



If you want to know all about Andy Warhol, just look at the surface of my paintings and films and me, and there I am. There's nothing behind it.

ANDY WARHOL

Andy Warhol

Twenty-Five Colored Marilyns, 1962

Acrylic on canvas

82 x 66 1/4 inches

Collection of the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Museum Purchase

The Benjamin J. Tillar Memorial Trust, acquired from the collection of Vernon Nikkel, Clovis, New Mexico

Acquired in 1983

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By now, Andy Warhol's silkscreens and paintings of people and images have become icons of life in the twentieth century. The Campbell's soup cans, photographs of celebrities, and images from newspapers that came to embody the ideas of Pop art all reflect Warhol's interest in the power, beauty, and banality of popular culture. Within weeks of Marilyn Monroe's suicide, Warhol began painting pictures of her, making twenty-two paintings of Marilyn by the end of the year. To make these pictures, Warhol chose a photograph of Marilyn used to publicize the 1953 movie *Niagara*, and cropped the image to show a close-up of her face. The source for *Twenty-Five Colored Marilyns* is not necessarily Marilyn Monroe herself, but rather the publicity photograph of her. In the Modern's *Twenty-Five Colored Marilyns*, he has repeated her face in a grid using the silkscreen process, which at the time was associated with commercial printing. The uneven inking of her image shows her face with different degrees of clarity, and the tilt of the grid gives the piece a handmade look. And Warhol does not give us one Marilyn; he gives us twenty-five. Perhaps he wants us to think about how we obsess over celebrities; perhaps he wants to suggest that more is better, or even that there are so many images of her already, you need more than one to convey her presence. As a star created for the purpose of films and photographs (even her name was created to look good in print and sound good when spoken), Marilyn Monroe was generated to embody glamour, celebrity, and sex appeal. In creating works with her image as the focus, Warhol asks us to think about how we try to embody or avoid these ideas ourselves.