

Big Horn Ram, from Endangered Species **Andy Warhol**



Date : 1983
Screenprint on Lenox Museum Board
38 x 38 in.
Edition of 150
Pencil Signed and Numbered

Artist bio

He was one of the most enigmatic figures in American art. His work became the definitive expression of a culture obsessed with images. He was surrounded by a coterie of beautiful bohemians with names like Viva, Candy Darling, and Ultra Violet. He held endless drug- and sex-filled parties, through which he never stopped working. He single-handedly confounded the distinctions between high and low art. His films are pivotal in the formation of contemporary experimental art and pornography. He spent the final years of his life walking around the posh neighborhoods of New York with a plastic bag full of hundred dollar bills, buying jewelry and knick knacks. His name was Andy Warhol, and he changed the nature of art forever.

Andy Warhol was born Andrew Warhola on August 6, 1928, in Pittsburgh. He received his B.F.A. from the Carnegie Institute of Technology, Pittsburgh, in 1949. That same year, he moved to New York, where he soon became successful as a commercial artist and illustrator. During the 1950s, Warhol's drawings were published in *Glamour* and other magazines and displayed in department stores. He became known for his illustrations of I. Miller shoes. In 1952, the Hugo Gallery in New York presented a show of Warhol's illustrations for Truman Capote's writings.

During this time, Warhol had also been working on a series of pictures separate from the advertisements and illustrations. It was this work that he considered his serious artistic endeavor. Though the paintings retained much of the style of popular advertising, their motivation was just the opposite. The most famous of the paintings of this time are the thirty-two paintings of Campbell soup cans. With these paintings, and other work that reproduced Coca-Cola bottles, Superman comics, and other immediately recognizable popular images, Warhol was mirroring society's obsessions. Where the main concern of advertising was to slip into the unconscious and unrecognizably evoke a feeling of desire, Warhol's work was meant to make the viewer actually stop and look at the images that had become invisible in their familiarity. These ideas were similarly being dealt with by artists such as Jasper Johns, Roy Lichtenstein, and Robert Rauschenberg — and came to be known as Pop Art.

Throughout the late 1950s and 1960s, Warhol produced work at an amazing rate. He embraced a mode of production similar to that taken on by the industries he was mimicking, and referred to his studio as "The Factory." The Factory was not only a production center for Warhol's paintings, silk-screens, and sculptures, but also a central point for the fast-paced high life of New York in the '60s. Warhol's obsession with fame, youth, and personality drew the most wild and interesting people to The Factory throughout the years. Among the regulars were Mick Jagger, Martha Graham, Lou Reed, and Truman Capote. For many, Warhol was a work of art in himself, reflecting back the basic desires of a consumerist American culture. He saw fame as the pinnacle of modern consumerism and reveled in it the way artists a hundred years before reveled in the western landscape. His oft-repeated statement that "every person will be world-famous for fifteen minutes" was an incredible insight into the growing commodification of everyday life.

By the mid-'60s, Warhol had become one of the most famous artists, in the world. He continued, however, to baffle the critics with his aggressively groundbreaking work. His paintings were primarily concerned with getting the viewer to look at something for longer than they otherwise would.

Throughout the '70s and '80s, Warhol produced hundreds of portraits, mostly in silk screen. His images of Liza Minnelli, Jimmy Carter, Albert Einstein, Elizabeth Taylor, and Philip Johnson express a more subtle and expressionistic side of his work.

Following routine gall bladder surgery, Andy Warhol died February 22, 1987. After his burial in Pittsburgh, his friends and associates organized a memorial mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York that was attended by more than 2,000 people.