

Art & Activities / Time Capsule 21 Activity: A Day in the Life of Warhol



Overview:

What can you learn about someone's personality, interests, place in culture and in history through the objects they collect? This lesson begins to explore those questions in a simple activity using an archive on the Internet of one of Andy Warhol's 600+ Time Capsules. Students explore the contents of Time Capsules 21, selecting objects to interpret and then write about the artist. This lesson encourages creative writing as well as research and analysis.

Grades: 6-12

Subjects: English, Language Arts, Creative Writing, History, Social Studies, Art, Computer

Pennsylvania State Standards:

Arts and Humanities:

9.2.D Analyze a work of art from its historical and cultural perspective

Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening:

1.4.8 A Write short-stories, poems and plays

History:

8.1.9 B Analyze and interpret historical sources.

Objectives:

- Students will identify objects within a collection
- Students will compose fictional stories based upon objects
- Students will present narratives orally
- Students will assess the information revealed by objects in both historical and fictional contexts

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Andy Warhol

Time Capsule 13, 1967-1968

cardboard with packing tape and felt-tip ink and graphite inscriptions

11 1/8 x 18 3/8 x 14 in. (28.3 x 46.7 x 35.6 cm.)

The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh

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About the Art:

The Time Capsules are Warhol's largest collecting project; in them, he saved source material for his work and an enormous record of his daily life. Warhol started his Time Capsules in 1974 after relocating his studio. He recognized that cardboard boxes used in the move were an efficient method for dealing with all of his "stuff." Warhol selected items from the daily flood of correspondence, magazines, newspapers, gifts, photographs, business records, and material that passed through his hands to put in an open cardboard box by his desk. Once the box was full he sealed it with tape, marked it with a date and/or title, and put it in his archive. En masse, this material provides a unique view into Warhol's private world, as well as a broad cultural backdrop illustrating the social and artistic scene during his lifetime. From the early '70s, until his death in 1987, Warhol created 612 finished Time Capsules.

Andy Warhol's Time Capsules were almost completely unknown until his death in 1987. Although various studio assistants frequently handled the boxes over the years, few people recognized the enormous mass of material as anything other than "Andy's stuff." With the opening of The Andy Warhol Museum in 1994, the Time Capsules became accessible to curators, scholars, and the general public, revealing new and important information about Warhol's life and expanding the public's understanding of his work and practice.

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Points of View:

Took a few time capsule boxes to the office. They are fun—when you go through them there are things you really don't want to give up. Some day I'll sell them for \$4,000 or \$5,000 apiece. I used to think \$100, but now I think that's my new price.

Andy Warhol, *The Warhol Diaries*, entry on Tuesday, September 30, 1986, p. 762

I have spent many days in the museum's archive, going page by page through the anatomized "Time Capsules," and I have thereby unearthed countless surprising and revelatory facts about Warhol's process, his aesthetic development, and the cultural movement that surrounded him and was partly his brainchild. In the "Time Capsules" I have discovered an "idea notebook" of Warhol's, in his own hand, detailing plans for conceptual artworks that never reached fruition. I have discovered personal correspondence from several of his collaborators and associates, including Gerard Malanga, Viva, Troy Donahue, and Irving Blum. I have found rare photographs, and most importantly, I have discovered period pieces such as movie magazines, news magazines, physique magazines, hospital brochures, ticket stubs—ephemera that usually escapes the historian's grasp, but that Warhol systematically saved. I believe that the contents of the "Time Capsules" are of interest not only to students of Warhol's artwork, but to any scholar investigating the cultural history of the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Indeed, these caches may turn out to be the most idiosyncratic repositories of American counter-cultural memory extant.

Wayne Koestenbaum, writer and poet, "Point of View," created for One Stop Warhol Shop, web project

Andy Warhol's "Time Capsules" represent the revenge of the historical subject. Imagine that you're researching a biography, attempting to distill some essence of everyday life and times. And Warhol gives you 610 boxes of raw material to work from. It's really overwhelming, an absurd amount, all unsorted. And yet, there are treasures to be found. A tiny, rare silkscreened canvas, one of the first Andy ever made as a contemporary artist, was unearthed in a box filled with unopened junk mail, magazines, Velvet Underground records, and a map to a party.

Ingrid Schaffner, writer and independent curator, "Point of View," created for One Stop Warhol Shop, web project

Andy Warhol possessed both too much and too little. In his capacity to have done those things equally, he vitally characterizes how we engage with the profusion of objects made possible by life in industrial societies. On the one hand, by the time of his premature death his house had become impassible because of the accumulated bulk of his art, furniture, tchotchkes, and personal effects, and the idea of his having to maintain what he called "time capsules" would be perfectly reasonable to anyone in the possession of that most modern of inventions, the storage unit... His collections stagger us as we try to make sense of their meanings, and we might begin to think that he was simply a pack-rat unable to discard the mundane things he encountered in his daily life: he had too much. Simultaneously, as we begin to sort through the belongings that he gathered around him, we are tempted to wonder what he didn't hold onto and whether we might discover the lost fragment (such as the precious discarded Rosebud of *Citizen Kane*) through which one life might be satisfyingly explained. No collection is ever complete and thus begs for those things that it fails to include: the collection always wants more. In short, Warhol's collections could never be large enough to explain his life and art.

Matthew Tinkcom, "Andy Warhol and Collecting: Kitsch and the Inexpensive," essay in *Possession Obsession* exhibition catalogue, The Andy Warhol Museum, 2002, p. 50

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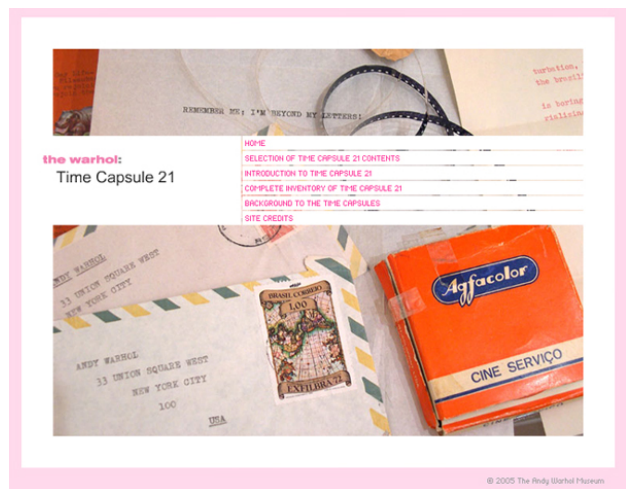
Discussion Questions:

1. Why do people collect and save objects?
2. What can you find out about someone through his or her collections? What could someone find out about you if they opened your locker at school or your closet at home?
3. Andy Warhol created over 600 Time Capsules over about 20 years. What do you think researchers will be able to know about Warhol and his life after all of these boxes are opened?
4. What will they know about American culture?

Activity: Explore Time Capsule 21

Materials:

Activity Handout (page 5 of this PDF)
Pencils
Computer with Internet Connection
Flashplayer Downloaded for site
Timecapsule 21 website:
www.warhol.org/tc21/



Procedure:

1. Explore the website Time Capsule 21.
2. Choose 3 to 5 items from Time Capsule 21.
3. Use the Activity Handout to identify your objects.
4. Write a brief description of each item and what it reveals about Andy Warhol.
5. Create a fictional story about one day in Andy Warhol's life incorporating your chosen objects as important elements within the narrative. Use your imagination and be creative!
6. Present your narrative to the class.
7. Discuss how objects reveal information about people, place and cultures.

Handout: Time Capsule 21

Andy Warhol		Yourself	
Identify (draw or describe) three items from TC21	Explain what these three items reveal about Andy Warhol	Identify (draw or describe) three items from your own life.	Explain what these three items reveal about you



Andy Warhol

Time Capsule 13, 1967-1968

cardboard with packing tape and felt-tip ink and graphite inscriptions

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Andy Warhol
 Time Capsule 44, 1890-1973
 cardboard with packing tape and felt-tip ink and graphite inscriptions
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