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Warhol: Confections & Confessions

[Affirmation Arts](#)

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Warhol: Confections & Confessions is a collection of black and white photographs from Andy Warhol's late career. Some of them were taken just a few years before his death. The photographs are arranged on the wall in different thematic sets: sickles and hammers, place settings, mothers and children, Warhol with women, food, interiors, and pop art references.

Taken as a whole, the collection has a dark tone. References to Andy Warhol's early career abound via symbols and self-portraits. In one photo, a banana peel sits in a dish on a hotel table cluttered with empty plates. In another photo, a hand holds a bundle of bananas while another pulls a single banana down from the bunch. These reminders of Warhol's iconic album cover for *The Velvet Underground* can be interpreted as self-portraits. As such, the unflattering photographs of the bananas seem cold and a bit self-loathing.

This perspective sheds new light on Warhol's early work. Warhol's screen prints of the Campbell's soup can and of Marilyn Monroe aren't as cuddly as some with a base knowledge of art history may think, they're clinical -- due to their procedural creation and deadpan presentation. A similar detachment is found here in Warhol's photography. His photographs of women's pumps strewn on a table or of ballet slippers lined up on a rack seem fetishistic, but the arbitrary arrangements don't portray the shoes affectionately. The shoes appear to have been passively photographed in the same way the artist would photograph clouds in the sky or the slats of a fence. Thus, the artist's interest in the shoes is open to interpretation.

The still-life photographs in the exhibition are also dark in tone. In one photograph, eggs are spread out on a black cloth. One imagines the artist thinking, "What would happen if I photographed white eggs on a black background," while not necessarily having an emotional connection to the subject matter. This could be interpreted as the artist dabbling because he feels empty or doesn't care, or, as with the shoes, it could have to do with his fascination with certain objects for reasons that aren't known to the viewer.

Although deadpan, Warhol's work doesn't seem negative overall. In fact, beneath the surface of seemingly emotionless works, such as a photo of Ice Cream sundaes lined up in a row, or a photo of Warhol stiffly roller-skating with a sarcastic smile, there seems to be a genuine appreciation for life. Warhol is perhaps not focused on the banal out of a feeling of hopelessness, but rather out of a curiosity for extremely simple things. He uses photography to document his stay in a lavish hotel, or to relish in the absurdity of himself—an expressionless man with gray hair—standing on a parade float and being temporarily cast as a celebrity. His photographs carry the quality of those made by a child who, having been given their first camera, went around photographing things in their house. In this way, 'Warhol: *Confections & Confessions*' is as much a personal photo album as it is a collection of art.

It's fitting that *Shadows*, a photograph of curtains projecting wispy shadows against the wall, were placed in the front room in order to introduce the exhibition. The photos are as mysterious as the artist himself. *Warhol: Confections & Confessions* underscores the fact that Warhol's art can be taken at face value or as a reflection of the artist, but the artist and his work are certainly not separable. Warhol is his art and vice-versa.

