



PICTURE YOURSELF

Selfies, Cellphones, and the Digital Age



THE COLLEGE OF WOOSTER ART MUSEUM

EBERT ART CENTER / 1220 BEALL AVENUE / WOOSTER, OHIO 44691-2363



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February 2–April 10, 2016

THE COLLEGE OF WOOSTER ART MUSEUM

Sussel Gallery

Burton D. Morgan Gallery

Daniel Arnold

Sean Fader

Luis Flores

Rollin Leonard

Farideh Sakhaeifar

Andy Warhol

The six artists in PICTURE YOURSELF are concerned with constructions of the self in an era of mass consumerism, rapid technological advancements, urban chaos, vast inequalities, online dating, shifting norms in gender and sexuality, and communities beyond the borders of our physical worlds. Their works ask us to rethink selfies as something other than vanity projects for public presentation. Instead, created with refracted, distorted, and manipulated technologies, these artists shed light on how we perform the self in and for a multivariable world.

Andy Warhol’s iconic self-portraits (1963–1986) are prescient images of self performance that play with notions of gender, sexuality, and youth. Warhol’s unapologetic expressions are meant to push against our ideas of propriety—whether in lipstick or a fright wig—and reconsider our ideas of what is or is not acceptable or respectable. Like Warhol who casts himself as the subject for analysis, Luis Flores examines the relationship between masculinity and performance in the knitted, life size version of himself angling an iPhone toward his face. On the wall in front of the figure, a red neon sign reads, *Whatever You Want It To Be*, literally illuminating the desire to satiate an audience.

While Warhol and Flores foreground the masculine self, Daniel Arnold and Farideh Sakhaeifar appear in their photographs subtly, almost ghostly; the self is present in the faces of strangers. Shot on an iPhone, Arnold’s subway photos capture subway riders immersed in their own worlds. He appears only as shadow or reflection against tired faces or wide-eyed children. Sakhaeifar’s *Workers Are Taking Photographs* is a series dedicated to Iranian men working in construction sites or grocery, wood, and metal shops. She enters these male-dominated spaces and asks them to photograph themselves by saying, “hold the cable and release when ready.” Behind them, feminine hands hold a white backdrop. Like Arnold, Sakhaeifar controls the image but only appears fleetingly, seeking instead to illuminate the other.

Rollin Leonard and Sean Fader also distort the self, but concentrate on technological manipulations and socially engaged digital spaces to do so. In Leonard’s *Spinning Wheel of Death* he photographs his face through water droplets created by spraying a hydrophobic liquid on glass. We encounter his face not as a whole but as broken up, distorted, and reshaped in each drop of water. Fader examines the self-generated depictions of men on online dating and hook-up sites. In *Sup?*, which takes its title from an informal greeting, Fader juxtaposes two images of the same man. The first picture is a reflection of who Fader imagines them to be from their online profile, the other is taken after they have met. There are striking differences between Fader’s fantasies and how the men see themselves.

In deftly manipulating technology and cultural norms, the artists in PICTURE YOURSELF highlight how self-representations are acute responses to the world we inhabit as well as testaments to versions of ourselves that we look away from, closet, or seek greater intimacy with. Together, these artists examine how we can see each other more clearly by obscuring, refracting, and reflecting a version of ourselves that betrays who we imagine and project ourselves to be.

Leah Mirakhor

Assistant Professor, Department of English

The College of Wooster

Cover: Rollin Leonard

Spinning Wheel of Death, 2015–2016

Dye-sublimation print on aluminum

60 h x 40 w (inches)

Courtesy of the artist

PICTURE YOURSELF: Selfies, Cellphones, and the Digital Age *is organized by The College of Wooster Art Museum (CWAM), and co-curated by Leah Mirakhor and Kitty McManus Zurko, CWAM Director/Curator.*

Daniel Arnold (American, b. 1980)

Daniel Arnold's iPhone snapshots were taken on New York City subways before he was dubbed: "the best photographer on Instagram" in 2012; commissioned to photograph Kimye and the Papal visit for *Vogue*; photographed men in everyday suits for *GQ*; and featured in *Forbes* and CNN for selling \$15,000 worth of his 4 x 6 inch prints online in one day. They are also a testament to what attracted his 120,000 Instagram followers; an ability to make a living as a street photographer who captures the ordinary mess of life through his inimitable perceptiveness of human frailty and vulnerability.

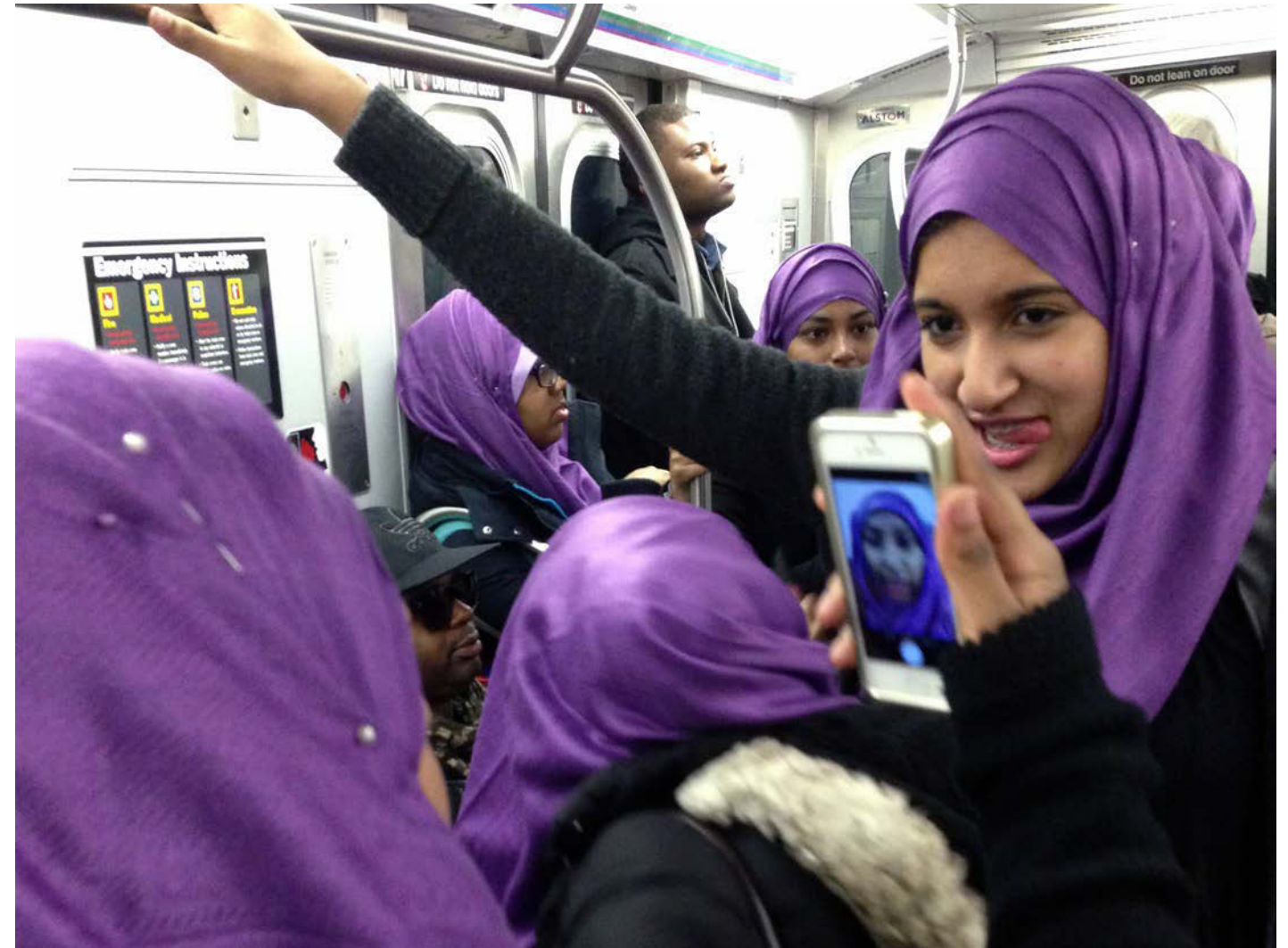
These subway photos frame the daily experiences of fatigue, knowing smiles, proximity without intimacy, and the ways in which our own experiences are reflected and refracted against people we might just glance at and never see again. Arnold is also sneaky. In some of the photos, we glimpse his reflection in glass, his expression blurry. His own figure is usually cut off; instead he foregrounds the unwitting stranger whom he captures in the middle of a yawn, posing for a picture, or staring off into space.

Arnold's photos betray—both formally and thematically—the idea of the selfie (these are not angled selfies of his head with a backdrop of the Empire State building or some other NYC icon). Instead, he wants us to see them as a product of the movement and pulse of a city constantly in motion, often overwhelming, and which contains ugliness and beauty in the same time and space.

—LM

About the Artist

Daniel Arnold lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.



Daniel Arnold
iPhone
8 1/2 h x 11 w (inches)
Courtesy of the artist

Sean Fader (American, b. 1979)

Sup? is a lived performance piece. For 365 days I trolled online dating and hookup websites looking for men who interested me. I looked at their profile and pre-visualized a portrait of who I thought they might be. Then I contacted them and asked them out on a date. The date consisted of arriving at their home (never having met them in person) pouring a glass of wine, and photographing them immediately. I directed them to enact my preconceived ideas of who I imagined them to be. After our shoot, I took them out on a date. This allowed me to consider how I might alter my first portrait of them. After our date, we collaborated on creating an image that we both felt represented them.

—Sean Fader

A conceptual artist working in photography, performance, social practice, and the Internet, Sean Fader explores projection, artifice, and self-reflexivity in his work. In his 2010 project *Sup?*, Fader investigates perceptions about self-curated online depictions and profiles.

Combining text and image, Fader’s *Patryk* and *Evan* are time-based documents; each begins with the text conversation in the middle panel. The chronology then moves to the left of each triptych, and reflects what Fader imagined about that person after reading their dating profile. Taken by Fader as soon as he meets them, both Patryk and Evan are posed bare chested, seated, and are photographed from the front. The photographs on the right are shot post-date, and again, there is a similarity in how Fader sets up these portraits. Post-date Patryk and Evan are now clothed, lying down, and are viewed from above.

While the photographs should ostensibly be the provocative aspect of *Sup?* (other subjects in this series are posed quite differently), it is the text that reveals the reality of meet ups in digital social spaces. Notably, Patryk and Fader’s text exchanges are both explanatory and solicitous, while Fader’s exchange with Evan is edgier and has the ring of communication miscues with comments such as, “ ‘straight acting’ is a code for ‘self hatred’,” and “This is my last one. You can text me and tell me I can expect a phone call . . . or never call me again.” An abbreviation of the urban slang “Wassup?,” Fader’s *Sup?* explores codes and signifiers that abound on most dating sites. He intentionally uses these sites as a way to consider what happens in spaces designed for online self-representation.

—KMZ

About the Artist

Sean Fader received an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, an MA from the Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, and BFA from the New School, New York. His work has been exhibited throughout the United States and internationally in Dubai, Canada, Mexico and England. Fader was named a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellow in 2013 and a Blade of Grass Fellow in 2012–2013. He received the Magenta Foundation’s Flash Forward Award for Emerging Photographers in 2012. Select exhibitions include: *Share This! Appropriation after Cynicism*, Denny Gallery, New York (2014–2015); *Sup?*, a solo exhibition at the University of Illinois in Springfield (2014); *#wishingpelt*, performed at Defibrillator Gallery, Chicago, Spring Break Art Show and Pulse Art Fair, New York (2013–2014) ; and *WhiteBoys*, curated by Hank Willis Thomas and Natasha L. Logan, Haverford College (2013). Fader has received press coverage in *MOMUS*, *Hyperallergic*, *Art F City*, *Huffington Post*, and *Slate.com*. Fader lives and works in Brooklyn, New York, and is represented by Denny Gallery, New York.



20twenty22: "Straight acting" is a code for "self hatred." Educate yourselves.

You are a stellar guy Sean Fader. See you soon :)

You are a stellar guy and you bring out the best in me. It's so good to have you around.

Ok so I assume you got my text messages. This is my last one. You can text me and tell me I can expect a phone call from you today or never call me again. The choice is yours.



Sean Fader

Left:

20Twenty22, Dlist.com, July 23, 2010

Archival inkjet prints

30 h x 39 1/2 w, overall (inches)

Courtesy of the artist and Denny Gallery, New York

Right:

Evan, Bolton Hill, Baltimore, July 24th, 2010

Archival inkjet prints

30 h x 39 1/2 w, overall (inches)

Courtesy of the artist and Denny Gallery, New York

Luis Flores (American)

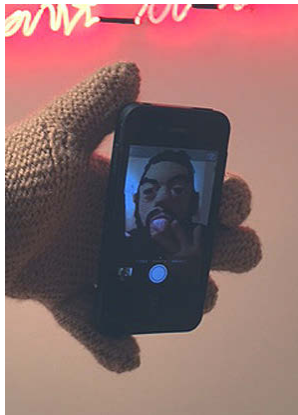
Luis Flores's sculptures are knit replicas of his own body. The black hair and beard mimic his own, the caramel beige yarn is similar to his skin color, and the figure is dressed in the artist's daily uniform of dark denim Levi's, Vans, and a navy blue t-shirt. Mistaking him for his knit recreation is eerie, troubling, and also may be the point. Flores' work is obsessed with constructions of masculinity and self-projection, and with our sense of self and our social anxieties. He wants us to question what we see and how we come to see it.

In *Whatever You Want It To Be*, 2015, the figure stands in front of a red neon sign whose words have become a sort of motto of the selfie in social media: a projection of a desired self both for the audience and for the self who fashions this other. With his back to us and his right hand holding an iPhone at an acute angle toward his face, the figure sticks his tongue out and playfully creates a space for us to hover over his shoulder. This staged action allows us to sneak into the figure's selfie and examine what it is we want to be—at least for now.

—LM

About the Artist

Luis Flores received his MFA in 2014 from the California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, and BA in 2009 from the University of California, Los Angeles. Select solo exhibitions include: *Whatever You Want It To Be*, Grice Bench, Los Angeles (2015); *Boxer*, D300 Gallery, California Institute of the Arts (2014); and *I Am Handsome*, TractionArts, Los Angeles, and *So Full of Potential . . . Is That All?*, Lime Gallery, California Institute of the Arts (both in 2013). Select group exhibitions include: *4 x 4*, Main Gallery, California Institute of the Arts (2013); *After Works*, Gallery 111, Los Angeles (2011); and *New Genres*, Broad Art Center 2122, Los Angeles. Flores lives and works in Los Angeles, and is represented by Grice Bench, Los Angeles.



Detail showing the figure's face in the iPhone.



Luis Flores

Whatever You Want It To Be, 2015

Mixed media with neon and iPhone

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of Dean Valentine and Amy Adelson

Rollin Leonard (American, b. 1984)

Sometimes elevating and manipulating the everyday is the shortest route through charged psychic terrain. This is particularly true about Rollin Leonard’s artistic practice, which is rooted in systematic studio photography. In *Spinning Wheel of Death*, he riffs on two ubiquitous aspects of digital life that we take for granted because they are so woven into the fabric of the everyday: the selfie and the wait cursor icon (spinning pinwheel).

Part of Leonard’s *Water Lens* series, the print and animations are produced by photographing the artist’s face through water droplets created by spraying a hydrophobic liquid on glass. Colored by lights, the resulting effect refracts and reshapes the artist’s face within each drop. According to Leonard, “the multiplicity of my face is intentional as our digital ‘selves’ are so fragmented and numerous now.”

The purposeful distortion of the face in each droplet raises the question of whether so much volitional online self-exposure helps us to see others and ourselves any more clearly. The saturated color wheel subliminally evokes the visceral frustration of time lost waiting for applications to load, render, or, more often than not, un-glitch. Ultimately, both versions of *Spinning Wheel of Death* simply and humorously synthesize mundane digital tropes to suggest a new kind of torture akin to Dante’s first circle of hell where one spends eternity in Limbo.

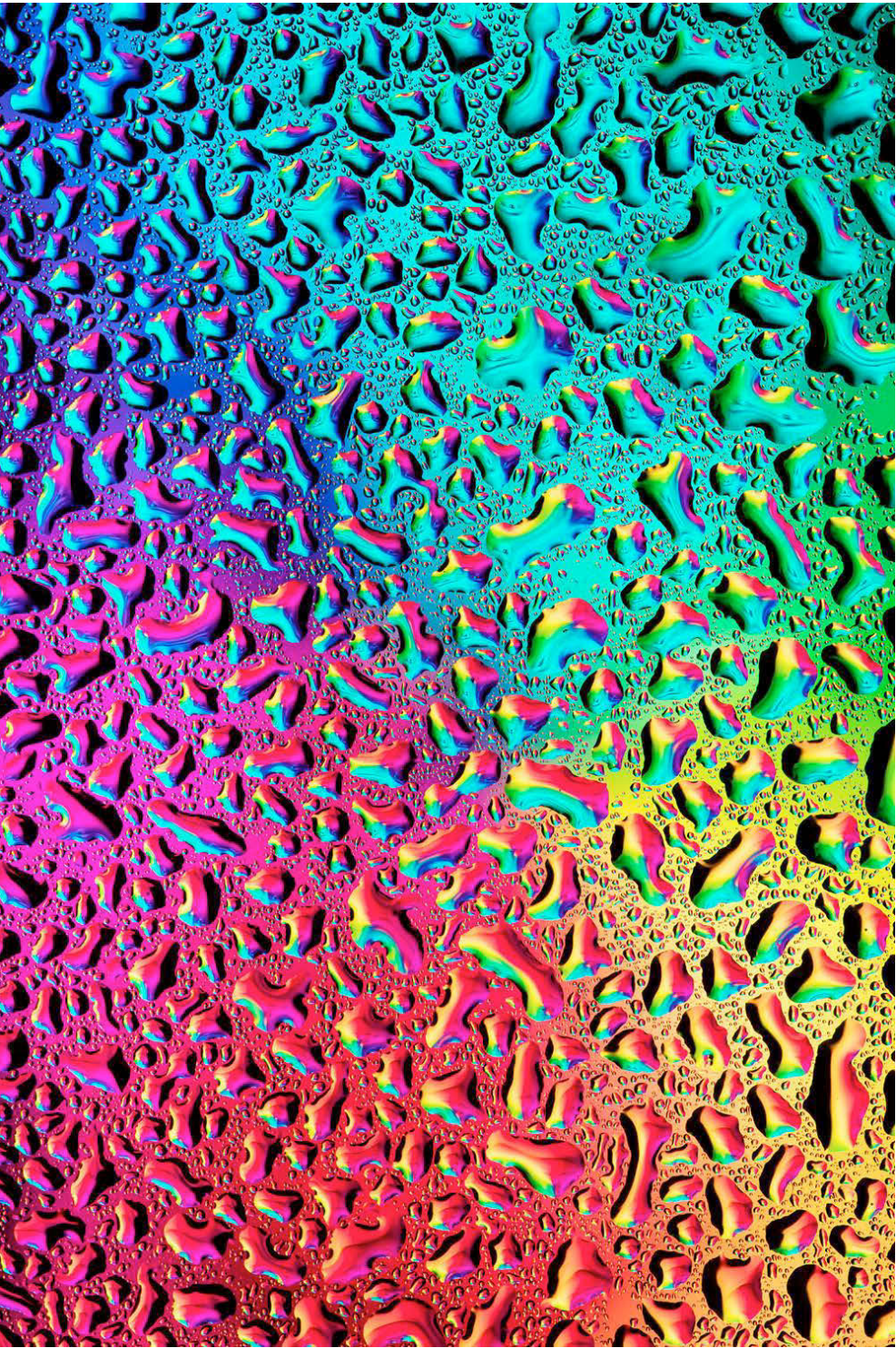
—KMZ

About the Artist

Rollin Leonard was born in Wheat Ridge, Colorado. He received his BA in 2007 in Philosophy and Fine Art from the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, and attended the Cleveland Institute of Art. Select solo exhibitions include: *Water Lens*, Moving Image Art Fair, Istanbul, presented by Transfer Gallery, Brooklyn, New York (2015); *Lilia/360*, Moving Image Art Fair, London, presented by Transfer Gallery, and *Trunks, Stems, and Heads*, Transfer Gallery, Brooklyn (both in 2013). Select group exhibitions include: *Ways of Something*, Western Front, Vancouver, Canada, and Photographer’s Gallery, London (both in 2015); *Premium Bundle*, Bronx Art Space, Bronx, New York (2015); *Breaking Ground: Contemporary Photography*, The College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia (2014); *PostPictures*, Bitforms Gallery, New York, *Casting a Wide Net*, Postmasters Gallery, New York (both in 2013); and *DeCenter*, Armory Show, New York (2013). Leonard has participated in artist residencies at La Napoule Art Foundation, Mandelieu-La Napoule, France (2015) and Hewn Oaks, Maine (2014 and 2012). His work is in the collection of 53 Museum Guangzhou, China. Leonard lives and works in Los Angeles.



Spinning Wheel of Death (detail)



Rollin Leonard
Spinning Wheel of Death, 2015–2016
Dye-sublimation print on aluminum
60 h x 40 w (inches)
Courtesy of the artist

Farideh Sakhaeifar (b. Tehran, Iran, 1985)

Worn down and wearing work clothes tainted by paint and dust, these men do not smile. They do not offer more than what they are asked, which is to hold the cable and press the release. Informed by both nineteenth-century Qajar prints and the work of American photographer Richard Avedon, Farideh Sakhaeifar's series *The Workers Are Taking Photographs*, 2008, highlights the effects of staging, portraiture, the working class, and the (in)visible hand of the photographer.

Taken outside of Tehran, the title sounds as though it is being uttered by an informant alerting a supervisor that his workers are taking a break, deviating from what they're supposed to be doing: working. As such, these photographs highlight conditions of labor, employment, and masculinity.

Each of these portraits contains at least two frames—the white frame behind the worker held by discreet feminine hands as the worker holds the cable release ready to press the shutter, and the frame of the surrounding workplace. But for the hands holding the white panel behind the subject, the absence of women is palpable and the implications of a woman's role in Iran are not subtle.

As a woman from a different social class, Sakhaeifar enters these male dominated spaces and asks the men to take their own photographs. While she gives them the power to choose and take their own picture, she, as the hands that hold up the white background, constructs the self-constructions of these working-class Tehranian men.

—LM

About the Artist

Farideh Sakhaeifar was born in Tehran, Iran, and received her MFA in 2011 from the College of Architecture, Art, and Planning, Cornell University Ithaca, New York, and BFA in 2008 from Azad Art and Architecture University, Tehran, Iran. Select solo exhibitions include: *Sacrosanct*, William Holman Gallery, New York, and *Laugh track*, Cathouse FUNeral, Brooklyn, New York (both in 2015). Select group exhibitions include: *Photography Now*, The Center of Photography at Woodstock, Woodstock, New York, and *War Stories*, William Holman Gallery, New York (both in 2014); *Nazri*, Factory Gallery, Hamedan, Iran (2013); and *Meditations in an Emergency*, Dumbo Art Center, New York (2012). Sakhaeifar was a visiting scholar at New York University, New York, in 2013, and a visiting artist at The New School for Liberal Arts, New York, in 2012. She lives and works in Brooklyn, and is represented by William Holman Gallery, New York.



Farideh Sakhaeifar

Workers Are Taking Photographs, 2008

Inkjet print

24 h x 18 w (inches)

Courtesy of the artist and William Holman Gallery, New York

Andy Warhol (American, 1928–1987)

Born Andrew Warhola in 1928 in Pittsburgh, Warhol attended Carnegie Institute of Technology (now Carnegie Mellon University), and then moved to New York City in the 1950s to work as a commercial artist. Along with Pop artists such as James Rosenquist, Roy Lichtenstein, and Claes Oldenburg, Warhol appropriated imagery from film, print, and other popular media as a means of calling into question the wholesale adoption of postwar consumerist culture. In practice, Pop artists pushed high brow/low brow art boundaries through the co-opting of banal images such as cartoons and advertising.

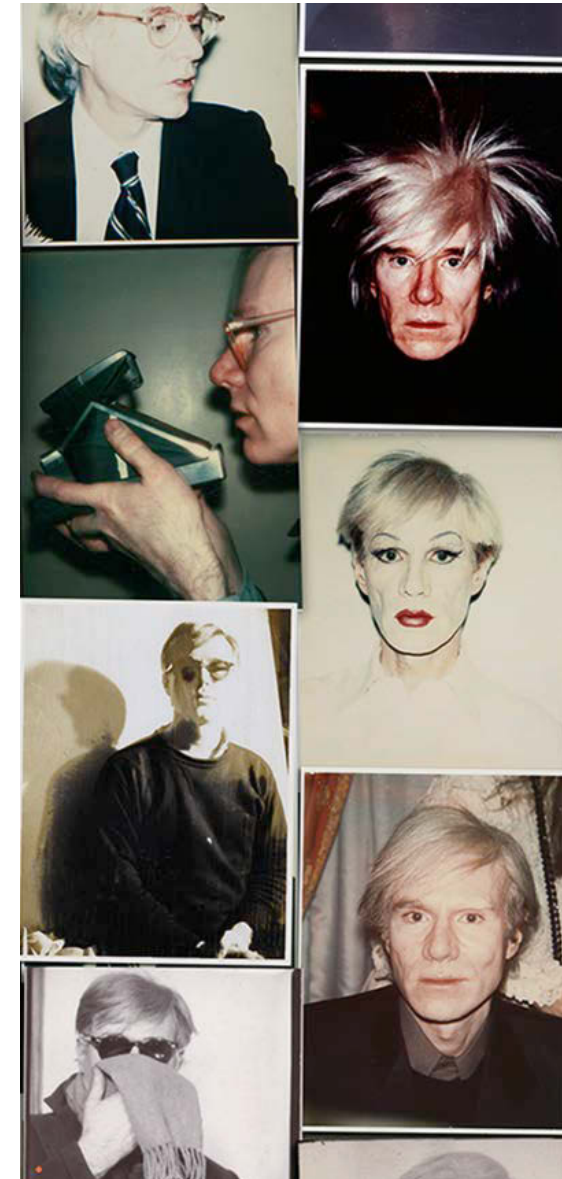
Warhol began taking his famously detached self-portraits or “selfies” in the early 1960s, and continued them through 1986. Although he used different photographic technologies as they became available (e.g., Polaroid cameras), his first self-portraits were taken in dime store photobooths; an inexpensive and usually private space with fixed lighting and focal point that excludes the interpretive eye of the photographer. While Warhol drew and painted self-portraits long before he began to use photos as source imagery for his silkscreened paintings and prints, it is the spirit of this rote and mechanical portrait style that informed the artist’s work until his death in 1987 at age 59.

Warhol’s photographic self-portraits begin with his earliest black and white selfies from the 1960s. In these, the artist appears haughty, yet, true to the nascent tenets of Pop art, seems to channel the celebrity of movie stars through his blank face, tough stance, and dark sunglasses. He took a hiatus from self-portraiture after being shot in 1968 by the radical feminist writer Valerie Solanas. Scholars have suggested that this murder attempt played a role in Warhol’s careful crafting of his persona after 1968, and prompted his prolonged engagement with the topic of death, demonstrated in the late-1970s self-portraits with a skull as *memento mori* or reminder of mortality. The later *Drag* series of 1981 introduced methods of concealment, but it is the last series of self-portraits, the *Fright Wig* series, with which Warhol is most identified. Taken in 1986, a year before the artist’s untimely death following gallbladder surgery, these iconic selfies feature the artist’s disembodied face peering out of the darkness.

Viewed cumulatively in the wallpaper, Warhol’s selfies articulate what Robert Rosenblum states in his introduction to the exhibition catalogue, *Andy Warhol Self-Portraits* (2004), “ . . . Warhol’s self-portraits constantly shift back and forth between telling us all and telling us nothing about the artist, who can seem, even in the same work, both vulnerable and invulnerable. They have both intimacy and calculated artifice.”

In many ways, Rosenblum’s comments about Warhol’s extended inquiry into self-representation are also true of 21st-century self-documentation when access to technology and social media allows and even encourages us to construct, frame, and reframe our digital narrative.

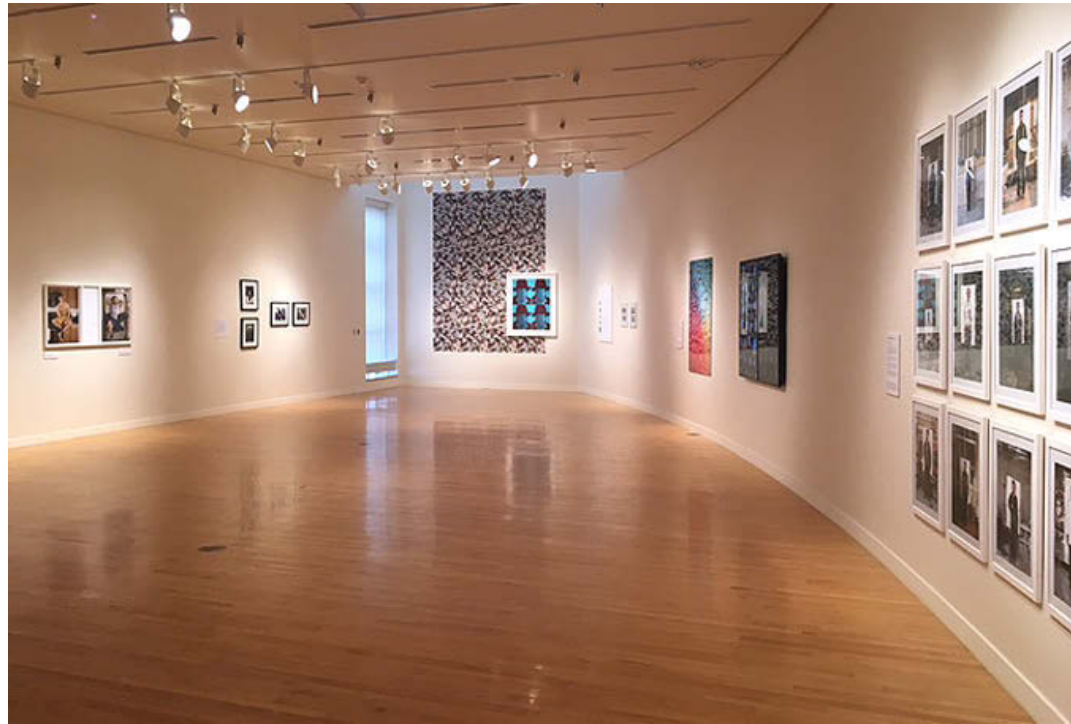
—KMZ



Selfie Wallpaper (detail)

Andy Warhol x Flavor Paper, Brooklyn, New York, in collaboration with The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc., New York. © 2016 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Installation



Acknowledgments

We thank the artists, galleries, and collectors who so graciously made possible the loans that comprise PICTURE YOURSELF. They are: Luis Flores, Dean Valentine and Amy Adelson, and James Bae of Grice Bench, Los Angeles; Farideh Sakhaeifar and William Holman Gallery, New York; Rollin Leonard, Los Angeles, and Transfer Gallery, Brooklyn, New York; Sean Fader and Denny Gallery, New York; and Daniel Arnold, Brooklyn. We also thank Flavor Paper, Brooklyn, and The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc., New York, for their support of this project.

Many participate in the realization of all CWAM projects, and I extend a warm thank you to my co-curator and collaborator, Leah Mirakhor, for her layered and nuanced contributions. I also thank Doug McGlumphy, CWAM Preparator/Collections Manager, who designed the sensitive installation, and consulted on all aspects of this project.

Finally, we thank the PICTURE YOURSELF LAB content developers for their ideas and efforts. They include: Tilly Alexander '16, Dani Gagnon '16, Claire Ilersich '17, Sue Reon Kim '16, Robin Klaus '16, Katie Stephens '15, and Petr Wiese '16.

Kitty McManus Zurko
CWAM Director/Curator

PICTURE YOURSELF LAB

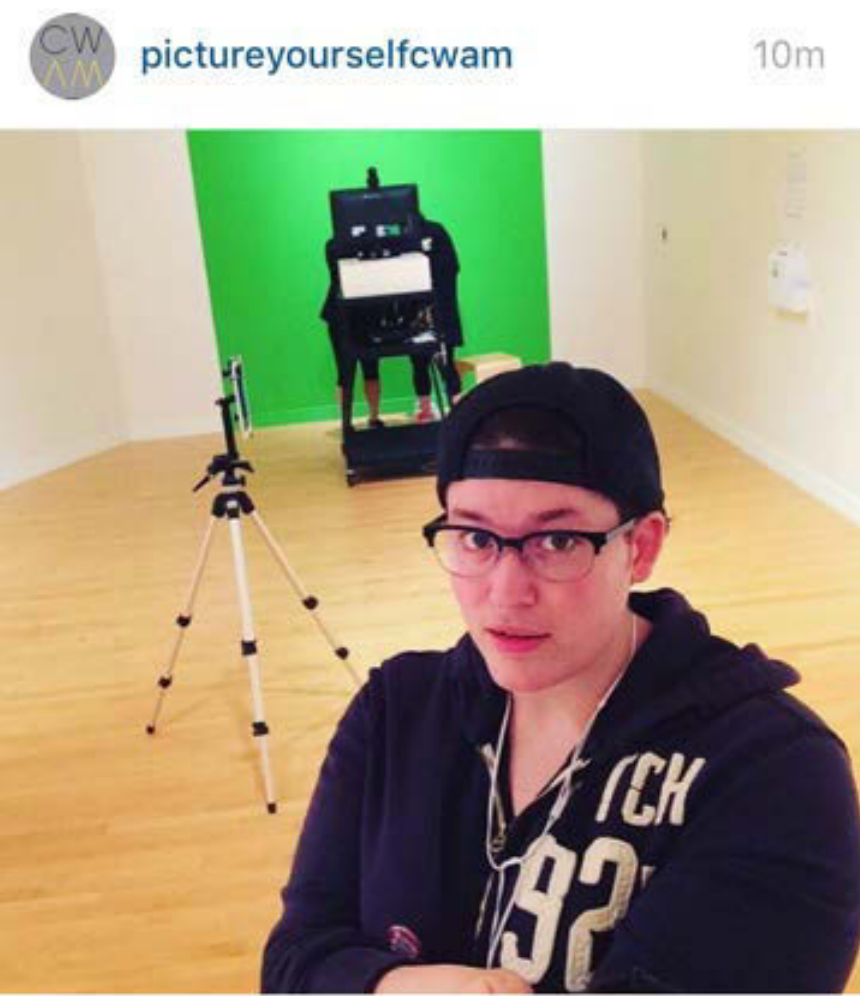


The PICTURE YOURSELF LAB included a reading corner with books on Andy Warhol and Kim Kardashian's *Selfish*, a table for making props, selfie sticks, clothes and masks, and an iPad and computer loaded with Photo Booth.



#pictureyourselfcwam

A selection of selfies taken in the LAB (or elsewhere), and submitted to the CWAM's PICTURE YOURSELF Instagram account, comprise the the visitor-generated wallpaper that grew throughout the run of the exhibition. View these selfies at #pictureyourselfcwam.



Visitor-Generated “Selfie” Wallpaper





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