

Eric Firestone Gallery salutes Warhol era

Collection including 28 photographers who documented Warhol and his Factory opens Saturday

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While the formidable output of paintings and screenprints are a crucial legacy of Andy Warhol's contribution to 20th century art, the atmosphere in which the art was made is laminated to the works themselves. For Warhol and his compadres, the line between art and life was never clearly defined.

On Saturday, the Eric Firestone Gallery opens "Warhol: From Dylan to Duchamp," its exhibition of photos documenting the Factory era, with a reception that promises to deliver much more than photos on the walls.

Firestone enlisted the help of photographer and photo editor Eric Kroll to curate this collection, arguably the most comprehensive gathering of photographic and filmic documentation of Warhol and the factory era.

The Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh has loaned Firestone the Warhol "Screen Tests" of both Bob Dylan and Marcel Duchamp. They will screen on a loop at the gallery. These two artists inspired Warhol as much as they did Firestone's title for the exhibition, and the recent addition of the films are quite a coup for the Tucson gallery.

"This whole show's been pretty guerrilla. We put together a show in a few months that would normally take years. It's a perfect storm of material coming together," says Firestone.

Much of the work is the previously unseen body of Warhol-related work by Tucson photographer Bob Broder. Broder shot black-and-whites of the Warhol clan when they arrived in Tucson to film the oddly compelling, western-themed sex romp, "Lonesome Cowboys," in 1968.

Broder's work is sure to appeal not just to Warhol fans, but to the nostalgic Tucsonan. Tucson in 1968 is, to be sure, a different place to look at from the contemporary landscape. Broder, then

the chief photographer at the University of Arizona, describes the experience of documenting Warhol:

"I haven't looked at those negatives in over 40 years. I was a stringer for The Arizona Republic then. I drove my '65 Mustang with the white, vinyl top to the Old Tucson set. It was a non-union production, so I didn't get booted out...besides, I knew the sheriff. I remember [Warhol] didn't say much. And he had high heels. He didn't bother me, and I didn't bother him."

Presented as a companion piece to the Tucson Warhol footage is a continuous screening of "Way Out West," a silent documentary of the filming of "Lonesome Cowboys" at Old Tucson. The film was directed by late Tucson artist Charles Littler. A limited DVD edition of 100 copies of the film will be available for sale at the gallery for \$25.

Warhol's chauffeur during his Tucson stay, Martin Holt, also made a documentary of the visit, "The Way the Western Was Done." The film, with sound and a music score, includes, according to Firestone, "some great, in-your-face shots of Warhol and company frolicking at Rancho Linda Vista. Some amazing footage."

But the local output is just the beginning of this comprehensive exhibition. Kroll and Firestone have arranged a significant loan from the Beth Rudin De Woody Collection, as well as gathering photos from various other places to create a never-before-seen vision of Warhol's world.

The photographers of the era, many of which are household names in the art world, include Annie Leibovitz, Robert Mapplethorpe, Helmut Newton, Cecil Beaton, actor Dennis Hopper, and Factory regulars Billy Name (who designed the actual Factory space), recently-deceased Nat Finkelstein, and poet and Warhol historian Gerard Malanga.

The closing shot of the accompanying exhibition catalog, also for sale at the gallery (Firestone's own press is producing an edition of 1000), is of Bob Dylan walking to his station wagon, Warhol watching from his 47th St. Factory window. Strapped to the roof of Dylan's car is one of Warhol's giant prints of Elvis Presley. Photographer Nat Finkelstein captures an era, a city, and a movement with a single shutter's click.

The opening reception also promises to be quite a scene, with various Tucsonans inhabiting the personae of Warhol, Malanga, Edie Sedgwick and others. This art party should go well into the night, what with so much to see in Firestone's space.