

# DANZIGER

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## On Rivington

Andy Warhol - Lips.

January 19 - February 25, 2017.

Andy Warhol's fascination with the feature and shape of women's lips can be traced back to his earliest personal work as well as his work as a commercial illustrator. It flourished in his most iconic works such as the paintings of Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor, and even Chairman Mao, where Warhol would highlight his subjects' lips, outlining and coloring each pair of lips in ways that made them the focal point of each painting. (As if to prove this point, in 1962 he made the painting "Marilyn's Lips"—a diptych that isolated and repeated Marilyn's lips 168 times.) The painting is now in the collection of the Hirschorn Museum.

For four decades, the depiction of lips were a touchstone for Warhol—a signature trademark that he returned to again and again in varied forms. It is tempting to read into this. Were his renderings of lips an expression of the artist's sublimated need for love, or sex, or communication? Was he interested in the individuality of each pair of lips? The form? The suggestiveness? Or all of the above?

While Warhol had started doing occasional commissioned portraits in the 1960s, by the 1970s it had become his main source of income and a relentless focus of his attention. To make these portraits he would take a Polaroid picture of the sitter which was then transferred to an enlarged silkscreen. Tracing simple outlines onto the canvas first, Warhol would underpaint the mouth and eye area so that when the silkscreen was applied on top those features would stand out. As always, it was his subject's lips that interested Warhol the most, so much so that in 1975 - always the avid bookmaker - Warhol created three different unique albums printing and/or collaging images of more than 60 different pairs of lips onto the album pages. It is from one of these three books that these works come. (Of the other two, one is now in the collection of The Warhol Museum and the other remains with the Warhol Foundation.)

The process is unusual. The lips are silkscreened onto various different tapes, from masking tape to packing tape to scotch tape, and then placed and adhered on to the 8 x 8 1/2" page. Because of the thin width of most of the tapes the substrate tape is laid down in layers. Sometimes the tape is laid down roughly and unevenly, sometimes the tape is trimmed to the outer edges of the lips. But the very handmade nature of each collage stands in interesting counterpoint to Warhol's proclaimed interest in the machine made artwork and the hands-off approach he increasingly adopted throughout his career.

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Until one of the “Lips” albums was exhibited at The Warhol Museum and subsequently the Morgan Library in their “Warhol - by the Book” shows (2015 - 2016) these particular types of work were virtually unknown. However, we now can see these unique collages as pure Warhol - isolated, mysterious, and glamorous. Repeating and varying the form, hovering between figurative and abstraction, each singular piece tells its own story and presents its own seductive identity in true Warhol fashion.