Andy Warhol, born Andrew Warhola on August 6, 1928, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was a central figure in the Pop Art movement, which emerged in the 1950s and became prominent over the next decade. He began his career as a commercial illustrator, gaining recognition for his whimsical ink drawings for shoe advertisements. However, it was his work in the 1960s that catapulted him to fame, particularly his iconic depictions of Campbell's Soup Cans and celebrities such as Marilyn Monroe. Warhol's work was characterized by its exploration of consumer culture and mass production, often using techniques like silk screening to create his art, which allowed for repeated, consistent imagery, echoing the manufacturing processes of the goods he depicted. Warhol's studio, The Factory, became a famous gathering place for intellectuals, drag queens, playwrights, Bohemian street people, Hollywood celebrities, and wealthy patrons. Located in Midtown Manhattan, it was both a literal art factory where Warhol's works were produced and a cultural hotspot. The silver-painted and foil-draped studio hosted legendary parties and was the birthplace of Warhol's forays into film and music production. It was here that Warhol collaborated with the Velvet Underground, the avant-garde rock band featuring Lou Reed, and where he created some of his most famous films, including 'Chelsea Girls' and 'Empire.' In 1968, Warhol survived an assassination attempt by radical feminist writer Valerie Solanas, who shot him at The Factory. Warhol was seriously wounded and nearly died, suffering physical effects for the rest of his life, including being required to wear a surgical corset. The shooting had a profound impact on Warhol's life and art; he became more reclusive and his work took a darker turn. Solanas had been a marginal figure at The Factory and was reportedly upset with Warhol over a script she had given him. After the shooting, Warhol's work began to explore themes of death and disaster more explicitly, such as in his 'Death and Disaster' series. Warhol's fascination with mortality was also evident in his creation of the 'Death and Disaster' series, which depicted images of car crashes, suicides, and electric chairs. These works were a stark contrast to the colorful and whimsical images of celebrities and everyday objects that had brought him fame. The series was a commentary on the desensitization to death and tragedy in the media. Warhol would use a silkscreen technique to reproduce graphic news photos, often layering the same image multiple times, which both desensitized and dramatized the original event, reflecting on the nature of media consumption and the repetitive cycle of news. Warhol was also an early adopter and influential figure in the use of computers to create art. In the mid-1980s, he experimented with digital art using a Commodore Amiga computer. He created digital images, including a reinterpretation of Botticelli's 'The Birth of Venus' and a digital version of his famous Campbell's Soup Can. This work was commissioned by Commodore International to demonstrate the graphic arts capabilities of the Amiga computer. Some of these digital works were only rediscovered and restored in 2014, highlighting Warhol's often overlooked contributions to the field of digital art. Beyond visual art, Warhol's influence extended into film and music. He produced and directed a number of avant-garde films, including 'Sleep,' which is a five-hour film of a man sleeping, and 'Empire,' an eight-hour static shot of the Empire State Building. His work in film was both controversial and groundbreaking, pushing the boundaries of what was considered acceptable in cinema. In music, he managed and produced the debut album for the Velvet Underground, a band that would go on to be one of the most influential in rock history. The album cover, featuring a Warhol banana, is iconic in its own right. Warhol's legacy is complex and multifaceted. He is credited with blurring the lines between high art and commercial art, challenging the traditional distinctions between fine art and popular culture. His work questioned the role of the artist, often employing assistants and collaborators to produce his art, which led to debates about authenticity and authorship. Warhol's philosophy of art as a business was epitomized in his famous quote, 'Making money is art and working is art and good business is the best art.' His approach to art as a product and his own persona as a brand were ahead of their time and have influenced generations of artists. Warhol was deeply involved in the New York City social scene and was known for his documentation of his daily life through photography and audio recordings. He was a prolific photographer, capturing the world around him with his 35mm camera and Polaroid pictures. These photographs often served as the basis for his silkscreen paintings. Moreover, Warhol kept an audio recorder with him almost constantly, referring to it as his 'wife,' and recorded vast amounts of conversation from the social gatherings he attended. These recordings provide a valuable historical archive of the cultural life of New York City during his time. Despite his fame and influence, Warhol was known for his enigmatic personality and was often described as distant or aloof. He was famous for his wigs—initially to cover up balding, then as a stylistic choice—which added to his carefully crafted public persona. Warhol's speech was often purposefully vague or contradictory, and he mastered the art of giving evasive answers in interviews. He was an openly gay man at a time when homosexuality was not widely accepted, and his art and films frequently explored themes of sexuality and gender identity, contributing to his status as a gay icon. Andy Warhol died on February 22, 1987, at the age of 58, from complications following gallbladder surgery. His passing was unexpected, as he was generally believed to be recovering from the procedure. Warhol's death highlighted his extensive work and significant impact on art and culture. In his will, Warhol established the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts to support the creation, presentation, and documentation of contemporary visual art. He also bequeathed his estate to create the Andy Warhol Museum in his native Pittsburgh, which is the largest museum in North America dedicated to a single artist.