

# the warhol:

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## Contact(s)

Gina Frey

T 412.237.8339

E [freyg@warhol.org](mailto:freyg@warhol.org)

Colleen Russell Criste

T 412.237.8338

E [cristec@warhol.org](mailto:cristec@warhol.org)



Aletha Martin, Untitled, c.1950



S. Rushakoff, Untitled, 1946

## The Andy Warhol Museum

117 Sandusky Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15212-5890

T 412.237.8300

F 412.237.8340

W [www.warhol.org](http://www.warhol.org)

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## THE ANDY WARHOL MUSEUM ANNOUNCES SUMMER EXHIBITION OF DIANE KEATON'S COLLECTION OF CLOWN PAINTINGS

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(Pittsburgh, PA) . . . June 23, 2003... The Andy Warhol Museum announces that it will present, *Clown Paintings: From the Collection of Diane Keaton and Others*, August 24 through October 26, 2003. The exhibition includes more than 40 amateur clown paintings culled from the collections of actress Diane Keaton and gallery-owner and collector Robert Berman. *Clown Paintings* is the final exhibition to open during “Summer of Andy”—The Warhol’s summer-long presentation of special exhibitions and programs in celebration of Andy Warhol’s 75<sup>th</sup> birthday. An opening event for the exhibition will be held at the Museum on Saturday, August 23.

On view in the Museum’s 4<sup>th</sup> floor gallery, *Clown Paintings* features dozens of stark white faces, red down-turned mouths and outlined eyes. A caricature of the human condition, the iconic image of the clown provokes both positive and negative responses. For some, the mere presence of a clown conjures up childhood memories and inexplicable uneasiness. But for Diane Keaton, the painted image of the clown—in all its kitsch and banality, conjures a collecting passion.

Andy Warhol’s own passion for collecting included more than 300 ceramic cookie jars, most of which he picked up at flea markets and garage sales. Clearly kitsch and yet somehow appealing for their vernacular and nostalgic charm, the cookie jars were among Warhol’s prized possessions. Keaton was struck by a similar allure one day while scouring through the Pasadena Rose Bowl Swap Meet in southern California. There, she came across an amateur painting of a circus clown and had what she describes as “an epiphany.” The discovery led to a new passion for these paintings and the outrageous subjects they depict. By turns heartfelt and humorous, frightening and bizarre, these paintings obsessed Keaton, who found herself moved by their mute eloquence and fascinated by their kitschy bad taste. Keaton is a well-known collector of kitsch, and *Clown Paintings* includes just a few dozen works from her collection of more than 300 paintings.

Robert Berman, owner of the Robert Berman Gallery, has amassed more than 1,000 clown paintings over the past 10 years. He thought he was alone in his passion, until a few years ago, when paintings he usually picked up at flea markets for \$25 began going for \$125. Recognizing the profit potential of collector competition, sellers of clown paintings began telling Berman, “If you don’t buy it, Diane Keaton will.” It appeared that Berman no longer had the corner on the market. In 2002, Berman and Keaton met and organized an exhibition of their collections at Berman’s Santa Monica, California gallery, in hopes of bringing a little respect to the clown painting

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genre. Although repeatedly placed outside the realm of high art by the serious art word, Keaton and Berman believe clown paintings represent an artistic purity, passion, and ridiculousness, that even some museum pieces fail to invoke.

The collections of Keaton and Berman are also featured in Keaton's new book, *Clown Paintings*. On sale in The Warhol store throughout the exhibition, the book includes essays by America's preeminent comics, from Jerry Lewis to Phyllis Diller.

The Andy Warhol Museum receives state arts funding support through a grant from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, a state agency funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency. The 2003 exhibition program has been supported, in part, by The Juliet Lea Hillman Simonds Foundation, Inc.

Located in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the place of Andy Warhol's birth, The Warhol is one of the most comprehensive single-artist museums in the world. The Andy Warhol Museum is one of the four Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh. Additional information about The Warhol is available at [www.warhol.org](http://www.warhol.org).

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**Phone: 412.237.8300**  
**Hours: Tues, Wed, Thurs, Sat, and Sun 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.**  
**Fri, 10 a.m. - 10 p.m.**  
**Mon closed**  
**Admission: Members - free**  
**Good Fridays - 5-10 p.m.**  
**Adults - \$8, Sr. Citizens - \$7, Children/Students - \$4**  
**The Warhol Store/The Warhol Café – free**