

VENUS

MANHATTAN LOS ANGELES

Andy Warhol | *Electric Chairs*
May 2 – June 25, 2016

VENUS

980 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10075



Andy Warhol, *Little Electric Chair*, 1964. Acrylic and silkscreen ink on canvas. 22 x 28 inches. 55.9 x

(New York, NY)— VENUS is pleased to present Andy Warhol's *Little Electric Chairs*, an exhibition of eighteen important paintings from one of Warhol's most significant and influential series of the '60s, *Death and Disaster*.

With the *Death and Disaster* series, Warhol explored the growing mass media's exploitation of tragic imagery in post-war America. The advent of celebrity culture and introduction of the television as a household object in the post-war era changed the way information circulated. Graphic, violent imagery—both gruesome and controversial—saw widespread broadcast for the first time with photographs of race riots, suicides, criminals, car crashes and worse. Warhol refers to this phenomenon directly with the *Little Electric Chairs*, a series whose source was a news wire service image from January 13, 1953 announcing the historic death

sentences of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg at Sing Sing Correctional Facility in upstate New York. Warhol began producing *Electric Chair* paintings in 1963—the same year that capital punishment was banned in the state, and the chair carried out New York's final execution.

By their repetition in irreverent colors ranging from hot pink to silver, Warhol transforms the once unsettling image of the chair into a visual perversion of the mass media's exploitation of graphic imagery and the public's ultimate desensitization to such material. In his essay on the series, Gerard Malanga credited Warhol with saying that "[a]dding pretty colors to a picture as gruesome as this would change people's perceptions of acceptance." The artist's reduction of the so-called "Sing Sing Death Chamber" to an endlessly recurring image subverts the chair's meaning. Regarded as one of his most important contributions to the Pop Art movement, Warhol's *Electric Chairs* reveal the banality that can attenuate even a topic as graphic as capital punishment.

Produced between 1964 and 1965, all of the works in the series are identical in size and subject matter though each silkscreen is unique in its color and ink saturation. Taking place in a smaller, modified space within the gallery, the exhibition at VENUS will pay homage to the inaugural presentation of the works that took place at the Jerrold Morris International Gallery in Toronto in March of 1965.

ABOUT VENUS

Founded in 2012 by Adam Lindemann, VENUS' Manhattan space is dedicated to curated exhibitions both historic and contemporary, which cast a unique and often iconoclastic view on the work of established artists or artists whose works have been somewhat overlooked. The gallery continues to collaborate with prominent artists, foundations, estates, and galleries. VENUS' Los Angeles gallery opened in May of 2015 and features a primary program in its 14,500 square foot exhibition space in the Downtown Arts District.

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