

# American MASTERS

20  
years

thirteen  
WNET NEW YORK

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press information

A Production of  
Thirteen/WNET  
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THIRTEEN/WNET NEW YORK'S AMERICAN MASTERS PRESENTS A GROUND-BREAKING FILM EXPLORING THE EXTRAORDINARY LIFE AND TIMES OF ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ARTISTS OF THE 20TH CENTURY – *ANDY WARHOL: A DOCUMENTARY FILM*, PREMIERING IN SEPTEMBER ON PBS

*“We were seeing the future and we knew it for sure. We saw people walking around in it without knowing it, because they were still thinking in the past, in the reference of the past. But all you had to do was know you were in the future and that put you there. The mystery was gone, but the amazement was just starting.”*

– Andy Warhol

This Two-Part, Four-Hour Documentary Directed By Ric Burns Is The First To Make Full Use Of The Extensive Archives Of The Andy Warhol Museum In Pittsburgh And The First To Explore The Full Range Of Warhol's Astonishing Career

Features Interviews With Art Dealer Irving Blum, Curator Donna De Salvo, Art Critic Dave Hickey, Writer Stephen Koch, Artist Jeff Koons, Former Manager Paul Morrissey, Writer/Editor George Plimpton, Art Historian John Richardson, And Andy Warhol's brother John Warhola

No artist of the second half of the 20th century was more famous – or, perhaps in the end, more famously misunderstood – than Andy Warhol. At once the most accessible and enigmatic, straightforward and elusive, naïve and savagely ironic artist of his time, he was the Wizard of Icons – the supreme archaeologist of a culture of desire – and the mercurial Merlin of a mass media age.

Grasping as none before or since the function of fame in a mass society, he forced us to confront and re-envision the world we live in. Along the way, he transformed himself into the unlikely poet laureate of the American century – the high priest and Pied Piper of one of the most radical experiments in the history of American culture and the greatest and most resoundingly influential artist of his age.

*AMERICAN MASTERS Andy Warhol: A Documentary Film* is a definitive film portrait of

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an artist whose signature works are among the most recognized and sought-after works of art ever created. The two-part *Andy Warhol* premieres Wednesday, September 20 and Thursday, September 21 at 9 p.m. (ET) on PBS (check local listings).

The four-hour film is a co-production of Steeplechase Films Inc., Daniel Wolf, High Line Productions, and Thirteen/WNET New York. It is directed by Ric Burns, written by Ric Burns and James Sanders, and produced by Donald Rosenfeld, Daniel Wolf and Ric Burns. Executive producers are Peter Brant, Larry Gagosian and Diane von Furstenberg. The film is narrated by artist and musician Laurie Anderson and features artist Jeff Koons as the voice of Andy Warhol.

Andy Warhol is a highlight of the 20th-anniversary season of *AMERICAN MASTERS*, a five-time winner of the Emmy Award for Outstanding Primetime Non-Fiction Series and a recent recipient of its seventh Peabody Award.

“*Andy Warhol* is a complex, contradictory artist, and a great subject to explore,” says Susan Lacy, creator and executive producer of *AMERICAN MASTERS*. “His impact on shaping our concepts about art in the 20th century is enormous. The dominance of his influence – his images, his sensibility, his ideas – is practically indescribable.”

During extensive research, director Ric Burns was astounded by the material he and his colleagues were able to gain access to, including black-and-white footage of Warhol working in his studio on the Disaster Series in 1962, 8mm behind-the-scenes footage of The Factory, a rare 1965 audio interview with Warhol, and unpublished photographs of Warhol’s family.

“Warhol was the most amazing archaeologist of our culture that has ever lived,” says Burns, the award-winning director of *New York: A Documentary Film*. “In the course of the incredible, Horatio Alger arc of his life story, he challenged every conventional idea of what a work of art can be, in half a dozen different media – from painting and sculpture to film and television to music, performance art and beyond. No 20th-century artist had a greater impact on the way we see the world around us. None remains more contemporary and relevant.”

*Episode One* of *AMERICAN MASTERS Andy Warhol: A Documentary Film* chronicles Warhol’s rise from the slums of Pittsburgh to the height of renown as a pop painter. The third and youngest son of hard-working immigrants from the heartland of central Europe, Warhol spent his

early youth living in two rooms, sleeping in the same bed with two older brothers in a home with no running water or indoor toilet. Warhol was small, frail and extremely shy, but showed signs of artistic interests and abilities from his earliest years. When he was 8 years old he developed St. Vitus Dance, thought to be a complication of rheumatic fever. During his long convalescence, while in the watchful care of his artistic and eccentric mother, Julia Warhola, he spent his days in bed drawing, reading movie magazines and developing a passionate interest in the celebrities of the time, including Shirley Temple and Lana Turner.

Warhol studied commercial art at Carnegie Tech. After graduating in 1949, he left Pittsburgh for New York, arriving in the city by train, with \$200 in his pocket and a portfolio of drawings under his arm. Over the next four decades Andy Warhol would radically revise the meaning of art and our sense of what a painting could be, taking the idea of art in the age of mechanical reproduction to its logical extreme – permanently breaching the wall dividing art and commerce.

*Episode Two of AMERICAN MASTERS Andy Warhol: A Documentary Film* includes exquisite, controversial and seldom seen selections from Warhol's screen tests and films. One of his most famous films, *Sleep* (1963), chronicles five-and-a-half hours in the life of the poet John Giorno as he lies sleeping in his bed.

In many ways, Warhol's life perfectly paralleled his times. From his humble beginnings during the Depression, to the financial success of the 1950s to the explosively creative Factory years – which came to a screeching halt with the attempt on his life in 1968 – and his ultimate success as a business artist, he could be seen as an extraordinary parable of a vast commercial culture on the cusp of great change. And of the unbounded promise and dark possibilities of the American dream.

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Schulman is director of cultural and arts programming for Thirteen/WNET New York.

To take *AMERICAN MASTERS* beyond the television broadcast and further explore the themes, stories and personalities of masters past and present, the companion Web site ([www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters)), created by Thirteen/WNET New York, offers interviews, essays, photographs, outtakes, and other resources.

*AMERICAN MASTERS* is produced for PBS by Thirteen/WNET New York. This acclaimed series, now celebrating its 20th season, has become a cultural legacy in its own right. The *AMERICAN MASTERS* film library is one of the most highly honored in television history with profiles of more than 140 artistic giants. In addition to seven Peabodys, an Oscar and two Grammys, *AMERICAN MASTERS* has won 17 Emmys, including Outstanding Primetime Non-Fiction Series for 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003, and 2004.

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Thirteen/WNET New York is one of the key program providers for public television, bringing such acclaimed series as *Nature*, *Great Performances*, *AMERICAN MASTERS*, *Charlie Rose*, *Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly*, *Wide Angle*, *Secrets of the Dead*, and *Cyberchase* - as well as the work of Bill Moyers - to audiences nationwide. As the flagship public broadcaster in the New York, New Jersey and Connecticut metro area, Thirteen reaches millions of viewers each week, airing the best of American public television along with its own local productions such as *The Ethnic Heritage Specials*, *The Thirteen Walking Tours*, *New York Voices*, and *Reel New York*. With educational and community outreach projects that extend the impact of its television productions, Thirteen takes television "out of the box." And as broadcast and digital media converge, Thirteen is blazing trails in the creation of Web sites, enhanced television, CD-ROMs, DVD-ROMs, educational software, and other cutting-edge media products. More information about Thirteen can be found at: [www.thirteen.org](http://www.thirteen.org).

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