

Gerry McCloskey

# Andy Warhol, 2020



[artillerybrand.com](http://artillerybrand.com)

It's a few days before New Year's Eve, 1981. I've come to New York - with some contacts in my notebook for people in graphic design and illustration who I hope will have an influence on my career - and to meet Andy Warhol.

The truth is I've been struggling with my final year graphics project at NCAD. My self-brief is to create a large-format one-colour newsprint magazine about visual communication. For inspiration, I've filled my wall with brilliant double-page spreads from Andy Warhol's *Interview Magazine*, Fred Woodward's *Rolling Stone* and Neville Brody's *The Face*. But weirdly, despite being surrounded with all this brilliance, I've clammed up creatively.

## Rubber stamps

Already one-third of the time I have to work - is gone. So this barely affordable New York trip is a plea to get unblocked. If my imagination continues to flatline after this... I'm sunk.

So I want to see how *Interview Magazine* ticks. And meet Warhol himself. In his work, Graphic Design, Illustration and Fine Art were so perfectly integrated I thought it would be amazing to learn something about that from the master. I'd read that when Pop Art was taking off, Warhol found his way into the art world by adapting his illustration skills to work on canvas. He had rubber-stamp blocks made from his drawings of dollar bills and Coke bottles and hand-printed them onto plain canvases. I wondered how he could so easily turn his hand to creating art, designing album covers and making movies, issuing a monthly magazine and writing books.



## **Aura**

*Interview Magazine* say I can visit right after New Year.

I buy two Warhol hardbacks including *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B & Back Again)* in which he recalls how some people wanted to buy his aura.

Not his name, not his signature - just his aura.

## **Play, record**

To prepare, I'm in an hi-fi store in lower Manhattan to buy a reporter's tape recorder - the kind that takes full-size audio cassettes. The sales guy holds up a set of foam-padded headphones and says, "*Take a listen to this.*"

That evening my ears are burning from listening to the demo tape playing on repeat on Sony's stunning new first series Walkman, the TPS -L2.

Next day I go back and swap the Walkman for a Panasonic RQ-337 (the reporters' workhorse tape recorder I should've bought in the first place) and get 12-packs of AA batteries and many hours' worth of blank tapes.

## **Lincoln, five parties in three hours**

Meanwhile, I meet another contact: Lincoln. A tall Rastafarian New Yorker who works security at a bar-grill that has no name or street number. Inside it's very plain, accented by some sketchy Larry Rivers artworks on the walls. Lincoln always sits in a booth at the back. Through him I'll get a glimpse of lower Manhattan social life.



### **Five parties, three hours**

December 31st: Lincoln lets me tag along to five private loft parties which he covers in three hours.

### **Paul Klee**

Over the next few days I walked a lot to get my bearings. This was partly for pleasure because the low winter sunshine made the streets look like they were lit for a movie. But was also because I'd been warned that to take the Subway was to invite muggers. I walked uptown to the Guggenheim. The one painting that stood out for me there was a small low-key watercolour by Paul Klee hanging quietly in an alcove off the sweep of the main ramp.

In Lower Manhattan I needed to find a much older building: The Factory headquarters of Andy Warhol and *Interview Magazine* at 860 Broadway.

### **Andy Warhol, a Great Dane and a big black marker**

Thursday January 7th 1982: I'm at the reception desk of *Interview Magazine*. Warhol is standing in a room off reception talking to someone. A Great Dane sits beside a neatly dressed guy at the desk. I've explained that I'm writing my thesis on Warhol. This goes down really well - but then it comes:

*"Andy can't see you today, but he can maybe see you next week?..."*

My heart sinks. I'm booked to fly home that weekend. *"...But I can tell you about Interview. I'm a sub-editor here."* And he was a really good behind-the-curtain interviewee.



Next day my books are waiting for me at *Interview's* reception, signed in big black marker, with a bold sweeping underline:

*to Gerry  
love  
Andy Warhol.*

Brilliant.

### **Back in Dublin**

The second semester is underway but I'm still unhappy with every double-page design I come up with. I take down all the spreads from *Interview*, *Rolling Stone* and *The Face* leaving my wall space completely blank and concentrate on generating editorial content.

### **Interviews, previews and Ben Shahn**

By Easter I have hours of fresh interviews made in Dublin: a Swiss photographer's studio opening party, Irish artist Robert Ballagh talking about ideas, communication and art, plus an afternoon with the exquisitely considered designer-illustrator Michael Lunt.

Along with the transcribed interviews, there was a preview of NCAD final year graphic students' work. A surreal story illustrated brilliantly by Brian Cronin. A lively piece about The Abbey Theatre's graphic designer Brendan Foreman. And an essay about international design influences on Irish graphic design during the 1950s and 1960s, written by NCAD senior tutor Bill Bolger - a salute to one of his own heroes, the American illustrator typographer, Ben Shahn.



## Cover

May 1982: Days before the final print deadline, I still haven't figured out the cover design or the name of the magazine.

At the last minute, as a small personal homage to early Warhol, I draw a retro-style repeat pattern of a pair of surprised eyes with raised eyebrows. It looks like a detail from a 1950s press ad selling something *A-mazing!*

And the title? Typeset in *Stencil* and made into a rubber-stamp, I hand-print the title onto each cover using red ink.

It read: 2020.



.....  
*Gerry McCloskey is an award-winning art director and designer.  
He was creative director of McCann-Erickson Dublin - a position he held  
with Eoghan Nolan, his editor-partner at CHOPS. He has acted as an  
external tutor and assessor at NCAD.  
He posts personal work at <https://www.behance.net/gerrymcclod6be>*  
.....

**© Gerry McCloskey 2020**

**Chops was conceived by Eoghan Nolan.**

**Designed and typeset by Gerry McCloskey**

**© Eoghan Nolan & Gerry McCloskey 2020**

**© Artillery Brand 2020**

**© Brand Artillery 2020**

**© Chops 2020**

No part of this PDF may be reproduced without the written permission of both the author and Chops, the publisher.

If you know someone who would like a copy, please encourage them to download their own, free of charge, from [artillerybrand.com](http://artillerybrand.com)

NB: There is no connection between Chops and Triumph motorcycles and use of a form of the Triumph logo is a homage only, our salute to a great brand. Respect.

