



Andy WARHOL

"Mao"

Synthetic polymer, silkscreen ink and acrylic on linen
447 x 345 cm
176 x 136 inches
1972

Reference Castelly Gallery LC 1115

PROVENANCE

Leo Castelli Gallery, New York;
Private collection, New York;
The Mayor Gallery, London;
Private collection.

EXHIBITIONS

Paris, Musée Galliera "Andy Warhol",
Washington D.C., Corcoran Gallery of Art "34th Biennial of American Painting",
Feb. 22 - April 6, 1975, p. 107 (colour);
New York, Whitney Museum, 1979;
Montreal, The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts "Warhol Live", 1991;
London, Saatchi Gallery "Warhol Live", 1991 (painting actually exhibited in
Montreal only)
Luzern, Kunstmuseum "Andy Warhol: paintings 1960-1986", 9 July - 24
September 1995, N° 53;
Barcelona, Fundació Juan Miró "Andy Warhol: 1960 - 1986", 19 September -
1 December 1996;
Wolsburg, Kunstmuseum "Andy Warhol: a Factory", 3 October 1998 - 10 January
1999;
Hong Kong, Convention Center "Mao by Andy Warhol", 22 - 29 May 2008, N° 1;
Paris, Grand Palais "Warhol, le grand monde d'Andy Warhol", 18 Mars - 13 Juillet
2009, N° 79

LITERATURE

N. Printz & S. King-Nero "The Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné: Paintings and
sculptures, 1970 - 1974, vol. III, N° 289 (Phaidon, 2010), ill. in colour.



Andy Warhol (1928-1987)

Mao

acrylic, silkscreen ink and graphite on linen

176 x 136 in. (447 x 345 cm.)

Painted in 1972.



Figure 1

The work examined was under available artificial and ultraviolet light.

SUPPORT

The canvas consisting of one piece is attached to the edges and reverse of a timber expandable stretcher using galvanised steel staples. The canvas turnover edges have been strip lined with linen. There are a number of creases in the canvas relating to the work having been previously rolled, probably early in the history of the work, perhaps shortly after execution. The striping is in general secure with only a few edges lifting along the canvas surplus.

PAINT FILM/IMAGE

The paint consists of acrylic medium and silkscreen ink. There are cracks along the previously mentioned creases and extending mainly along the vertical right and left sides. The cracks have slightly raised edges and there are some small retouched losses along these crack edges (see illustrations below). There are in addition some minor cracks and soft creases scattered throughout the work.

TURNOVER EDGES

There are tiny losses and cracks along the front turnover edges, relating to the stretching and un-stretching of the work in the past. There are a few small losses along the edges some filled and un-retouched. Some of the retouching are discoloured.






RECOMMENDED TREATMENT

- 1/ Consolidate lifting paint
- 2/ Fill and retouch losses and replace discoloured retouching

The work is large and considering the canvas weight the support and attachments remain in good condition, despite showing superficial loss of paint along the turnover edges. It is our opinion that once the above treatment is carried out, the work can be considered to be in good to very good condition.



Conservator of Paintings
03/12/12






Fig 2 Detail lower left – creases extending from lower edge

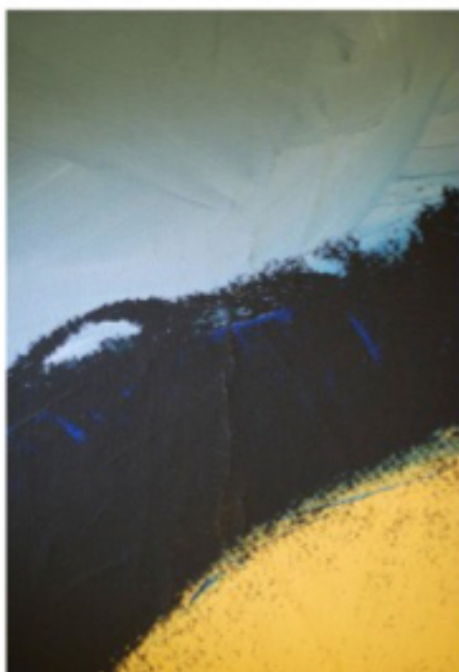


Fig 3 Detail upper left –raking light

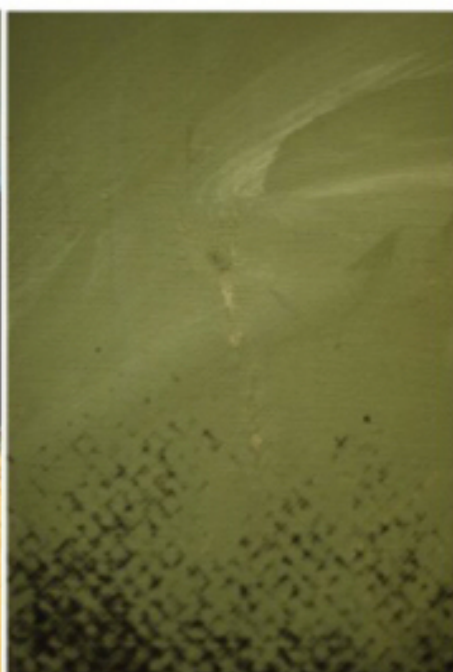


Fig4 Detail lower right - un-retouched loss



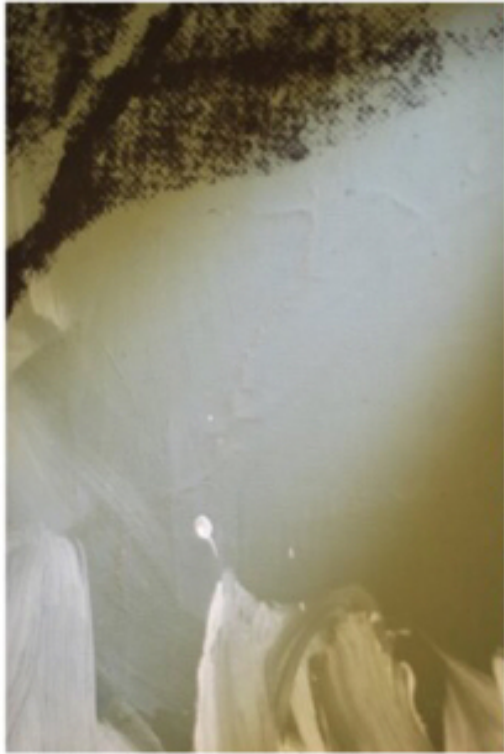


Fig 5 Detail lower right – raking light



Fig 6 Detail upper left – vertical crack in paint

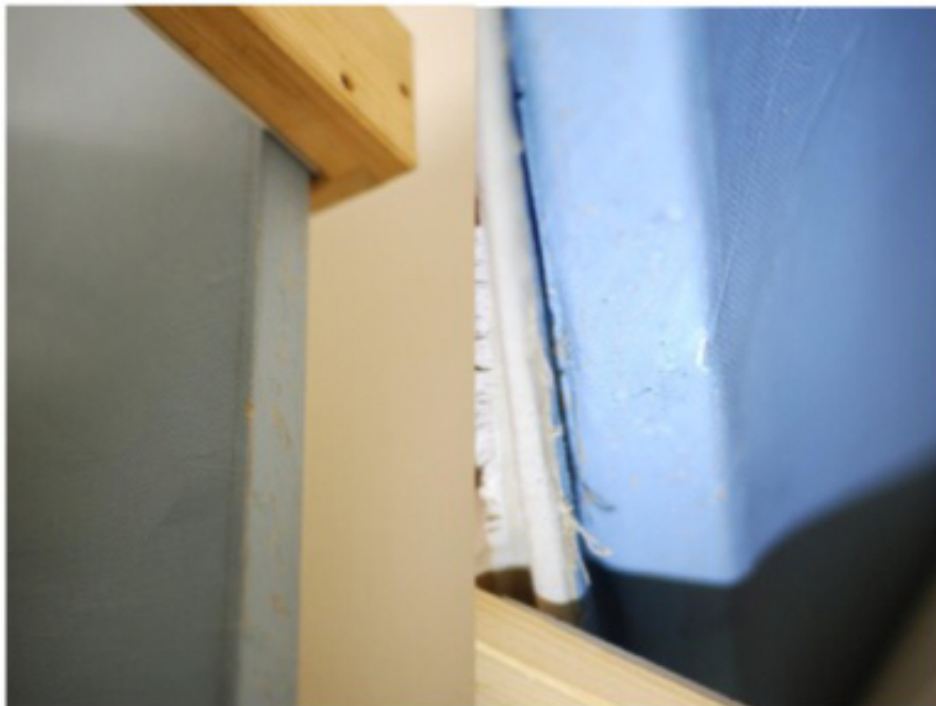


Fig 7 Turnover edge showing old loss

Fig 8 Lifting paint at turnover





Mao by Andy Warhol is a superlative work in every aspect. One of the finest and greatest examples from Warhol's entire oeuvre, this magnificent, colossal Mao stuns viewers with its staggering size and wall-power. Over 14 feet high, the painting is one of four Giant Mao's of these dimensions executed by the artist. The other three are in major American and European museum collections: the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin.

Never before has any of these paintings been displayed outside of the Western world.

Mao encompassed Warhol's first major critically and commercially successful series following his premature "retirement" from painting in 1965 to pursue filmmaking. A near fatal shooting in 1968 led Warhol to reevaluate his career and artistic output and he began to execute commissioned celebrity portraits in the early 1970's. The subject of Mao marks a turning point in the artist's career and would begin a period of renewed growth. Warhol's choice of subject may have reflected the political developments of his day. In 1971, the People's Republic of China replaced Nationalist China in the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council and relations between China and the United States became less strained. In fact, it was Chairman Mao who was credited for encouraging President Nixon's visit to China in February of 1972, the first by an American leader, with the visit easing Cold War tensions between the United States and China.

The subject of this work and its relevance to Chinese history makes it an important work to exhibit in Hong Kong given its proximity and ties to mainland China. Despite his radical policies, many people still see Mao as a figure of strength and unity. Warhol's Mao represents the shift in cultural values that has taken place over the past decade and is therefore emblematic of the bridging of east and west.

The other Mao portraits of this size are in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin.





Art Institute, Chicago.

Mao, 1973

Synthetic polymer paint and silkscreen ink on canvas
448.3 x 346.7 cm (176 1/2 x 136 1/2 in.)

The influential Pop artist Andy Warhol cast a cool, ironic light on the pervasiveness of commercial culture and contemporary celebrity worship. Early in his career, he began to utilize the silkscreen process to transfer photographic images to canvas: images of mass-produced consumer products and Hollywood film stars are among his most recognizable subjects. In this example from his Mao series, Warhol melded his signature style with the scale of totalitarian propaganda to address the cult of personality surrounding Chinese ruler Mao Zedong (1893–1976). Nearly 15 feet tall, this towering work mimics the representations of the political figure that were ubiquitous throughout China. In contrast to

the photographic nature of the image, garish colors were applied like makeup to Mao's face. Ultimately, the portrait shows Warhol at his most painterly, rendering Mao, an enemy of individualism, in a brazenly personal style.

Warhol began the series in 1972 in the wake of an epochal visit to Beijing by conservative hero Richard M. Nixon.

The image is one of a very large series of silkscreen paintings and prints the late Pop artist made of Mao. Warhol's parody transformed the leader of the world's most populous nation into a vapid superstar -- the most famous of the famous. The portrait photo from Mao's Little Red Book is tarted up with lipstick, eyeshadow and other Marilyn Monroe-style flourishes.

Warhol's Mao's are in art museum collections from coast to coast, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Art Institute of Chicago and both the County Museum of Art and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. Not surprisingly, Pittsburgh's Andy Warhol Museum has several.

At the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House, **the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C. has 21 different versions** of Warhol's "Mao."

CHRISTIE'S Hong Kong,

"It's worth \$120 million because it's so rare," said Ken Yeh, Christie's deputy chairman in Asia.

The exhibition, "Mao by Andy Warhol," which Christie's organized in collaboration with New York's L&M Arts gallery, will feature 15 portraits.

Christie's expects the 14-foot Andy Warhol "Mao" it's exhibiting in Hong Kong to fetch up to \$120 million.

Source: Blomberg.com

Hong Kong – Christie's is honored to showcase one of the most important works from the Mao series by Andy Warhol and the most valuable work by Warhol to remain outside of a museum during its Hong Kong 2008 Spring Sales. The work will be displayed as part of an exhibition featuring portraits of Mao by Andy Warhol from May 22-29 at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, where Christie's holds its sales and views.



"It is an honor and a unique opportunity to bring one of the most important paintings by Warhol to remain outside an institution to Christie's in Hong Kong where the international art world will gather for our Spring Sales," said Brett Gorvy, International Co-Head of Christie's Post-War and Contemporary Art. "Visitors will have a chance to view this extraordinary Mao in Asia for the very first time as part of a specially curated exhibition celebrating Warhol's legendary series."

Mao 10, Andy Warhol, 26"x22" acrylic and silkscreen on linen

I follow art in general and China. So, when I read that in the New York Times that at a Phillips de Pury & Company auction on May 12, 2011:

'Three people tried to bring home a 1973 Mao painting [*Mao 10*] by the artist, a work that had also been owned by Sonnabend. Here Mao is set against a brilliant blue background with his lips outlined in red. Estimated to fetch \$3.5 million to \$4.5 million, it sold for \$3.5 million, or \$4,002,500 million with fees.' I got interested.

Andy Warhol, the Pope of Pop Art, is best known for taking an image; making many, many prints of it; and then coloring them. He said, "I like boring things. I like things to be the same over and over."

His main subjects were everyday items, like Campbell's Soup cans...

...and celebrities, like Marilyn Monroe. It was Warhol who said, "In the future everybody will be world famous for fifteen minutes."

And, of course, starting in 1972, he painted many Mao Zedong's. According to the Phillips de Pury & Company auction [catalog](#) [I found and added all photos]:

'Aside from the highly fueled subject matter, the *Mao* paintings are also significant in the development of Warhol's technique. These canvases mark a departure from his previously highly repetitive silkscreened works – each canvas in the *Mao* series is significantly unique.'

'Warhol's *Mao* paintings take a radical departure and stand in high contrast to the original source photograph of Mao and certainly create an irreverent representation of the Chinese Communist leader. They shout more of Hollywood glamour than they do of Chinese politics. Warhol began the *Mao* series upon the urging of his dealer, Bruno Bischofberger, who implored Warhol to return to painting after his premature "retirement." As inspiration Bischofberger suggested that Warhol paint the most important figure of the twentieth century. Bischofberger's suggestion was Albert Einstein. Warhol's response to this was, "Oh, that's a good idea. But I was just reading in *Life* magazine that the most famous person in the world today is Chairman Mao. Shouldn't it be the most famous person, Bruno?"

'The issue of *Life* Warhol would have been referring to dated from March 3, 1972 with Mao on the cover. The cover was spurred on by Richard Nixon's historic visit to the People's Republic of China during the last week of February 1972. This was the first time a U.S. President had visited China, a country considered one of the United States' staunchest foes.'

Searching further, I learned from a [catalog](#) at Gallery Warhol of a different or perhaps complementary source:

'His choice was in fact inspired by a recent cover of *Vogue* Magazine illustrated by Salvador Dali. It showed a morphed image of Marilyn Monroe and Chairman Mao as one face. Warhol viewed Dali, who shared his commercial and artistic flamboyance, as one of his peers. It is likely that Dali's choice of Marilyn, which echoed Warhol's own fascination for the screen goddess, brought Mao further into Warhol's focus as a new icon.'

I was now intrigued and tracked down at *Dali Planet* the *Vogue* cover for the December 1971-January 1972 issue that had inspired Warhol .

And, with a little more digging, I found that the photo used here is *Marilyn-Mao* made by surrealist photographer Phillippe Halsman in 1952 at Dali's request.

There I learned that apparently after cover from Dali's 'Self-Portrait' (right) done in 1972 used the same image.

USA Today reported on November 16, 2006 that:

Mao, Andy Warhol, 81"x61", acrylic and silkscreen on linen

'Andy Warhol's iconic image of Communist Party Chairman Mao Zedong, considered one of his most sensational pieces of the 1970s, sold for \$17.4 million, a world auction record for the artist, Christie's auction house said.'

Then, on May 6, 2008, the Wall Street Journal reported that:

'One of Andy Warhol's large portraits of Mao Zedong is on sale for \$120 million — a price experts believe would set a record for the American Pop artist.

'The rainbow-colored portrait, titled "Mao," is one of four 14-foot-tall silkscreen paintings of the Communist leader that the artist completed in 1973 after the U.S. renewed relations with China. The work portrays Mao with an orange face, blue eyeliner and a tan smear on his gray smock.

'Warhol originally created this group of four so-called Giant Mao paintings with financing from two New York galleries, Knoedler & Co. and the Leo Castelli Gallery, as well as collector Peter Brant. The artist gave each of his backers one Mao, and these have subsequently been given to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Art Institute of Chicago and the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin. Warhol later painted a large number of smaller Mao portraits.'

The Phillips de Pury & Company auction [catalog](#) states:

'Warhol based his Mao series on the official portrait of Mao, reproduced as the frontispiece of *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*, known in the west as the "Little Red Book" — Warhol incidentally owned a copy of this. This official portrait of Mao was not limited to the book — it was disseminated across the country including a monumental version hanging in Tiananmen Square in Beijing. Like Warhol, Mao was well aware of the importance and influence of an image and he used the omnipresent billboards, posters and pamphlets of his face to reflect himself as both a benevolent and fearsome leader, keeping an eye on all of his subjects. Considering the size of China's population, this particular image of Mao became one of the most widely distributed, viewed and recognizable images in the world. Warhol's choice of Mao as the subject of these paintings was subversively brilliant — his face already had a pop and iconic presence in China.'

Next time we will examine this and other official portraits of Mao, their perch on Tiananmen, the artists who worked on them in secret, and the crisis that erupted when one iconic painting of Mao was going to be auctioned.

