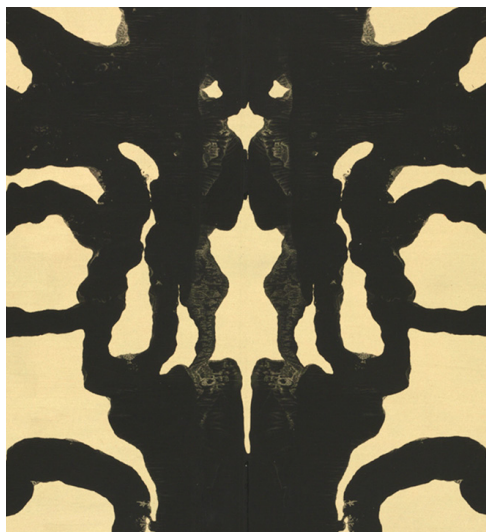




NOVEMBER 2010

Symmetry

Andy Warhol | *Rorschach*



VISIT THE BMA
and see *Rorschach* in
the special exhibition
*Andy Warhol: The
Last Decade* on view
until January 9.

Andy Warhol (American, 1928-1987). Detail, *Rorschach*. 1984. Synthetic polymer paint on canvas. 158 x 110 inches. Purchase with funds provided by Laura R. Burrows-Jackson, Baltimore; and partial gift of The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, BMA 1994.34. ©The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc./Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.



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Imagine taking a walk straight down the middle of *Rorschach* from the top of the page to the bottom. As you walk, look to your right and left. For every swirl or squiggle or bump that you see on your right, you'll see a nearly identical mark on your left, be facing (or leaning) in the opposite direction. How did Andy Warhol make the left and right sides match so closely, down to the very last twist and turn? Actually it was quite simple: Warhol and his assistants painted only one side of the canvas, and left the other side blank. While the paint was still wet, they folded the canvas straight down the middle (on the line where you took your imaginary walk), and pressed hard. When they unfolded the canvas, they were pleased to see that the design that they had poured or brushed onto one side had been imprinted on the other side as a mirror image.

Andy Warhol got the idea for painting *Rorschach* after learning about a set of small symmetric inkblot designs that were made by a psychiatrist named Hermann Rorschach in the 1920s. (The doctor asked his patients to describe what the inkblot pictures brought to mind.) Warhol liked the way the doctor's inkblot designs looked, and decided to try it himself. But rather than dribble spots of black ink onto a small white card and fold it down the middle as the doctor had done, Warhol decided to make a gold and black "Rorschach," 13 feet long and 9 feet wide. The enormous canvas was painted, folded, and unfolded right on his studio floor.

CHALLENGE FOR STUDENTS

Make your own inkblot design. Check out the BMA's Rorschach activity sheet at artbma.org/educators/documents/WARHOL-Inkblot.pdf

Use your own hands to study symmetry! First, press your hands together so that your thumbs are facing you, then stretch your thumbs out to the side. You'll see the line of symmetry going right down the middle between your two hands. Now bend your fingers. Allow them to separate but make sure that each fingertip still touches its opposite. Again an **imaginary** line of symmetry goes right down the middle, passing through each set of fingertips. Now release your fingers and rearrange your hands and fingers to make some new symmetrical designs. Remember that your right hand must always be a mirror image of the left hand!

PRINT THE IMAGE ON PAGE 2 FOR YOUR STUDENTS.



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Andy Warhol. *Rorschach*.

1984. Synthetic polymer paint on canvas. 158 x 110 inches. Purchase with funds provided by Laura R. Burrows-Jackson, Baltimore; and partial gift of The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, BMA 1994.34. ©The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc./Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.