

# NORTHLIGHT THEATRE



## STUDY GUIDE

In 1976 the artist Andy Warhol, portrait painter of the rich and famous, travels to Tehran to take Polaroids of the Shah's wife. Between sightseeing and room service caviar, Warhol encounters a young revolutionary who throws his plans into turmoil and opens his eyes to a world beyond himself.

[Click here for a full show synopsis!](#) 



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questions to ask  
students.*

*Created by Alexi Siegel, Matthew Aguinaga, Abaigeal O'Donnell and the Northlight Theatre staff*

# Meet the Artists

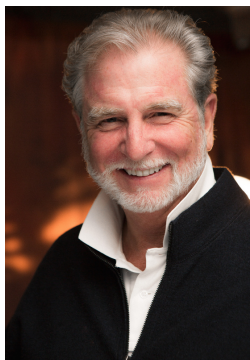


## *The Playwright: Brent Askari*

[Read an interview with Brent Askari!](#)



Brent Askari is a Persian-American writer and actor. He is the winner of the 2019 NNPN Smith Prize for Political Theater for his play *The Refugees*. His play *Andy Warhol In Iran* won a Berkshire Theater Award for Best New Play. He was part of HBO's New Writers Project and has written screenplays for several companies including Paramount Pictures, Marvel Films, MTV, and Reveille Entertainment. He is an ensemble member of Mad Horse Theatre Company and an affiliate artist of the NNPN.



## *The Director: BJ Jones*

[Watch an interview with BJ Jones!](#)



*Andy Warhol In Iran* director BJ Jones guides you through the mind, life, and world of Andy Warhol. In this thrilling and comedic story, BJ hopes that you will leave the theatre inspired, and with a new outlook on art and theatre. BJ Jones assumed his position as Northlight's artistic director in 1997. BJ Jones is in his 23rd season as Artistic Director of Northlight. Mr. Jones is a two-time Joseph Jefferson Award-winning actor and a three-time nominated director and has directed the world premieres of *Relativity*, *Funnyman*, *Faceless*, *Charm*, *White Guy on the Bus*, *Stella & Lou*, *The Outgoing Tide*, *Better Late*, and *Rounding Third*.

## *The Actors*

[Click for full artist team bios](#)



ROB LINDLEY

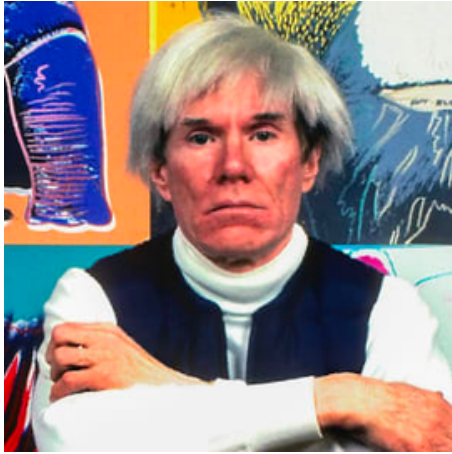


HAMID DEGHANI



Jeff Kurysz Photography

# Andy Warhol



## Who was Andy Warhol?

Andy Warhol was a leading artist in the 1950s Pop Art movement. Throughout his life he ventured into a variety of art forms, including performance art, filmmaking, and writing. His work was controversial because it defied what was traditionally considered fine art. His work simultaneously satirized and celebrated materialism and celebrity. When he was 8, Warhol grew ill and was bedridden for months. In this time his mother taught him to draw, sparking his lifelong artistic passion. Learn more about him and his work through the [Andy Warhol Museum](#).



## Key Term POP ART

Pop Art is an artistic style that takes inspiration from ordinary things and popular culture. It uses bold colors, contrast, and repetitive patterns. It emerged in the United Kingdom and United States in the mid to late 1950s. Pop Art challenged what was traditionally considered fine art.



Andy Warhol, Self-Portrait In Drag, 1981.

## Andy Warhol Fun Facts

- Andy Warhol's "Shot Sage Blue Marilyn" sold for \$195 million last May. It was the most expensive work by a U.S. artist ever sold at an auction. The proceeds went to the Thomas and Doris Ammann Foundation Zurich, a foundation that aims to help children with health care and educational programs.
- Andy Warhol typically wore a wig in public
- Andy Warhol was an avant-garde film director creating films like SLEEP that was a man sleeping for 5 hours and EAT that was a man eating mushrooms for 45 minutes. [Check out his IMDB.](#)





# Historical Background

1928

## Andy Warhol is Born

Andy Warhol was born on August 6, 1928. His parents were Slovakian immigrants and he was born in their two-room apartment in a working class neighborhood in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.



Late 1950s

## Beginning of the Pop Art Movement

Pop Art began in the United Kingdom and United States in the late 1950s. It began as a rebellion against traditional art forms, as many pop artists felt that the art taught in schools and shown in museums did not represent the world we lived in, and looked to pop culture for inspiration.



How Pop-Art Changed  
Perception of Art



1962

## Andy Warhol Emerges

Andy Warhol exhibited paintings of Campbell's soup cans, Coca-Cola bottles, and wooden replicas of Brillo soap pad boxes at the Ferus Gallery of Los Angeles on July 9, 1962. He gained major notoriety and recognition after this exhibition, pushing the boundaries of art and proposing thought provoking questions as to what is exactly considered "art".



Andy Warhol, Marilyn Diptych, 1962

1963

## The Factory

The Factory was Andy Warhol's studio in New York City, which he had between 1963 and 1987. The Factory was well known as the place where Warhol would make all of his art, including directing his films. It quickly became a popular hangout spot among artists, musicians, Warhol's friends, and other celebrities.



Andy Warhol at The Factory

1965

## Andy Warhol Retires From Painting

After establishing a reputation as an avant-garde pop artist through his paintings, Warhol had announced his retirement from painting to focus on film-making, video art, and managing the popular American rock band The Velvet Underground.

# Historical Background, Cont.

June 3rd, 1968

## The Attempted Murder Of Andy Warhol

Valerie Solanas, a struggling writer who had formerly appeared in one of Warhol's films, waited for Warhol outside The Factory and rode the elevator up with him to the studio. She then shot Warhol in the abdomen, and attempted to shoot London art critic Mario Amaya. Warhol was rushed to the hospital with a ruptured stomach, liver, spleen, and lungs. He was required to wear a surgical corset for the rest of his life. Solanas claimed Warhol "had too much control over [her] life"

1976

## Andy Warhol Visits Iran

Warhol was requested by the Empress of Iran to do her and the Shah's portrait as she was an art collector. In addition to this, he was also invited to a state dinner with the Shah of Iran. Although he was retired from painting at this time, he decided he would return to it since it was such a big deal, and also could make him a lot of money. Warhol was joined on the trip by his biographer Bob Colacello. Their trip was criticized publicly.

*When our play takes place!*

January 7th, 1978

## The Iranian Revolution Begins

A paper published by the national daily Ettela'at newspaper denounced Ruhollah Khomeini, founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran and later the First Supreme Leader of Iran, calling him a "mad Indian poet", and "British agent". This sparked outrage among religious seminary students in the city of Qom, who then clashed with police. It was said that there were 70 killed and over 500 injured.

January 1979

## The Shah Flees Iran

After years of fighting from the general public, the Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, fled Iran in exile and left his duties to a regency council. Ayatollah Khomeini, former Supreme Leader of Iran, was invited back to Iran by the government and returned to Tehran shortly after.

November 4th, 1979

## Iran Hostage Crisis

United States diplomats and citizens were held hostage after a group of militarized Iranian college students belonging to the Muslim Student Followers of the Imam's Line, who supported the Iranian Revolution, took over the U.S. Embassy in Tehran. A diplomatic standoff ensued. The hostages were held for 444 days.

February 22nd, 1987

## The Death Of Andy Warhol

At 6:32 A.M in Manhattan, New York, Warhol died in his sleep from a sudden postoperative irregular heartbeat after making a recovery from a gallbladder surgery at New York Hospital. He was 58 years old.



*Former hostages arriving in the United States on January 25, 1981, five days after being released by their captors in Iran.*

# The Iranian Revolution



The Iranian Revolution was a series of events that culminated in the overthrow of the Pahlavi dynasty under Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, and the replacement of his government with an Islamic republic under the rule of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, a leader of one of the factions in the revolt. The revolution was supported by various leftist and Islamist organizations.

## Key Term

### REVOLUTION

In social and political science, a revolution is a challenge to how things have been resulting in a fundamental change in the previously established political order. A revolution creates radical change and helps establish a new structure.



"The Shah had a lot of sympathy for the poor." Cartoon by Iraj Zare: reprinted in Hassan Javadi's Satire in Persian Literature.

## Watch a Crash Course video on Iran's Revolutions



## Iranian Revolution Summary

### Pre - Revolution

- Authoritarian monarchy
- Harsh police rule
- Forced "westernization"

### Start of Revolution

- Anger with regime
- Discontent over living conditions
- Economic recession
- Peaceful Protests

### During Revolution

- Violent suppression of protests
- Strikes, demonstrations
- Shah flees the country

### After

- New Islamic Republic
- Cultural revolution
- Better education
- Improved public health



# Andy Warhol's Trip to Iran

Andy Warhol in Iran tells a fascinating new view of a pop icon and a (somewhat) true story inspired by a real trip in 1976.

**But what really happened on Andy's travels to Iran?**

October 28, 2013 The Atlantic


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## TRAVELING TO IRAN WITH ANDY WARHOL

Excerpts from an interview with the artist's biographer, Bob Colacello  
By Dan Washburn

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Bob Colacello has said he was the Andy Warhol biographer who knew Warhol for more than 15 minutes. He was editor of Warhol's *Interview* magazine from 1971 to 1983, and became actively involved in all aspects of life—business and social—at The Factory, Warhol's studio, including procuring celebrity clients for Warhol's famous silkscreened portraits. Colacello's book, *Holy Terror: Andy Warhol Close Up*, came out in 1990. In 1976, Colacello traveled to Iran with Warhol.



**First, can you describe what brought about your trip to Iran with Andy?**  
Well, it happened because we had gotten to know the Iranian ambassador to the United Nations, Fereydoon Hoveyda, and he actually arranged for Andy to do a portrait of the Shabanu, or the Empress, Farah Pahlavi. So the purpose of the trip was basically for Andy to take polaroids of her, which then would be made into portraits.

**What did Andy think of Iran?**  
Well, Andy was like, "Oh gee, oh wow, how glamorous." He loved the fact that we could call room service at the Hilton Hotel and get caviar all day long for \$10 an order... Andy's politics are different. I was republican and Andy was a democrat — we would kind of tease each other about it.

**How did people react to Andy in Iran?**  
The people we saw, again were mostly the sophisticated slice of society. They were people who had spent time in America and Europe on a regular basis, so they knew who Andy was. I mean walking in the streets, Andy was strange looking with his white wig and his pallor, but that could happen anywhere. I think people treated Andy with a kind of respect and curiosity. They wanted to meet him.



Watch an interview with Farah Diba Pahlavi about her portrait by Andy Warhol

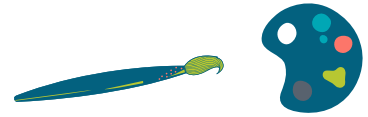


Andy Warhol. Farah Diba Pahlavi, 1976.

**BONUS! Watch an interview with the Bob Colacello, Warhol's biographer, talking about their trip to Iran**



# Activities



## When Worlds Collide

In the play, Warhol is thrown into the world of politics after being commissioned by the Empress of Iran to do a portrait of her and the Shah. Warhol didn't consider himself a political person but created portraits of many politicians, royalty, and celebrities, including Marilyn Monroe, Richard Nixon, and Queen Elizabeth II. Check out more of his portraits through this guide by [Artland Magazine](#).



- How do art and politics mix?
- What makes a piece of artwork "political"?

1. Think about your favorite artist; whether that be a musician, painter, poet, or designer.
2. Identify an important time in their artistic life, perhaps their first #1 song, an award they won, or a showing at a museum.
3. Now think about what was going on in the world at the time. Did this artist and/or their artwork engage with any current events or political discussions at the time?
4. Why do you think they did or did not engage?

*Example: Many artists use televised award shows to speak about a cause or political event that is important to them. Read this article in Vanity Fair about the [history of politics and the Oscars](#).*



Andy Warhol, Reigning Queen: Queen Ntombi Twala of Swaziland, 1985.

## Childhood Significance

Andy Warhol once said, "I love making repetitions of things, It's what I'm famous for. Whether Campbell's Soup cans, or Marilyn Monroe, or Mao, or atomic bombs." One of Warhol's signature artistic techniques was repeating the image multiple times, his most famous one, was drawings of Campbell's soup. Warhol claimed to have eaten it everyday for lunch for 20 years.



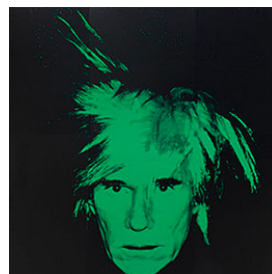
Think about an item that is important to you, whether that be a specific brand of food, clothing, or electronic device.

- Why is that item important to you?
- What significance does that item play in your life?
- What makes an item go from just an object to something special?

Take out a piece of paper or online document. Draw or copy and paste an image of that item however many times you feel is right to create your own Warhol inspired repetition artwork. Feel free to alter the colors of the image or drawing on each repeat!

## Self Portrait

Andy Warhol created many self portraits throughout his career. Take a selfie and transform it into your own self-portrait. Explore playing with accessories, color, repetition, editing, and filters.



Teacher Note: Childhood Significance and Self Portrait can be done through drawing, collage, graphic design, or a combination of artistic mediums.



# Resources

## **Northlight Theatre**

[Andy Warhol in Iran Production](#)

[Full Synopsis of Andy Warhol in Iran](#)

['Andy Warhol in Iran' tries to cut through the artist's enigma](#) (Interview with the playwright) by Joseph Dalton

[People You Should Know - BJ Jones of Northlight Theatre](#) by Evanston RoundTable

## **Andy Warhol**

[Andy Warhol Portraits: A Definitive Guide](#) by Naomi Martin

[Andy Warhol Biography](#) by Biography.com Editors

[Andy Warhol Was Shot By Valerie Solanas. It Killed Him 19 Years Later](#) by Sarah Pruitt

[Bob Colacello: When Warhol Met the Empress](#) Video

[Farah Pahlavi: the empress of Iran about her portrait by Andy Warhol](#) Video

[Here's how Andy Warhol ended up in Iran during the Shah's regime](#) by Shirin Jaafari

[How Pop-Art Changed the Perception of Art](#) by Jake S. Platt

[The Andy Warhol Museum](#)

[Traveling to Iran With Andy Warhol](#) by Dan Washburn

[Warhol's portrait of Marilyn Monroe sells for \\$195 million, most for any U.S. artist](#)

## **Iranian Revolution**

[Iranian Revolution](#) by Janet Afary

[The Iranian revolution—A timeline of events](#) by Suzanne Maloney and Keian Razipour

[Iran's Revolutions: Crash Course World History 226](#) Video

[The Iranian Revolution of February 1979](#) by Homa Katouzian

***“I don't think art should be only for the select few, I think It should be for the mass of the American people.”***

- Andy Warhol