on Andy Warhol and music. Thus, the Los Ganglios music band will work with artist Laura Llaneli on the basis of the *Exploding Plastic Inevitable* project, a leading action in the field of expanded cinema that was born in The Factory from the collaboration between The Velvet Underground and Andy Warhol. Meanwhile, the graphics communication materials for the project by Los Ganglios and Laura Llaneli will be developed within the exhibition space by the Eina school of design by means of silk screen printing workshops led by Enric Mas. The Serra i Abella school of art and design of L'Hospitalet will likewise carry out sessions featuring screen tests, one of the foremost contributions Warhol made to video art from The Factory. The recordings will star sufferers from associations related to the Department of Health of L'Hospitalet, including people with mental disorders, Alzheimer's disease and Alcoholics Anonymous members. The multiple sclerosis and mental health associations will participate in engraving and mail art workshops taught by artists Ester Aguilà and Berta Fontboté, respectively.

The Factory alive! is an art and territorial project conceived by Artur Muñoz and Albert Mercadé.

PROGRAM

Friday, May 12

19 h Inauguration of *The Factory alive!* with Los Ganglios, Laura Llaneli, Eina, Serra i Abella, Berta Fontboté and patients' associations from L'Hospitalet

Saturday, May 13

11 h Guided tour -seminar with the curator, Javier Panera, and the Alzheimer's disease patients' association of L'Hospitalet
13.30h L'Hospitalet music school. "Les músiques d'Andy Warhol" (The music of Andy Warhol) concert.

Tuesday, May 16 – Thursday, May 18

10.30 - 13.30 h Los Ganglios + Laura Llaneli

Friday, May 19

16 -19.30 h Silk screen printing workshops with students from EINA. Teacher: Dr. Enric Mas + Documentary photography workshop (Serra i Abella)

Tuesday, May 23

10.30 - 13.30 h *Screen Test* sessions with Serra i Abella and patients' associations from L'Hospitalet. Teacher: Angie Ballester
10.30 - 13.30 h Los Ganglios + Laura Llaneli

Wednesday, May 24 - Friday, May 26

10.30 - 13.30 h Los Ganglios + Laura Llaneli

Friday, May 26

16 -19.30 h Silk screen printing workshops with students from EINA + documentary photography (Serra i Abella)

Tuesday, May 30

10.30 - 13.30 h *Screen Test* sessions with Serra i Abella and patients' associations from L'Hospitalet. Teacher: Angie Ballester
10.30 - 13.30 h Los Ganglios + Laura Llaneli

Wednesday, May 31 – Friday, June 2

10.30 - 13.30 h Los Ganglios + Laura Llaneli

Friday, June 2

16 - 19 h Silk screen printing workshops with students from EINA. Teacher: Enric Mas

Tuesday, June 6

10.30 - 13.30 h Rehearsal by Los Ganglios
17 - 20 h *Screen Test* sessions with Serra i Abella and patients' associations from L'Hospitalet. Teacher: Angie Ballester

Wednesday, June 7 – Thursday, June 8

10.30 - 13.30 h Rehearsal by Los Ganglios

Friday, June 9

19 h Concert presentation of the project by Los Ganglios and Laura Llaneli. Organized by: Afluent
Presentation of the graphic material project by the Eina school

Tuesday, June 13

17-20h *Screen Test* sessions with Serra i Abella and patients' associations from L'Hospitalet. Teacher: Angie Ballester
19 h Drama performance by Plaudite Teatre, with music by Andy Warhol

Wednesday, June 14 – Saturday, June 17

17-20h Expressive silk screen printing workshop and music by Andy Warhol with artist Ester Aguilà and L'Hospitalet patients' associations and Alcoholics Anonymous

Sunday, June 18

13 h Aperitif and closing event for *The Factory alive!*
Presentation of the works by Berta Fontboté and Ester Aguilà

A project by Districte Cultural de l'Hospitalet and LOOP Barcelona

Curator: Javier Panera
Art Direction: Albert Mercadé (Districte Cultural L'H)
Coordination: Isa Casanellas (LOOP)
The Factory Alive!: Artur Muñoz
Set up: Pense Febrer – Hangar
Technical Direction: Xevi Gibert
Technical Company: BAF
Graphic Design: Alex Gifreu
Translation: Michael Moss i Gaizka Ramón

Acknowledgments

Afluent, Pep Alemany, Toni Barceló, Carlos Barchín, Antonio Coll, Pep Cusidó, Andrea Diéguez Barrio, María Jesús Díez, Alberto Gil Martín, Javier Largen, Mercè Moneo, Ronald Nameth, Amparo Pascual Alvarez, Lucía Terán Viadero

Arts Santa Mònica, CCCB, Centre d'Art Tecla Sala, Da2 (Domus Artium 2002), La Virreina Centre de la Imatge, Soho House, The Warhol Foundation

Participating entities

EINA, Centre Universitari de disseny i Art
EASD Serra i Abella
EMMCA Escola de música Centre de les Arts de L'H
Associacions vinculades a la regidoria de salut de L'Hospitalet

A production by:



With the collaboration of:

