In the months following Andy Warhol's shocking and untimely
death on February 22, 1987 at age 58, Fred Hughes, Andy's 
close friend and business manager, and I had the daunting 
job of inventories all of Andy's work. With Fred, as executor, 
taking the lead in this long process, we worked to locate Andy's 
last studio at 22 East 33rd Street to help us catalogue 
paintings, drawings, limited edition prints, photography, 
sculpture, film and video.

It was during this time that I rediscovered my appreciation 
for Andy's early drawings from the 1950s. In 1971, the 
Gotham Book Mart on West 47th Street in Manhattan had 
staged an exhibition of Andy's drawings, which he reluctantly 
attended after much prodding from Fred and Jed Johnson, 
Andy's boyfriend at the time. I went with Andy and the 
others to the show that night. The exhibition was a wonderful 
collection of 1950s drawings, including gold leaf, blotted 
line and ink wash drawings with subjects as diverse as shoes, 
flowers, cherubs and boys. It was a comprehensive introduction 
to Andy's early drawings.

Andy was reluctant to go to the show because he always 
responded to stay in the present, be the person he was at 
that moment and, more than anything, always keep moving 
forward. That desire was probably the motivation for him 
stashing the drawings in flat files and hiding from view a trove 
dating as early as 1949. Fortunately, he never destroyed or 
throw any of them.

The provocative German artist George Grosz was working 
in Pittsburgh when Andy was in college and Grosz's drawings 
certainly influenced Andy. In 1946, while attending Carnegie 
Institute of Technology, Andy made drawings depicting his 
brother and others selling fruit and vegetables from the 
back of a truck. These works in particular have the feel of 
Grosz. In 1949, Andy entered a painting entitled The Broad 
Gave Me My Face, But I Can Pick My Own Nose to the annual 
exhibition of the Associated Artists of Pittsburgh. The exhibition 
jury summarily rejected it, except for one member, 
George Grosz, who admired and defended it. Andy must 
have been aware of Grosz's work for books and magazines; 
something he would take up on his arrival in New York in 
1949. The style of American artist Ben Shahn also made an 
impression on Andy's early 1950s drawings, as did the Swiss 
German artist Paul Klee.

As I studied these drawings, I could see a young and talented 
Andy finding his own voice through an evolution of technique. 
He experimented with different techniques, making “broken 
line” and sketched pieces using graphite pencils to make 
portraits of people. He would use several sheets of paper to 
make one drawing by Scotch-taping them together. He also 
was adept at lifting his pencil off the paper in the midst of 
creating a portrait, allowing the viewer's eye to complete the 
image. In the 1950s, in his work as a commercial artist for 
Glamour and other fashion magazines, Andy began to use the 
blotted line technique, a form of printmaking he mastered. 
He could make a very fine blotted line to a very thick, almost 
unruly blotted line, an aesthetic that caught the attention of 
many art directors. I. Miller Shoes hired him to depict their 
designs in a 1955 advertising campaign.

Andy used source material culled from magazines like LIFE and 
photographs taken by his friend Ed Wallwitch for his 
commercial commissions. Wallwitch continued his collaboration 
with Andy into the 1960s, taking photographs of Campbell 
Soup cans for the now-famous paintings and drawings. 
He became an extremely successful commercial artist in the 
1950s and won a number of Art Directors Club Awards for 
distinguished merit and, more importantly, the Art Directors 
Club Medal, the group's highest honor.

At the same time, Andy was also creating fine art. He focused 
mostly on portraits of men using a ballpoint pen or pen and 
ink. He also did portraits of feet with objects and decor 
and fanciful drawings of decorated penises. As I looked through 
sketchbook after sketchbook, I was astounded by what 
a wonderful draftsman Andy had become. The simplicity of 
line when drawing a face or body was not unlike Henri Matisse 
— pure beauty captured by just a few spare lines in graphite 
or ink. He also did drawings of children and various animals, most 
notably cats. The output in the 1950s was extraordinary; the 
drawings imaginative, whimsical, and provocative, as in the 
blotted line image of two men about to kiss. Andy created 
markedly fewer drawings in the 1960s but the works are 
strong, powerful and iconic like the Campbell Soup cans, 
Coca-Cola bottles, 10 dollar bills, perfume bottles, and a 
series of portraits of female movie stars to name a few.

During the early 60s, Andy was still experimenting with 
line, using both cross-hatching and broad, soft, 
expressionistic strokes with graphite pencils. 

In 1972, Andy incorporated his line drawings — squiggles and 
outlines — into his silkscreens in works like the Mao series and 
to a lesser extent his Vote McGovern (Nixon) prints. By this 
time Andy had been using the silkscreen process for about ten 
years but his drawing output started to increase again. As 
part of the Mao series, Andy made multiple drawings using a 
soft graphite pencil that was almost like a carpenter's pencil. 
In 1974, he made drawings of Japanese flower arrangements, 
ikebana, and had them assembled into a portfolio of 
silkscreens entitled Hand Colored Flowers. Through the 1970s 
and 80s, Andy used his drawings in various print editions 
as well as his paintings. The quality of the paper became 
consistently higher. In 1975, he made drawings for his Hammer 
& Sickles, Skulls, Mick Jagger, and Ladies & Gentleman (Drag 
Queen) series.

I watched him draw as we would talk about business. I was 
Vice President of Andy Warhol Enterprises, Inc. and Executive 
Studio Manager as well as a producer of the video projects 
and cable TV shows we collaborated on. Over the years, 
Andy commented in interviews that he had shaky hands and 
could not draw, but that was never evident as I watched his 
steady and sure hand commit line to paper without hesitation. 
In the 1970s and 80s, Andy used an overhead projector to 
make drawings with graphite that some people thought was 
charcoal. He also created drawings with black acrylic paint. 
He would have silkscreens made of graphite drawings and 
acrylic paintings to be screened onto the painted canvas which 
added depth and created the shadow effect apparent in 
works like the Absolut Vodka painting series made in 1985-
86.

From the 1950s until he died, Andy remained remarkably 
creative and innovative. For a man who declared he 
responded to be a machine or a robot, he was a singularly sensitive 
and accomplished draftsman. Because of the New York Academy 
Of Art's focus on drawing as a foundation for all types of 
artmaking, he was genuinely enthusiastic to be one its earliest 
founders. I remember him encouraging artists like 
Jean-Michel Basquiat, Keith Haring and Kenny Scharf to study 
drawing. He took Kenny and Keith to the Academy so they 
could discover firsthand what was being taught at the school.

This exhibition offers a glimpse into Andy's immense body of 
drawing work. I hope it will encourage artists and viewers to 
value the practice of drawing as much as he did.

Vincent Fremont
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