the warhol:

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re-mix, re-envision: commissioning songs for andy warhol's *screen tests*

The central aspect of The Andy Warhol Museum's mission is to inspire audiences by using our collection to create understanding and appreciation of the art and life of Andy Warhol. One of the ways in which we try to achieve this is by re-contextualizing Warhol's work in ways that resonate in contemporary culture. To illuminate the unwavering relevancy of an artist who always had an eye on the high/low crossroads and who created work that could be experienced equally well in a gallery, a cinema or a rock show, it seemed appropriate to use his films as a catalyst for a new performance commission.

Among Warhol's films, the *Screen Tests* seem to be intentioned for multiple presentation contexts. Not only were they shown at his studio, the Factory, and as short subjects in avant-garde screenings, but these silent, four-minute, film portraits were a primary visual component of Warhol's multi-media happenings *Andy Warhol Uptight* (1966) and the *Exploding Plastic Inevitable* (1967). These shows, featuring live performances by the Velvet Underground and Nico, provide a precedent and historic basis for this film/performance initiative.

The first endeavor in commissioning a musician to compose, arrange, and perform songs for the films was to somehow make a selection from among the almost 300 *Screen Tests* that have been preserved. Warhol's conceptual sub-series *Thirteen Most Beautiful Women* and *Thirteen Most Beautiful Boys* presented a rather convenient and intriguing model for the structure of the project. Thirteen four-minute *Screen Test*s run about an hour, a fitting length for a live music set and thirteen is also an appropriate number of songs for a full-length record. Also, given that the four-minute length is typical of a standard pop song, we imagined that the music could involve a narrative songwriting

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approach with lyrics whose imagery could either tangentially evoke the "essence" of the filmed subject, particularly for the lesser known subjects, or provide a more direct homage.

Dean Wareham and Britta Phillips are uniquely appropriate for this project on many levels, including the overall "dream pop" sensibility of their former indie-pop band, Luna, known for its combination of both churning and languid rhythms, entrancingly melodic guitar hooks, and clever and wistful lyrics, as well as the often referenced Velvet Underground influence in their music. In addition, Wareham and Phillips have a keen interest in 1960s Italian and French New Wave cinema and have created scores for contemporary films, such as Noah Baumbach's *The Squid & the Whale* and *Clean* by Olivier Assayas. Their songs provide not only a new context for experiencing Warhol's films, but also a juxtaposition that may reveal new or previously hidden qualities in these engaging film portraits.

It has been an absolute pleasure developing this project with Dean & Britta and to see a performance tour come to fruition. This DVD, which allows the project, the films, and the songs to reach a much larger audience, is thoroughly exciting and gratifying.

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Special Thanks…
Paul Organisak, VP of Programming at The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, and The Pittsburgh International Festival of Firsts for co-commissioning the performance of *13 Most Beautiful: Songs for Andy Warhol's Screen Tests*

Rob Long and Doug McDermott from Clear Story Creative for the production design of the performance of *13 Most Beautiful: Songs for Andy Warhol's Screen Tests*.

Gary Hustwit of Plexi Productions for his thoughtful guidance through our first foray into DVD product**ion.**

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