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Rare Andy Warhol photos on display in Santa Ana

Cal State Fullerton's art center in the Artists Village is the first institution in the U.S. to exhibit the artist's celebrity snapshots and other images.

By **RICHARD CHANG**

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Andy Warhol immersed himself in art from his early days as a student in Pittsburgh until the February 1987 day he passed away.

The Pop Art icon is known for his paintings, prints and Kellogg's and Brillo boxes. Yet, he's not as well known for his photography. Between 1970 and 1987, Warhol took thousands of Polaroid and black and white photographs. He often appeared at Factory

parties and public events, snapping photos or shooting film.

After he died, his will created the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. Troves of his photographic work – about 58,000 images altogether – went into the New York-based foundation's collection. Recently, nearly half of them were pledged to colleges and universities across the country.

Many of those pictures – snapshots of celebrities, society notables and random people – had been in storage for decades, never seen by the public.

Until now. Through May 28, the Grand Central Art Center in Santa Ana is showcasing 155 Polaroids and black and white photographs by Warhol. Cal State Fullerton's art center in the Artists Village is the first institution in the country to publicly exhibit this donated portion of Warhol's vast oeuvre.

"I really was happy with what I received at the university," said Andrea Harris, gallery director at the Grand Central Art Center. "I just really liked the imagery. It has a rough, simple quality to it. You see all this stuff behind the scenes."

Last year, the Warhol Foundation decided to donate more than 28,500 original Warhol photographs to 183 college and university

art museums across the United States. The gifts – valued at more than \$28 million and made through the Warhol Photographic Legacy Program – commemorated the 20th anniversary of the Warhol Foundation.

"We just thought it would be really nice to celebrate the 20-year anniversary and do something in Andy's name," said Joel Wachs, president of the Warhol Foundation. "The photographic work is so very important, because it really informs his other work. But it's less well-known."

Wachs, a former Los Angeles City Councilman, said U.S. colleges with art museums and collections were chosen, because such institutions are everywhere and serve an educational purpose.

California institutions that are scheduled to receive images include Cal State Long Beach, Cal State Northridge, Cal State San Bernardino, UCLA, UC Riverside, UC Santa Barbara, UC Berkeley, the University of Southern California, Pomona College, Scripps College and St. Mary's College.

UC Davis got a box of 150 photos this month, and attracted statewide media attention when the shipment included early shots of Arnold Schwarzenegger and Maria Shriver.

UP AGAINST TIME

Though pledged in 2007, Cal State Fullerton's share in the bounty did not actually make it to the university's gallery directors until a few weeks ago. The timing made them nervous, since they had the Warhol show inked in the calendar for early April.

"We had to register and frame them immediately," Harris said. "It was a bit of a risk, but we pulled it off."

The pictures are "really insightful," said Mike McGee, CSUF art professor and gallery director. "You see a side you usually don't get to see. It's giving everybody a chance to look behind the curtains. You see how prolific the guy was."

Some of the faces in the Santa Ana exhibit are instantly recognizable: John McEnroe, Tatum O'Neal, Liza Minnelli, Jack Nicklaus, Mary Tyler Moore. Sports fans might recognize tennis player Vitas Gerulaitis; art enthusiasts may identify Navajo painter R.C. Gorman; followers of 1970s and '80s rock may distinguish Eddie Money.

Other portraits are not as familiar. There are young, nameless men working out, posing shirtless, smoking cigarettes and rolling joints. Other unidentified fellows are strolling New York City streets, running errands or just hanging out on the corners.

We see anonymous friends at the beach, lounging on a boat at sea, and socializing at nighttime, indoor parties.

Then there are the series of multiple Polaroid portraits. Warhol shot his subjects posing during one sitting, often with the same expression. Some are portraits of affection: Berkely Rheinhold, the daughter of a friend, tilts her head charmingly for her session. A mother and daughter pose for posterity in "Bilotti, Mrs. Carlo and Daughter" (1980).

Other series seem more like character studies. "Unidentified Woman (Lebanese Princess)" (1977), a collection of 11 square Polaroids, examines subtle changes in mood and countenance for a presumably privileged woman.

Polaroid portraits of unidentified men, strung out horizontally, reveal bad haircuts, cheesy facial expressions and dated suits.

A DIFFERENT LOOK?

Not every image in this Warhol exhibition is a human portrait. Dogs, Japanese toys, flea markets and cityscapes make their way into his lens and photographic vision.

And not every picture is worth a thousand words. Mark Chamberlain, a Laguna Beach photographer and photography instructor at

Cypress College, has seen the Grand Central show. He said he didn't think Warhol "broke any new ground photographically."

"I think his film work is exceptional. It was free and loose – really kind of wild," Chamberlain said. "But when you look at the individual photographs, some of them are like stock portraits. You see Jack Nicklaus, standing there with a golf club. They could be any period by any person. But when you see the signature of Andy Warhol, then it becomes a different dimension."

A dimension that the art market certainly recognizes. Last year, Warhol's Elizabeth Taylor portrait sold at Christie's for \$23.7 million. In 1994, his estate was valued at \$827 million, according to the Pittsburgh Tribune Review. That was *14 years* ago.

Despite those eye-popping dollar signs, and Warhol's own affection for celebrity and repetition, it's clear that the artist had a broad vision. He experimented with a variety of media – setting the standards in many of them – and was constantly making art.

The Grand Central show offers an excellent opportunity to see Warhol's later work and his little-seen adventures in photography. Plus, the images capture an exuberant America of the 1970s and '80s that we rarely see nowadays.



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