



Marilyn Thirty-five Times:

Uncovering a Missing Link in Andy Warhol's Oeuvre

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The great artists generally invent the technique or style for which they are known over a period of time. Early works often provide an evolutionary, developmental record leading to a mature style. But the first examples of the silkscreen and acrylic on canvas format that dominate Andy Warhol's paintings first appeared fully developed; there are no extant surviving examples of preliminary or experimental stages. The subject painting, *Marilyn Thirty-five Times*, that has recently come to light, may indeed be Warhol's first silkscreen and acrylic on canvas.

Armed with a clear vision, Warhol's metamorphosis from illustrator to fine artist began in 1962. Art in its traditional forms is time and labor intensive. Warhol proceeded to invent his way around this obstacle with ingenuity and taste. Both Warhol and Rauschenberg used the silkscreen method of image production. Warhol wanted to make color silkscreen images. In August 1962, he invented the double print method of producing silkscreen images tinted with underlying acrylic paint, ingeniously printing a preliminary image to guide the registration of the underlying colors. *The Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné* confirms that Warhol used this process until the arrival of his assistant, Gerard Malanga, in 1963, when he learned to replace the first impression with a pencil outline. Gerard describes this new approach to the silkscreen process in his memoirs:

"I'd put the tracing paper on top of the positive acetate of the original image and trace the shapes, the hair, the eyes, the eyebrows and the lips. The outlines were then transferred onto the canvas by pressing along the acetate's image, and then I'd take masking tape and isolate areas or shapes based on those traced outlines. Andy and I would paint in by hand with a brush the different colors that we wanted with a water-based Liquitex. Once the paint had dried, I'd remove the tape from the shape or area. In this way, when I painted in the next area it would fill in almost seamlessly. The application was never 100% perfect. In the final step, we'd lay the screen down on the canvas, trying to line up the registration marks. I would then pour the oil-based black ink along one side of the screen's wooden 2 x 4 frame and push the ink across the nylon mesh surface with a squeegee. Andy would grab the squeegee coming to him and continue the process of pushing the ink through the screen from his end. We'd lift the screen and

I'd swing it away from the canvas and then splash Varnolene onto the screen surface and begin rubbing it with paper towels in a circular motion. If this was not done immediately, the remaining ink would cake up and clog the pores. The actual silkscreen impression took no more than a minute to create the final image on the canvas."

This essay asserts that *Marilyn Thirty-five Times* is Warhol's first known color acrylic silkscreen painting. The invention of silkscreen painting by Warhol and Rauschenberg was the subject of an exhibition at the 2017 Venice Biennale, presented by the Faurischou Foundation. The catalogue of the exhibition cites *Marilyn Thirty-five Times* as Warhol's initial effort in this technique. *The Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné* sets out a chronological reconstruction of the sequence of works, beginning in mid-1962, that saw a series of Warhol's inventions in the silkscreen process; these led to the establishment of a standard production method for a silkscreen acrylic painting on canvas that constituted Warhol's fine art oeuvre.

As is typical of inventions, these works are the unexpected result of the combination of known processes. The basis of Warhol's techniques is children's art methods---coloring books, stencils, rubber stamps, and painting by numbers. His choice of subjects includes everyday objects and dramatic events. Accidental inaccuracies become the overwhelming aesthetic criterion. Neatness no longer counts. The inevitable product of the rubber stamp is the multiple image. Warhol's early trial techniques include rubber stamp images of Troy Donahue. Turning his back on the media of the illustrator, Warhol understood the definition of "fine art" as a painting on canvas. The early paintings of Warhol include: *Baseball*, two *Natalies*, several *Warren Beattys*, *Troy Donahues*, and the *Marilyn Monroes* from August 1962. The extant *Troys* and *Marilyns* introduce color in the final stage in the development of Warhol's primary technique, the double print color sandwich described here. A preliminary black ink impression of the silkscreen photo image serves as coloring-book-type outline for the fields of color. Soon dry, parts of the image are painted over in around five monochromatic patches for the face, hair, lips, and eye shadow. These are laid on hastily, overlapping the outlines. A second impression neatly outlines the color fields. When the colors dry, the same silkscreen is squeegeed once more, neatly outlining the color sandwiched between the two prints. The purpose of the scarcely visible first print is to correctly register the color patches relative to the final print. The texture of this

first print mingles with that of the final print, and of the dot pattern of the original photo print. The overlapping of images adds to the encoded thicket of texture that comprises the picture. The “secret” of the double print technique is revealed in two unfinished canvases shown in *The Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné*: the unfinished *Silver Liz*, (catalogue no. 158, partially painted 1963) and *Two Marilyn*s (catalogue no. 277, August–September 1962). In both of these paintings the second print was not added, leaving visible the color zones for the face, hair, lips, eye shadow, and dress over the black preprint. These five color zones are universal in Warhol’s color portraits.

A Warhol painting may be seen as a coloring book and a stencil. The first print is the image outline. Coloring necessitated overlapping the outline, rather than staying within it. *Forty-nine Elvises* could be colored in minutes. The second impression is a stencil that restores the outlines of the image. The study of the patterns produced by the texture of the silkscreen process can serve as a tool in the understanding of Warhol’s work. By closely observing this double print technique it is possible to discern the forms of the underlying color fields; this is an indication of the decision as to the degree of purposeful extreme randomness, as in *Baseball*, or the unyielding order of the *Green Stamps*. How closely packed are the images? And in their multiplicity, how similar are they to each other? The solution to this puzzle is Warhol’s aesthetic. In a Christie’s video one of Warhol’s silkscreen print makers, Alexander Heinrici, says that Warhol, stunned by the precision of the silkscreen prints, said, “Once in a while you have to make mistakes so it looks like a Warhol.”

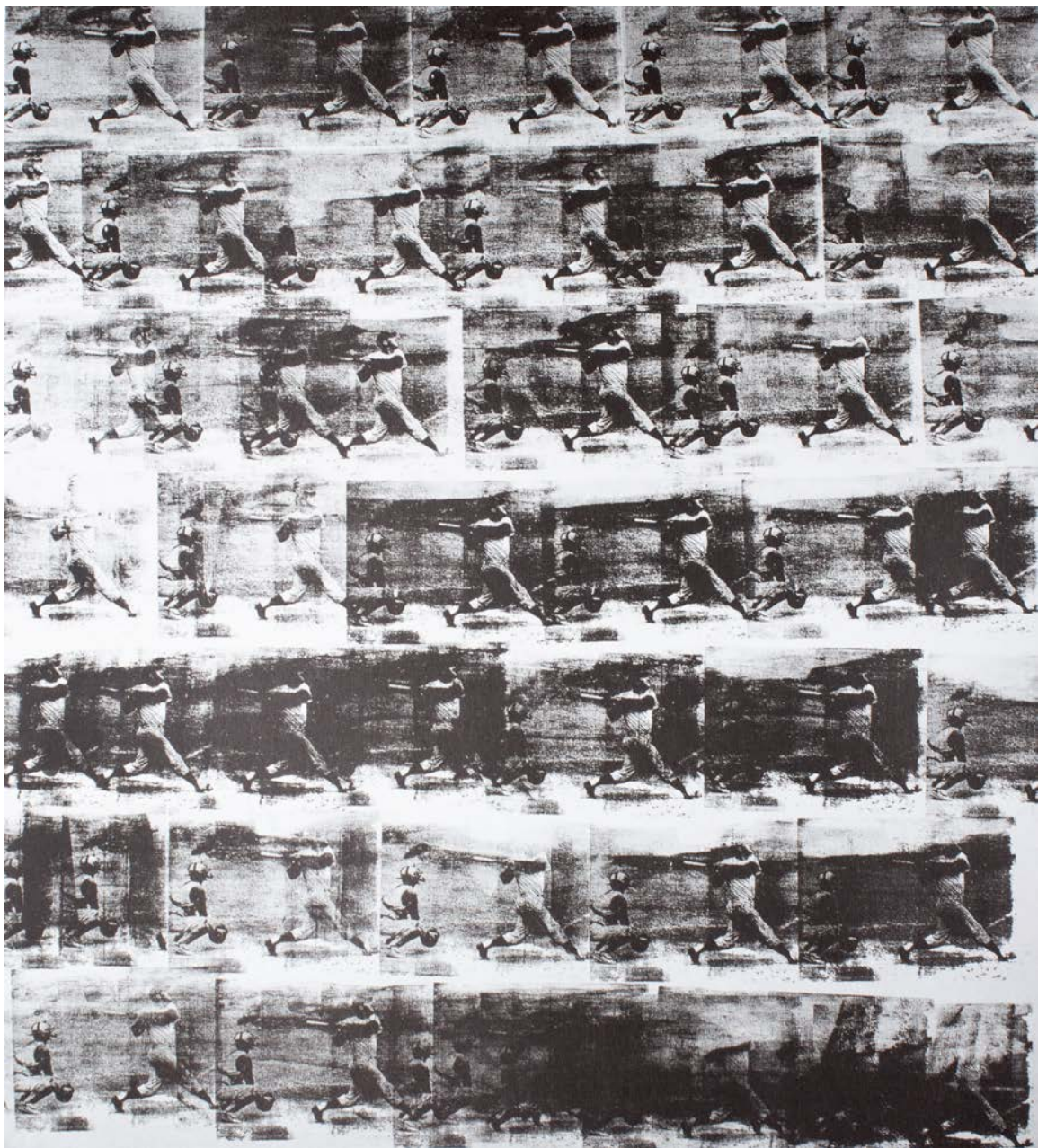
The only evidence of the order in which these early paintings were made is Warhol’s later statement calling *Baseball* his first. The placement in the *Catalogue Raisonné* of the *Troys* as the first color paintings, followed by the *Marilyns*, is not an implausible proposition. There is no record of earlier experiments in the use of color upon the black and white *Natalies* or *Warren Beattys*. The *Troys* and *Marilyns* appear in bright colors in the fully developed double print technique. The Tate’s *Marilyn Diptych* presents the then recently deceased star in vibrant color in neat rows, and in grim black and white in overlapping disorder. The painting is known to be an assemblage of two works made at different times. Their union is the Rosetta Stone of Andy Warhol’s painting method and possibly an allegory of whether neatness counts.

Marilyn Thirty-five Times is a double print acrylic on canvas based uniquely on a photo by Bert Stern, while all other known *Marilyns* are based on a publicity photo. At first glance the painting appears to be black and white. Muted tones of violet and yellow were applied over her mouth, eye shadow, and hair, mixed on the canvas in hasty painterly strokes rather than large fields as in all subsequent work. That violet and yellow makes grey is fundamental. This is the only *Marilyn* where the face has not been painted. It may be plausibly concluded that this *Marilyn* preceded the other color silkscreen paintings. The style of the random overlapping of the images is identical to the idiosyncratic style of other early overlapping multiple images. One may imagine Warhol's initial reaction to Marilyn Monroe's death is suggested by the appropriately lugubrious tones; later he would generally banish emotional content, even in depicting the most anxious events, consistent with Warhol's noted reluctance to mourn.

Experts, including SAFA (Scientific Analysis of Fine Art LLC), have ascertained that it is highly improbable that this picture could have been produced anywhere but in the studio of Andy Warhol in the absence of any facility at the time capable of this complex double print technique in August 1962 (Faurichou catalogue, 2017). The technique of installing color between two impressions, with the signature random overlapping Warhol used in 1962, had been developed from the previously single impression paintings: *Baseball*, *Natalie*, and *Warren Beatty*. The painting is stylistically arch-typical of the Warhol 1962 style and bears no anomalies inconsistent with its authenticity. The painting is not signed. It bears a faint lead pencil inscription "B-L B---O, 2/1970" on the reverse lower right, with stretcher dimension numbers in the same hand.

Below is a reconstruction of images from *The Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné* that suggests a chronology leading to the development of the double print technique Warhol used widely. The *Marilyn Thirty-five Times* is inserted in a plausible hypothetical position. There may well be other undiscovered works that would fill out his developmental, chronological puzzle.

- Fig. 1 --- *Baseball*, 1962 (no. 231), B&W
- Fig. 2 --- *Natalie*, 1962 (nos. 232), B&W
- Fig. 3 --- *Natalie*, 1962 (no. 233), B&W
- Fig. 4 --- *Warren Beatty*, 1962 (no. 234), B&W
- Fig. 5 --- ***Marilyn Thirty-five Times***, 1962, Color
- Fig. 6 --- *Troy Donahue*, 1962 (no. 238), Color
- Fig. 7 --- *Troy Donahue*, 1962 (no. 239), Color
- Fig. 8 --- *Marilyn*, 1962 (no. 262), Color
- Fig. 9 --- *Silver Liz*, 1962 (no. 158), Color
- Fig. 10 --- *Two Marilyn*s, 1962 (no. 277), Color
- Fig. 11 --- ***Marilyn Thirty-five Times*** -- Close-up images (SAFA)
- Fig. 12 --- ***Marilyn Thirty-five Times*** -- Close-up images (SAFA)



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Fig. 1



@The Andy Warhol Museum

Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Figure 17. In the regions shown here, the yellow paint is clearly below the uppermost black silkscreen.



Figure 18. Overview of hand-applied polychrome paint.

Fig. 11



Figure 19. The yellow paint on the left is sandwiched between the two black silkscreens.

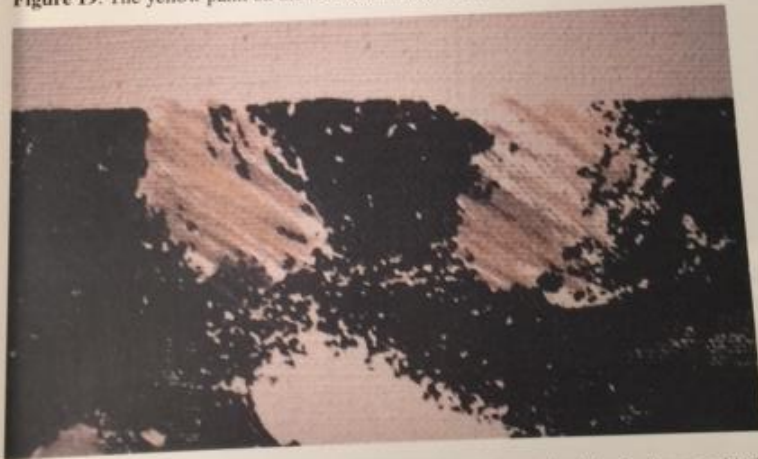


Figure 20. Similarly to Figure 19, in this image the yellow paint is both above and below the two black silkscreens.

Fig. 12