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Art *Warhol in Colorado: John Bonath's 15 Minutes of Fame*

By Susan Froyd Thu., Jan. 20 2011 at 11:01 AM
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John Bonath

When the exhibit *Warhol in Colorado* debuts tonight at DU's Myhren Gallery, one of the show's major components will include photos taken of Warhol by Colorado photographers in the early '80s, when the pop artist visited Fort Collins amid much hoopla for a major exhibition of his works, assembled by noted collectors Jon and Kimiko Powers, at the Colorado State University campus. John Bonath, then an art professor at CSU, is one of them, and here are some of his stories.

"I met Warhol in New York City at the Factory. He was scheduled to come to Colorado, and I was also the art director for *Poudre Magazine* and wanted to do an article on him. When I got to New York, I had forgotten his phone number, and although I had the date, I had no way to call him. So, I went to a phone booth and opened up the phone book and looked him up. There was a 'Warhol, Andy' in there, if you can believe it. I just called it up, and Andy Warhol picks up phone and says 'Hello?'

"I went and met with him, and it was very interesting. I also photographed him. He had no qualms about people photographing him, the more the better. Then he had a phone call while we talking, and it was Liza Minnelli and Bianca Jagger. He asked me, 'Do you mind if I take this call?' I photographed him talking on the phone. In the picture, he's got the handset against his ear, and the phone cord is a major part of the composition.

"I really don't think anybody existed on the planet or in the whole world -- I never met anyone remotely similar. He was really childlike, naive in demeanor, soft focus, very gentle. He was sweet, such a sweet person. It was like he would never step on an ant or hit a mosquito. There was also a real kind of awe in his look and in everything else. When he'd talk to me, he'd be looking right at me, and it felt like he was looking right through me, which went along with his demeanor. He wouldn't disappoint you as looking like you'd expect, with that straw-like hair and pasty complexion. That was who he was.



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