

the warhol:

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THE ANDY WARHOL MUSEUM PRESENTS RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBITION OF THE WORK OF GENERAL IDEA

(Pittsburgh, PA) . . . August 29, 2005...The Andy Warhol Museum will present the retrospective exhibition, *General Idea Editions: 1967-1995*, October 8 through December 31, 2005. Organized by the Blackwood Gallery at the University of Toronto at Mississauga and curated by Barbara Fischer, the internationally-touring exhibition features more than 200 mass produced objects — including prints, postcards, posters, photo-based projects, multiples, serial publications, flags, and crests — produced from 1967 to 1995 by Canadian-based art collective General Idea. The Warhol will be the only East Coast U.S. venue to host the exhibition.

Exclusively at The Warhol, the exhibition will be doubled in size to include three of the group's major installations and many unique works, selected by The Warhol's John Smith, and General Idea's AA Bronson, to illuminate the group's use of mass-produced and multiple elements.

“Andy Warhol was a significant influence on General Idea, and seeing this important survey of their work in the context of The Warhol will be a rich and resonant experience,” says John Smith, Assistant Director for Collections and Research at The Warhol. “The complexity and continuing relevancy of General Idea's work allows for a multitude of topical discussions. Art and activism, the nature of artistic collaboration, and questions of originality and authenticity in contemporary art are just a few of the issues we will explore with this exhibition.”

General Idea was formed by Jorge Zontal, Felix Partz and AA Bronson in 1969 in Toronto and came to international attention for their incisive interventions into the media environment of the late 1960s and early 1970s. As Bronson explains in the catalogue *General Idea Editions 1967-1995*, the collective “emerged in the aftermath of the Paris riots, from the detritus of hippie communes, underground newspapers, radical education, Happenings, love-ins, Marshall McLuhan, and the International Situationists. We believed in free economy, in the abolition of copyright, and in a grassroots horizontal structure that prefigured the Internet.”

Pioneers of media-based practices, General Idea's work involved everyday promotional culture (postcards, press releases, magazines) and evolved into high gloss advertising (posters, billboards, television specials). General Idea editions form a discourse that established the group's broader themes: the role of the media, the dissemination of marginalized identities, and the devaluation of originality and artistic genius.



General Idea, *Playing Doctor*, 1992

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Masters of appropriation, General Idea bent popular icons to their own needs, transforming bastions of Americana such as *LIFE Magazine* and beauty pageants into vehicles for subverting the culture's reigning values.

In 1987, General Idea realized one of its most famous images, the *AIDS* logo, appropriated from the Pop artist Robert Indiana's famous "Love" painting from 1966. The resulting project was General Idea's most intensive media campaign. In the height of the AIDS epidemic, the image was disseminated by the group and eventually others on a massive scale, and became an international emblem that brought home to the general public a crisis from which many had remained detached. In the form of paintings, billboards, wallpaper, posters, stamps, and magazine covers, the AIDS logo became the means to counter the silence surrounding the disease, which eventually ended the General Idea collaboration when it took the lives of Jorge Zontal and Felix Partz in 1994.

In addition to the works in *General Idea Edition: 1967-1995*, The Warhol will present three major installation works by General Idea. *One Day of AZT* (1991) and *One Year of AZT* (1991.) were based on the daily dose of AZT taken by people living with AIDS at the time. Five gigantic pills, each large enough to hold a body, and 1,825 oversized pills, assembled like a calendar, describe life in an era of pharmaceuticals, not only for those suffering from AIDS, but for the elderly and the chronically ill in this consumer culture.

Mondo Cane Kama Sutra is a series of 10 oversized canvases, day-glo geometric self-portraits that describe the life of the artists as a metaphorical coupling of poodle triplets. This major installation has not been exhibited since 1985, when it was featured at the Kunsthalle Basel (Switzerland), the van Abbemuseum Eindhoven (Netherlands), and the Art Gallery of Ontario (Toronto).

General Idea's work remains acutely relevant, not only as a model for collaboration, but also as an articulation of queer identity and an imaginative formation of alternative community. In connection with the exhibition, The Warhol will present education programs that focus on collaborations with local artists and organizations and explore contemporary notions of social activism.

A solo project by AA Bronson will be presented in conjunction with the exhibition.

This exhibition and related programs are presented in remembrance of the late Dr. Samuel W. Golden. *General Idea Editions: 1967-1995* has received generous financial assistance from the Ontario Arts Council, the Canada Council for the Arts, the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and the support of Foreign Affairs Canada. The exhibition is organized and circulated by the Blackwood Gallery, University of Toronto at Mississauga.

The 2005 exhibition program has been supported, in part, by The Juliet Lea Hillman Simonds Foundation, Inc. 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.

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.

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**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., Half-price Museum admission
Adults - \$10, Sr. Citizens - \$7, Children/Students - \$6
The Warhol Store/The Warhol Café – free**