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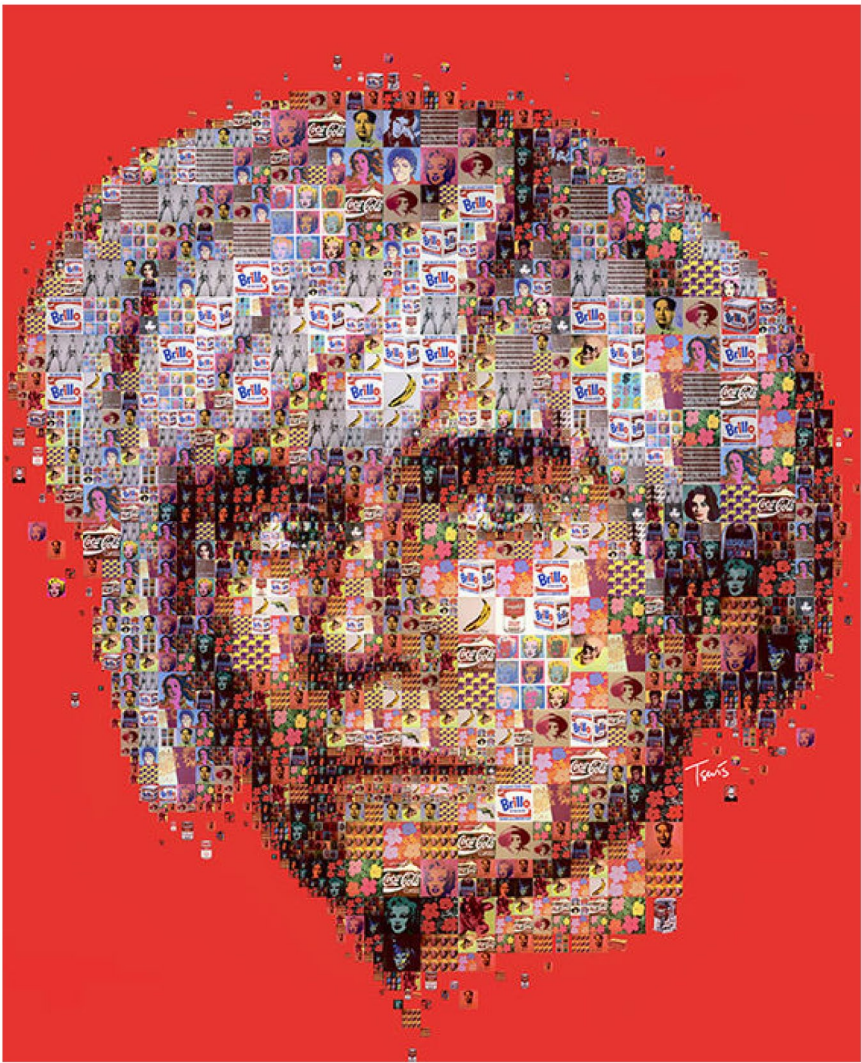
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Andy Warhol's New York, 25 Years On

Looking for signs of the artist a quarter-century after he disappeared

By Camille Dodero Wednesday, Feb 22 2012

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Charis Tsevis

For an interactive, magnified version of the above art, [click here](#).

The Pope of Pop's last week with this mortal coil began, more or less, on Valentine's Day. It was a Saturday in 1987 during an otherwise routine collagen treatment when Andy Warhol complained

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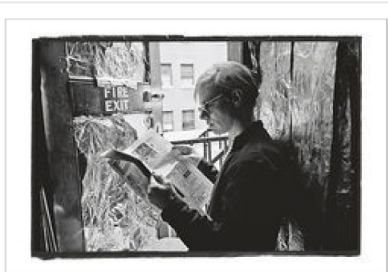
about his gallbladder, an irascible organ he'd begrudgingly dealt with for years—at least since '73 or '74—and had since placated with doctor's visits, prescriptions, and dietary adjustments. But a week or so prior to this appointment, the abdominal pain had returned with such a vengeance that he had been forced to cancel post-dinner plans to see the [Bette Midler](#) movie *Outrageous Fortune*. ("It wasn't much," he later sniffed.) But now the discomfort had returned violently enough that the man who prided himself on not letting on when something was wrong was forced to admit that something was.

Warhol would spend the following day, Sunday, in bed. He missed church—which was atypical behavior for the practicing Catholic—but stayed awake long enough to catch himself on television, which was not. On Monday, the 58-year-old dutifully saw his chiropractor but felt unsteady enough to cancel a week of personal-training appointments. On Tuesday, the public figure joined [Miles Davis](#) in a fashion show at the Tunnel and wore alligator, lace, and fur designs he would later joke made him look like [Liberace](#). Friends could tell he felt poorly, and he went home immediately after the event.

By Friday, Andy Warhol was in what was then New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center. By Saturday, surgeons had removed his gangrenous gallbladder, and that night, he was alert enough to watch television and make phone calls. But something happened in the dark, and by 6:31 the next morning, he was dead.

Andy Warhol died on February 22, 1987. In other words, 25 years ago, the famous man who had famously written his own script finally had it taken away. New York City is, of course, a different place than it was then. But nothing has changed so drastically that the creator of the *Can That Sold the World* has stopped being one of New York City's most deeply abiding myths. "I never understood why when you died, you didn't just vanish, everything could just keep going on the way it was, only you just wouldn't be there," Warhol once wrote. And he didn't, and it did, but he is. Which leaves you to wonder, a quarter of a century expired, what does Andy Warhol's New York City look like today?

[Thomas Kiedrowski](#), a thirtysomething [Boerum Hill](#) resident, has devoted more than two years to trying to answer that question. Warhol's legend shaped his vision of New York City, and he wanted to see where these extraordinary events had transpired. Drugs and self-preservation and [Wikipedia](#) are unreliable narrators, plus [Kiedrowski](#) admits that he's "kind of a Doubting



© Bob Adelman

Andy Warhol reads the May 6, 1965, edition of *The Village Voice* at his Silver Factory.



Sasha Patkin

The Andy Monument, Rob Pruitt's chrome Union Square tribute. It's kind of hideous, right?

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Thomas," so he dug through phone books, excavated newspaper clippings, and interviewed as many of Warhol's remaining friends and associates who would talk. Based on his research, he started giving occasional walking tours, all of which culminated in last summer's publication of *Andy Warhol's New York City: Four Walks Uptown to Downtown*, a pocket guidebook of 80 addresses.

When we meet in a [Starbucks](#) on the corner of [Lexington](#) and 87th Street, Kiedrowski is as

excited to discuss Warhol as most new parents are about their babies. (Maybe even more.) The first place Kiedrowski likes to take people, as a kind of contextual prologue, is 1060 Park Avenue, a distinguished-looking [Upper East Side](#) apartment building with a green-awning entrance and an adjacent doctor's office, where [Truman Capote](#) lived with his drunken mess of a mother in the early '50s. A sickly, awkward, working-class Slovakian outcast armed with \$200, visual-arts talent, and a terrifyingly possessed quest for fame, Warhol relocated to New York from [Pittsburgh](#) at age 20. Soon after, he became interminably fixated with Capote, a New York transplant whose first published novel, 1948's *Other Voices, Other Rooms*, had recently propelled the young Louisiana-born author to literary stardom. Warhol not only shared characteristics with *Other Voices'* sensitive, effete 13-year-old protagonist, but he also became infatuated with the author's seductive dust-jacket photo, a controversially "suggestive" (and suggestively gay) portrait. This infatuation became so utterly overwhelming that Warhol adopted a stalker-like persistence, writing fan letters, calling Capote's home, and waiting on the sidewalk outside this concrete building, slavishly, for hours. Kiedrowski says in a reverent awe, "You can just *see* him standing here!" (I didn't.)

Our next stop is within walking distance, St. Thomas More Church, located at 65 East 89th Street, a Roman-Catholic ministry that dates back to 1870 and still holds regular services. On the sidewalk outside the gates, Kiedrowski emphasizes the thing anybody who has ever heard of Andy Warhol knows: Every single action—from where the man worshiped to where he ate—was carefully premeditated and designed to place him in the company of the world's most spectacular humans. For example, [St. Thomas More](#) was conveniently also Jackie O's parish—[John F. Kennedy Jr.](#)'s memorial service was held there in 1999. "I'm Catholic and go to church at St. Thomas More," reads a Warhol interview Kiedrowski has just pulled out from a black binder. "They have those rock masses. I take [my dog] Archie with me every Sunday, but we're usually late."

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We traipse over to the far more crucial 1342 Lexington Avenue townhouse near 89th Street, which Warhol bought around 1960 after his commercial-art career had become sufficiently lucrative and lived in until 1974. Julia lived in the basement, near the kitchen; upstairs is where Warhol would create many of his early masterpieces: the *Campbell's Soup Cans*, the first run of *Marilyn Monroes*, his *Liz Taylor* tribute. Today, 1342 Lexington is one of seven buildings that form the Hardenbergh/Rhineland Historic District: Architect Henry J. Hardenbergh, who is also responsible for the *Plaza Hotel* and the *Dakota*, designed the brick-faced brownstone. The most recent owners weren't keen on having fans stop by: Eventually, they put the property on the market at an asking price *The New York Times* reported as \$5.99 million. This past December, it went for \$3.55 million. There are no curtains nor window fixtures—it doesn't look like anybody has moved in. (In contrast, Warhol's Firehouse Studio on East 87th, which he rented for \$150 from the city and where he painted the *Death and Disaster* series, recently sold for \$33 million.)

As a volunteer tour guide, Kiedrowski is more focused on the New York City of Andy Warhol that still exists, rather than what has vanished. For example, he doesn't drag his followers to 216 East 75th Street to see the razed site of the second-floor rental Warhol briefly occupied alone, until his mother, Julia, unexpectedly arrived from Pittsburgh one day, effectively plopped down with all her possessions, and decided to stay with her youngest son—for what would ultimately be almost 20 years. We don't trek down to 26 East 55th Street, where Hugo Gallery stood until 1955, the site of Warhol's crush-funneling first solo exhibition, *Fifteen Drawings Based on the Writings of Truman Capote*, a collection that opened on June 16, 1952, and didn't sell one piece. Or 125 West 41st Street, where the Film-Makers' Cinematheque once was, the *Jonas Mekas* screening-room precursor to the Anthology Film Archives that showed Warhol's experimental projects like, say, the *Paul America*—starring *My Hustler*, advertised in 1966 as "Surf, sand, and sex on *Fire Island*."

"I just don't want people to have the impression that he's not really around," Kiedrowski says in a tone much like he is speaking of God. "He's everywhere."

An incomplete list of other Warholian settings: The *West Village's* original Kettle of Fish—a MacDougal joint where Warhol, *Bob Dylan*, and *Edie Sedgwick* collided for a night—is now the *Saigon Shack*, a glass-fronted restaurant that promises both an espresso bar and a Vietnamese kitchen. An epochal den of iniquity, *Max's Kansas City* is now a *Bread & Butter*, an all-purpose deli/buffet with the unintentionally nostalgic motto "Habits To Be Made." *Café Bizarre*, the 106

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West Third Street West Village joint where Warhol famously first saw the [Velvet Underground](#), is an NYU law school building, [D'Agostino Hall](#). The St. Marks 19-23 complex that held the Dom and Open Stage—the setting for the *Exploding Plastic Inevitable*, Warhol's multimedia VU stage show—and later Electric Circus is now chopped up into a Chipotle, a [Supercuts](#), and a Grand Szechuan above a neighborhood market. (The Velvet Underground, by the way, is suing the [Andy Warhol Foundation](#) over licensing its banana to iPod and iPad cases.)

Where the first Silver Factory once stood—231 East 47th Street, between Second and Third avenues—there's now nothing more than an ugly parking ramp. In the summer of 1974, Warhol moved his base of operations from the Decker Building, where he was shot by [Valerie Solanas](#), to 860 Broadway, called "860." ("Factory' had become 'too corny,' he said," writes former secretary [Pat Hackett](#) in the introduction to *The Andy Warhol Diaries*. "And the place became simply 'the office.'") Inhabiting that space now, above a [Petco](#), is brand-licensing agency the [Joester Loria Group](#). Brownies, a health-food restaurant Factory workers frequented and where Warhol often sent assistants to pick up carrot juice or tea for him, is now [Danny Meyer's Union Square Café](#).

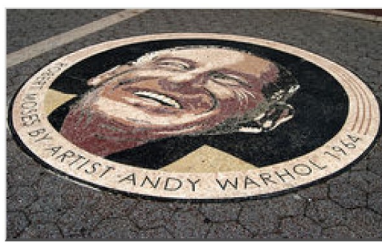
The Pyramid Club still exists.

You would think that Warhol's most famous Manhattan haunts would be preserved—at least to some degree—especially because they're fossils of a fastidiously documented life. Specifically, the Factories. But none of them are. Or the White Factory, the Union Square West sixth floor where, shooting him three times and debilitating him so severely, his body required five and a half hours of emergency surgery, Solanas, a frustrated actress, gunned down Warhol in 1968. A building that looms so large in American-contemporary-cultural-history memory would, it seems reasonable to think, still bear scars of this radical episode. At least, you know, a plaque somewhere in the Decker Building: "ANDY WARHOL WAS SHOT HERE."

You would be wrong. That is provincial thinking, the sort of small-minded "Home of the World's Biggest Ball of String" nostalgia people like Andy Warhol were trying to escape by moving to New



Courtesy The Andy Warhol Foundation/Patricia Bosworth
One of the last photos of Warhol alive, taken on the night of the February 1987 Tunnel fashion show with Miles Davis.



wally's photostream/Wally Gobetz
Warhol's Robert Moses mosaic at Flushing Meadows Corona Park.

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York City. This isn't Gettysburg or, for that matter, *Midnight in Paris*.

Here's what happens instead when you go into the Decker Building: The lobby is locked. But if you stand there long enough and pretend to look in the brightly lit windows of the first-floor Puma store, eventually delivery guys or North Face-clad mouth-breathers will hold the door for you. The sixth floor is where it happened more than 40 years ago, and the space has since been divided into two spots. The halls are narrow, there is cat-puke-colored carpeting, and there are big, thick industrial doors. Inside, it's an old building, landmarked. In the back, you might hear voices and laughing, and if you knock, and knock, and knock . . . no one comes.

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Kittybyrne3

Thanks...enjoyed that..! Don't you hate idiots like Troy below saying things like...Anybody could have done what he did..I am glad I was born with at least a few brain cells...

3 MONTHS AGO

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Troy Lee Turner

oh please-Warhol was a no-talent hack who got lucky. Anybody could have done what he did. A man who got his kicks out of being Andy Warhol-a predecessor to today's braindead culture. For this, he deserves no sympathy

6 MONTHS AGO

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Napoleon Nikolai Zivkovic

Ethnically, Andy Warhol [family name: Warhola] was Carpatho-Rusyn or Ruthenian, a small Slavic nationality scattered throughout East Central Europe, mostly near Poland, Slovakia and Ukraine, as well as former Austro-Hungarian territories. As for religion, though he may have professed to being a "Catholic" his gravestone in



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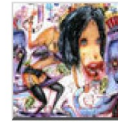
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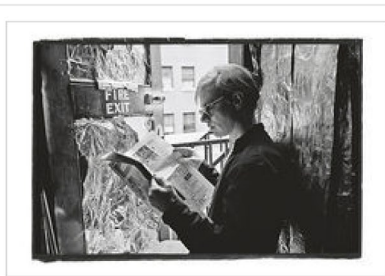
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But then again, what else did you expect? Warhol wanted it this way. "My ideal city would be completely new. No antiques," Warhol proclaimed in *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again)*. "Old buildings are unnatural spaces. Buildings should be built to last for a short time. And if they're older than 10 years, I say get rid of them. I'd build new buildings every 14 years."

Here is an incomplete list of the places you can still find overt references to Andy Warhol in the New York City streetscape: At 57 East 66th Street between Madison and Park avenues, a five-story Federal-style brownstone that was Warhol's home from 1974 to 1987, there is a commemorative plaque by the front door. Outside the Gaslight Café on MacDougal Street, Andy Warhol's face appears in ghostly newsprint; someone has added a monster face. And until May, find the cartoony chrome Rob Pruitt statue of Warhol in Union Square, which has elected a temporary peer of Gandhi.

And there is 57 Great Jones Street, near the corner Bowery, formerly the Andy Warhol Building, where Jean-Michel Basquiat fatally overdosed, upstairs, in August 1988. With death shrines comes the temptation to assign profound meaning to coincidence. But there are incontrovertible facts. One of those is that Basquiat, a dope-shooting vampire, and Madonna, a studied health fiend, had a legendary fling in the fall of 1982, and here, today, directly across the street from Basquiat's loft, there is a poster advertising Madonna's upcoming takeover of Yankee Stadium, almost exactly 30 years later. Another is that there's an impassioned hand-scrrawl to the right of the 57 Great Jones entrance where Basquiat died that reads, rather sweetly, "SAMO LIVES ON." And a third, drawn near a fluorescent row of spray-painted stencils that say "LAST CELEBRITY,"



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Andy Warhol reads the May 6, 1965, edition of The Village Voice at his Silver Factory.

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someone has conveniently added, "WARHOL 4EVA."

That is what Warhol's New York City looks like 25 years later.

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Sasha Patkin

The Andy Monument, Rob Pruitt's chrome Union Square tribute. It's kind of hideous, right?

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