

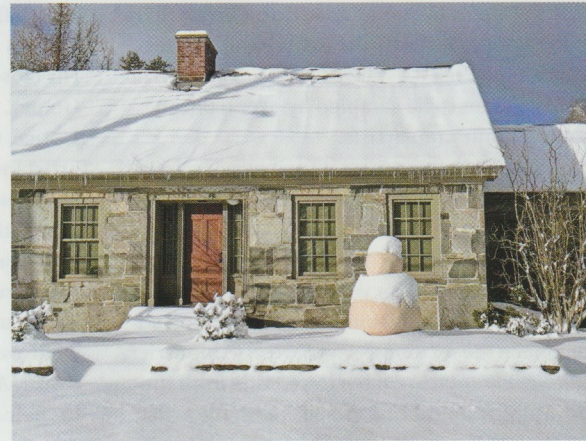
By Cynthia Close

# Andy Warhol and The Hall Art Foundation in Winter

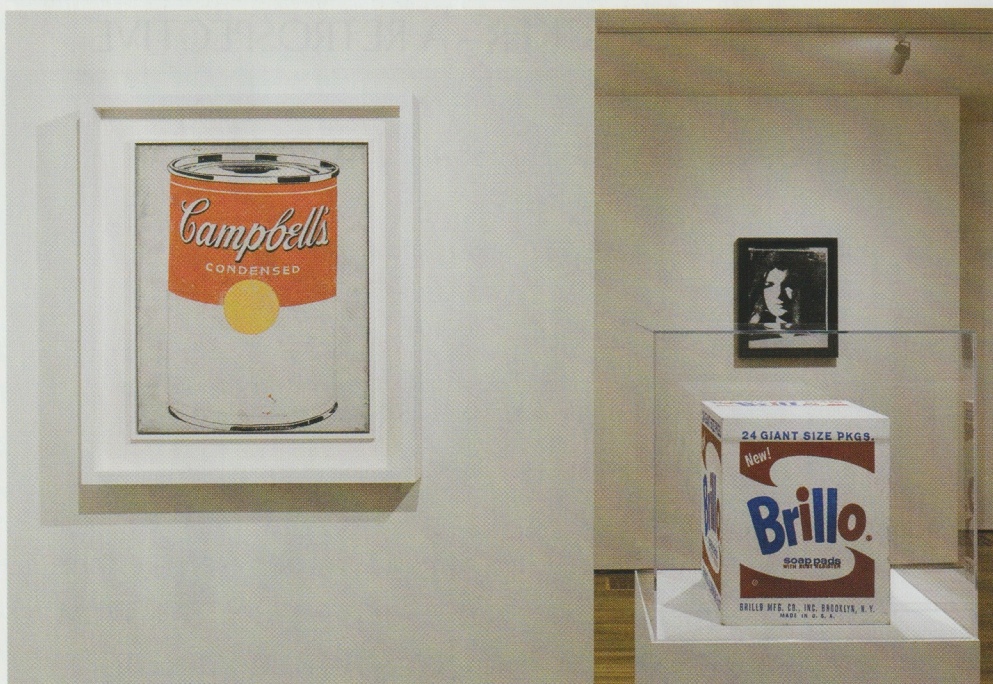
Most visitors stroll the sculpture dotted hills and fields of The Hall Art Foundation, located in rural Reading, Vermont, in early spring to fall yet this writer found herself standing at the entrance to their visitor center on a sunny, bitter cold Sunday morning in late January of this year. The Hall first explored opening one gallery in the farmhouse/reception center on weekends during winter 2023 and it proved popular, along with the hot chocolate and other light fare available in the small, pleasant, light-filled cafe. The Foundation decided to expand the experiment this year, and a small group of us enjoyed the two-hour scenic route from Burlington to view the current *Warhol - Small Works* exhibition in the galleries.

Given its largely rural landscape and low population density, Vermont offers few opportunities to experience a high-profile, iconic contemporary artist like Andy Warhol, making this exhibition of over one hundred works spanning Warhol's career a must-see event. Thanks to

important collectors of contemporary art like Andrew and Christine Hall, who have chosen to form non-profit institutions making their private collections public, Vermont has become more of a destination for art lovers both inside and outside the state. Founded in 2007, The Hall Art Foundation maintains two museum quality exhibition spaces; one here in Vermont, and the other near Hanover, Germany where Kunstmuseum Schloss Derneburg stands as a cultural landmark on top of a history stretching back over a thousand years. The Halls acquired Schloss Derneburg in 2006 from the German artist Georg Baselitz (b.1938-). He had used it as his studio and primary residence for more than thirty years. Along with these exhibition spaces the Halls also maintain a permanent installation of Anselm Kiefer's work in a massive 10,000 square-foot building at MASS MoCA in North Adams, Massachusetts.

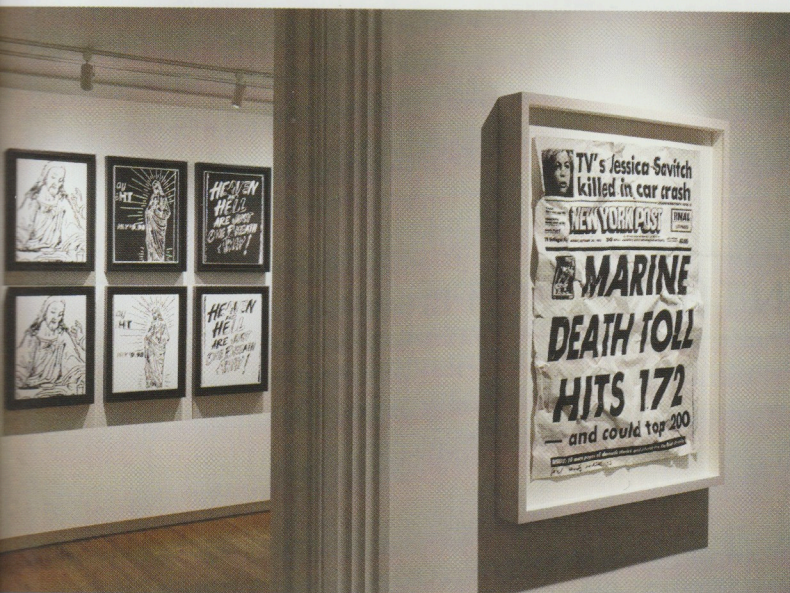


Above: The exterior of The Hall Art Foundation in winter. Courtesy of the museum. Below: Installation view featuring *Campbell's Soup Can*, 1961, casein and pencil on canvas, 20 x 16". Hall Collection; *Brillo Soap Pads Box*, 1964, synthetic polymer paint on wood, 17 x 17 x 14". Hall Collection. *Jackie*, 1964, acrylic and silkscreen ink on linen, 20 x 16". Hall Collection. All images courtesy Hall Art Foundation.



Smaller than the MASS MoCA site by 4,000 square feet, the interior space in Vermont consists of a 19th century stone farmhouse and three barns, surrounded by four hundred acres of fields, woodlands, and pastures. It had been the former Lexington Dairy Farm. Opened in 2012 after extensive renovation, the exterior of the buildings remain true to their historic character. The "snecked ashlar" stone siding of the farmhouse is relatively unique to this area of Vermont. In 2013, *Architectural Digest* named Hall Vermont as one of the "Must-See Museums Opened by Collectors Around the World."

The farmhouse and barns are located on a picturesque site next to a waterfall on a tributary of the Black River which has proven to be challenging. Vermont recently faced extensive flooding due to climate change. The Hall Foundation was not immune. The extensive July 2023 Vermont floods forced a curtailed exhibition season while repairs were made. We observed a newly constructed concrete berm edging the road between



the farmhouse on one side and the barn/galleries on the other. Hall Foundation docent and tour guide Susan Piccoli explained, “The wall is part of our flood mitigation renovations and will be faced with the same indigenous stone siding as the farmhouse as soon as the weather allows.”

The more than one hundred works shown come from the Hall collection. During a May interview on Vermont Public, Foundation director Maryse Brand commented, “Although, there have been many Warhol exhibitions where there are large-scale works—I could be wrong, and I would be happy to be corrected—but I think this is the largest exhibition of Warhol paintings to have ever taken place in Vermont. I also think it’s one of the very few Warhol retrospectives to have taken place in the northeast in the last ten or twenty years.”

By choosing to install these small scale works in the low-ceilinged spaces of the 18th century farmhouses, rather than the expansive barn/galleries, allows the viewers to have a more intimate experience with the art. Warhol is often thought of as primarily a print-maker, a manufacturer of mass produced works that were an integral part of the capitalist pop culture they exemplified. The Hall refers to these two-dimensional works as

“paintings.” While the original source material is usually a photograph transformed via a process of silk-screen printing on canvas, every piece also bares the marks of the human hand: pencil marks, strokes of paint, added at some point in the process.

The show was organized chronologically starting with hand-drawn dollar bills from 1960–61 before Warhol began working with silkscreens. A single *Campbell’s Soup Can* print looks familiar, hung next to a single *Brillo Box* sculpture. We’re used to seeing piles of Brillo boxes stacked in front of wall-sized displays of Warhol’s *Campbell’s soup can* prints. Being able to focus on small works, framed individually, allowed us to “see” Warhol for the first time. *5 Deaths*, a stark, black, and very dark red piece from 1963 featuring an overturned car in a gruesome scenario, exemplifies the underlying disquiet in Warhol’s oeuvre.

Rather than deference to his subjects, Warhol’s portraits exhibit a pervasive laconic insolence. Many of them were commissions. One of his earliest was of Patty Oldenburg, who was married to 1960s Pop sculptor Claes Oldenburg. It is a stereoscopic piece, and our tour guide handed us 3D glasses to view the work. Oldenburg is now

Above, left: Installation view featuring two paintings titled *Detail of the Last Supper*, 1986, *Christ \$9.98 (Positive)* and *Christ \$9.98 (Negative)*, 1985–86, *Heaven and Hell are Just One Breath Away (Positive)* and *Heaven and Hell are Just One Breath Away (Negative)*, 1985–86; *New York Post Marine Death Toll Hits 172*, 1983. Above, right: Installation view featuring *Nude model (male)* from the series *Torsos/Sex Parts* (1977); *Torso* (1976–77), *Torso* (1977); *Crosses* (1981–82); *Hammer and Sickle* (1976); *Dollar Sign* (1981). Below, from top: *Untitled (Oxidation Painting)*, 1978, six works, mixed media on canvas, 14 x 10”; *Patty Oldenburg*, 1962, silkscreen ink, acrylic, and pencil on linen, 21 x 18”. Hall Collection. Courtesy of Hall Art Foundation.



a Vermont resident in her 80s and goes by her maiden name of Patty Mucha. She attended the opening. This was only one of many revelations like discovering Warhol’s exploration of abstraction in the late 1970s and 80s with the *Shadow Series* and the *Oxidation Series*. The iridescent yellows and greens in the *Oxidations* were created not by paint, but by Warhol and other invited friends peeing on a copper coated surface. *Sex Parts*, prints of penises, were never exhibited in his lifetime.

The Halls have chosen not to post wall texts in any of their exhibitions, allowing viewers to discover the artwork on their own terms. There are binders that include supplemental information in each of the galleries for those who are interested. As we emerged from the exhibition the sun sparkled on the snow-covered ground transforming Terence Koh’s 2011 *Children of the Corn*, *Totem Pole* into a shimmering specter, waiting for spring.

Cynthia Close is contributing editor for Documentary Magazine and writes regularly for Art New England and several other publications.

[hallartfoundation.org](http://hallartfoundation.org)