

Andy Warhol's 'first selfie' expected to fetch £7m at Sotheby's auction

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Andy Warhol's "first selfie", the painting which catapulted the pop artist to worldwide fame, is going under the hammer. Warhol created his first self-portrait in 1963, when he was 35 – and best known for his images of stars such as Marilyn Monroe, Jackie Kennedy and Liz Taylor, as well as Campbell's soup cans. The image, created using a strip of photographs taken in a New York dime-store photo booth, is expected to fetch £7m at Sotheby's.



Emma Baker, contemporary art specialist at the auction house, said: "It is the moment when Warhol the icon was born. Everybody is looking to create their own brand now. The selfie is so ubiquitous and it's all about self-image. But Warhol really was at the forefront of this whole phenomenon, which has only just caught up to his prophetic way of thinking."

The work will appear at auction, in London, 30 years after the artist's death in New York in 1987. His first self-portrait came after Warhol's dealer had been trying to persuade the pop artist to turn his eye on himself for some time, saying: "People want to see you. Your looks are responsible for a certain part of your fame."

Ms Baker said of the work: "It was the moment that Warhol, who predicted that in the future, everyone would be 'world-famous for 15 minutes', turned to his own image. He became as iconic as the people he had painted." And she added: "Using a photo booth was revolutionary and pioneering. It hadn't really been done before and it was very Warhol. It's ubiquitous, anybody could go and have a

photo-booth portrait so he's really doing the same thing he did with Campbell's soup cans, anybody can have Campbell's soup, anybody can have a photo-booth portrait. It's quintessential Warhol."

She described the image as his "first selfie" adding: "Warhol really is the godfather of the whole social media era. He is the man who kind of saw it happening before it was going to happen. The idea of celebrity culture was totally Warhol and painting himself was part of that. By 1963/64 he'd gained a level of fame and people were asking for portraits to be done in his iconic style, which was really what led him to turn the camera back on himself and create Warhol the brand. He was totally ahead of the game, doing that in the 1960s was incredible."

In 1968, the artist was critically wounded by a gunshot and, although he survived, themes related to the fragility of human life became more prominent in his work. His later self portraits feature skulls and became "more meditative and reflect on the idea of death".

The acrylic and silk-screen ink portrait is being sold by a private collector, who has had the image since 1985. Ms Baker added: "It's the self-portrait that you would want."

Andy Warhol, Self-Portrait, (1963/64) is expected to fetch between £5m and £7m when it goes under the hammer at Sotheby's Contemporary Art Evening Auction in London on 28 June