

# History Is Not Fixed

The stories people tell often change over time, just as the past tends to be reinterpreted and assigned new meaning depending on the contemporary context. This is frequently the case with artists' works as well. Artists acclaimed early in their careers may see their reputations grow even stronger in subsequent years. On the other hand, successful artists can fall out of favor and become overlooked.

Marisol was one of only a few women to achieve the same level of critical and commercial success as Andy Warhol in the 1960s. Even though her exhibitions garnered significant attention and her work appeared repeatedly on the cover of *Time* magazine, today her name is less widely recognized. Marisol's "real fame rests on her dazzling ability to distill art from the clichés of American life," wrote a critic in 1965, but even that article implicitly suggested that Marisol's "witty, inventive sculptures" were sometimes overshadowed by other factors, such as a general fascination with her glamorous appearance and mystique. (Warhol himself declared, "Marisol! The first girl artist with *glamour*.")

# Beyond Pop Art

Warhol positioned himself at the center of the pop art movement and largely welcomed the attention it brought him. Marisol was sometimes described as a pop artist, too, but her work resisted easy classification. She said in 1965, “I don’t like the idea of all those groups. An artist is an artist . . . But whatever they want to call me is okay—pop or anything.” Consequently, her art has been assigned to other movements at various times.

Marisol’s use of found objects initially prompted comparisons to assemblage—sculpture that combines everyday objects in collage-like arrangements. In Chicago, a city with a deep interest in surrealist works, historically speaking, collectors may have been drawn to Marisol’s work for its absurdist qualities and unusual juxtapositions, which recall the emphasis the early twentieth-century surrealists placed on the irrational and the unconscious mind.

Warhol also voiced doubts about the dominance of certain movements: “How can you say one style is better than another? You ought to be able to be an abstract expressionist next week, or a pop artist, or a realist, without feeling you’ve given something up. . . . It’s this style or that style, this or that image of man—but really that doesn’t make any difference. Some artists get left out that way, and why should they?”

# Repetition and Composite Portraits

Warhol and Marisol both repeated images and other forms in their work. Today, digital technologies allow for the almost effortless copying of images from the Internet. In the 1960s, borrowing photographs from pop culture was provocative and reproducing them in a series could only be achieved by hand or by mechanical means, such as the printmaking technique of silk-screening.

The silk-screen process allowed Warhol—or his assistants—to repurpose any photograph that caught his eye and to generate a series of similar paintings quickly. *Jackie Frieze* (1964), on display here, was one of forty-nine paintings Warhol made of former First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. He claimed repeatedly, “The reason I’m painting this way is that I want to be a machine.” Warhol’s serial imagery also echoes how the media endlessly reproduce certain photographs until they become iconic or lose meaning altogether.

Marisol worked more slowly than Warhol, carving and painting her sculptures by hand. Though she wasn’t particularly motivated by her friend’s desire to be machinelike, Marisol’s composite portraits are likewise full of repeating faces. In Marisol’s *Six Women* (1965–66), the features of the anonymous figures are all cast in plaster from a mold of the artist’s face. In this way, Marisol uses her own image repeatedly to produce a variety of female characters, “a microcosm of present-day society,” as one critic wrote of her work in 1964.

## Marisol on Film

In 1963 Warhol bought his first movie camera, a 16 mm model. That same year, Marisol appeared in some of his earliest films. Her screen test—one of many Warhol recorded of his friends sitting alone in front of the camera—was later included in the well-known compilation *13 Most Beautiful Women* (1964–65). Unfortunately, due to the sheer quantity of short films Warhol made, many of them, including Marisol's, have yet to be preserved or restored and are not available to be screened publicly. One exception is Warhol's hour-long film *Kiss* (1964), parts of which were shot at the summer home of Eleanor Ward, who ran the Stable Gallery in New York, where both Warhol and Marisol exhibited in the early 1960s.

# Marisol

(American, b. France, 1930)

*Andy*, 1962–63

Graphite, oil, and plaster on wood  
with Andy Warhol's shoes

Courtesy of Acquavella Galleries

Warhol once said, "If you want to know Andy Warhol, just look at the surface of my paintings and films and me, and there I am. There's nothing behind it." Marisol's portrait of Warhol has a similarly cool demeanor. His figure is painted on multiple flat surfaces and the sculpture even mimics the shape of a chair, as if the aloof Warhol had been transformed into an inanimate object. Nevertheless, Marisol's portrait is an openly personal work. Not only did she title it with Warhol's first name, suggesting a certain familiarity or closeness, the sculpture includes an actual pair of his shoes.

# Marisol

(American, b. France, 1930)

## *Self-Portrait*, 1961–62

Wood, plaster, marker, paint, graphite,  
human teeth, gold, and plastic

Collection Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago

Gift of Joseph and Jory Shapiro, 1992.66

The seven heads in Marisol's *Self-Portrait* were originally old hat forms (wooden shapes used to fashion hats) that she found in a potato sack at a friend's house. By carving, painting, or adding casts of her own face, Marisol turned these found objects into distinct characters, creating a multifaceted representation of herself. Each head may correspond to a different aspect of Marisol's personality, or perhaps different roles she played within her life. Even so, Marisol downplayed autobiographical references in her work. "The truth is," she said, "I use my own face because it's easier. When I want to make a face or hands for one of my figures, I'm usually the only person around to use as a model."

**Andy Warhol**  
(American, 1928–1987)  
*Marisol Sculpture of William Burroughs,*  
1981

Gelatin silver print  
Smart Museum of Art, University of Chicago  
Gift of The Andy Warhol Foundation for  
the Visual Arts, Inc., 2008.201

Over the course of his life, Warhol took thousands of photographs, creating a visual record of what he was looking at and with whom he spent his time. This photograph is of a sculpture made by Marisol of the writer William S. Burroughs—part of a series of carved wood portraits she made in the 1980s in homage to older artists and writers whom she considered crucial to her artistic development. All of the figures in the scenes appear in seated poses, echoing Marisol's portrait of Warhol made twenty years earlier.

**Andy Warhol**  
(American, 1928–1987)  
*Troy Diptych, 1962*

Silk-screen ink on synthetic polymer  
paint and graphite on linen  
Collection Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago  
Gift of Mrs. Robert B. Mayer, 1984.1.a–b

Warhol made numerous paintings of celebrities in the 1960s, often repeating their faces across the canvas. Troy Donahue, the subject of this work, was a well-known movie star at the time. By the end of the decade, however, his popularity began to fade and he was no longer a household name. Donahue's recognition today, as a celebrity or a familiar face, is more likely due to his having been painted by Warhol rather than his own stardom. Warhol's well-known comment "In the future, everyone will be world-famous for fifteen minutes" was a celebratory prediction but also pointed to the fleeting nature of fame.



**Andy Warhol**  
(American, 1928–1987)  
*Jackie Frieze, 1964*

Silk screen on linen  
Collection Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago  
Partial and promised gift of  
Beatrice Cummings Mayer, 2007.32

**Marisol**  
(American, b. France, 1930)  
*Six Women, 1965–66*

Wood, paint, mirrors, shoes, Formica, and plaster  
Collection Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago  
Gift of the artist, 1968.1