



Discovered Warhol Films Premiere with Live Music at BAM

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by Sandra Hale Schulman

Looking for a new twist in Andy Warhol's screen tests? Newly-unearthed short silent films and screen tests have been discovered, paired with live music performance, and are premiering across the country. "Exposed: Songs for Unseen Warhol Films" is set to arrive at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) from November 6 to 8, 2014. Can't wait? There's a selection of 12 well-known screen tests viewable at BAM right now, courtesy of BAM Visual Art. Warhol's films and film making are the subject of a November 7 Talk at BAM led by Claire Henry, senior curatorial assistant at The Whitney Museum of American Art, and Geralyn Huxley, film and video curator at the Andy Warhol Museum.

The installation of "Profiles: Andy Warhol's Screen Tests" in BAM's Diker Gallery operate as appetizer to "Exposed", which has its New York Premiere as part of BAM's Next Wave Festival. "Profiles" also provides a primer on Warhol's screen tests: short films of artsy, oddball staring contests with young, beautiful, or famous people who are given no lines to speak and nothing to do except communicate ... well ... something about who they are, or maybe who they wish to be. None of the films have a score or talking, just pure visual eye candy with occasional flickers of light and fast-cut edits that pre-dated MTV-style music video filmmaking by almost two decades.

These screen tests of Nico, Bob Dylan, Edie Sedgwick, Lou Reed and others have been pretty widely seen in various museum shows. For those who haven't seen them, "Profiles" provides the chance. A selection of 12 is currently being shown through November 30, 2014 at BAM's Peter Jay Sharp Building in the Diker Gallery.

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"Screen Test: Donovan [ST 78]" (1966). 60's pop singer/songwriter
Donavan Leitch.

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The newly discovered films catalogue a heady 1960s pop culture brew, including artists Marcel Duchamp and Robert Indiana; writers John Giorno, Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac and Gregory Corso; and the musician Donovan, along with perennial Factory figures Taylor Mead, who died last year, Gerard Malanga and Sedgwick. Warhol himself even makes an appearance in this half movie/half concert.

The production uses 15 never-before-seen, digitally restored selections from the 1960s screened

with live music performance. At the BAM premiere, expect to find live performances by Bradford Cox (Deerhunter, Atlas Sound); Eleanor Friedberger (The Fiery Furnaces); Martin Rev (Suicide); Tom Verlaine (Television); and performance curator Dean Wareham (Galaxie 500, Luna).

Each of the musical artists will provide a live music soundtrack for three Warhol shorts apiece.



Still from “Me and Taylor” (1963). Underground film Superstar Taylor Mead mugs and dances for Andy’s camera at Warhol’s Lexington Avenue home.

“Exposed: Songs for Unseen Warhol Films” isn’t the first time Warhol’s screen tests have made it onto the big screen, punctuated by music.

In 2008, the Andy Warhol Museum teamed with the musician Dean Wareham and his wife Britta Phillips (formerly of Luna and Galaxie 500) for “13 Most Beautiful ... Songs for Andy Warhol’s Screen Tests”. The film was a theatrical showing of 13 screen tests—featuring Dennis Hopper, Edie Sedgwick and Lou Reed, among others—accompanied by live music. A big hit, the production notched 85 performances over a period of five years and made it to DVD, a rare feat for a Warhol film.

Now the Warhol Museum has paired again with Wareham for “Exposed: Songs for Unseen Warhol Films”.

In the past few years, a treasure trove of hundreds of long-forgotten 16mm Warhol films was discovered in a Pennsylvania warehouse (yes, these things still happen) and were digitized as part of the ongoing effort to preserve Warhol’s films, with the Warhol Museum, MoMA and the Whitney all collaborating on the effort.



Musical director and performer Dean Wareham.

“The Warhol Museum narrowed the newly digitized films down to 35,” Wareham said of scoring the follow-up to “13 Most Beautiful” in a phone interview from Los Angeles.

"I zeroed in on some clips that looked like home movies, that appealed to me as being something different we had not seen much of; these have never been in circulation," he said. "There's a home movie of Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso and Gerard Malanga hanging on the couch at the Factory, and that's really unusual. Then there's Malanga licking Mary Woronov's boots that was last screened during a performance of the Exploding Plastic Inevitable in 1967."



Eleanor Friedberger performs at "Warhol Exposed 2014."

After winnowing the 35 newly digitized films into a cohesive set of 15, Wareham assigned each film to a musician.

Some artists, like Wareham and Friedberger, composed traditional songs to accompany the films, while others, like Verlaine and Rev, came up with a purely instrumental soundtrack. Verlaine was a member of Television, a pivotal '70s band that was not part of the punk scene that followed at CBGB, a club where they were the first group to perform. Verlaine's filigree guitar playing and dense, mysterious lyrics filled with art world references ("I fell right into the arms of Venus de Milo") set Television apart from the cruder, louder groups that soon followed.

"I picked Verlaine because I thought he would create something cool and cinematic," Wareham said.



Marcel Ducham and Benedetta Barzini screen test, 1966.

Martin Rev performed as half of the hypnotic electro-synth band Suicide along with Alan Vega, straddling the lines between electronica and dance music. The unusual duo filled large concert halls in their heyday, setting the stage for the industrial dance/rock/noise bands that boomed a decade later.

"Rev plays the synthesizer and some samples," Wareham said. "He really gets a groove going."



Robert Indiana, 1963.

BASIC INFO: “Exposed: Songs for Unseen Warhol Films” will be presented with live music from November 6 through 8, 2014 at the Peter Jay Sharp Building, BAM Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11217. Tickets are \$25. www.bam.org/music/2014/exposed-songs-for-unseen-warhol-films. “Exposed” is part of BAM’s Next Wave Festival taking place from September 7 through December 20.

A Talk on Warhol’s Films takes place on November 7 at 6 p.m. Tickets are \$15 or \$7.50 for Friends of BAM. The talk is led by Claire Henry, senior curatorial assistant at The Whitney Museum of American Art, and Geralyn Huxley, film and video curator at the Andy Warhol Museum. www.bam.org/talks.

BAM Visual Art presents “Exposed: Songs for Unseen Warhol Films” from October 3 through November 30, 2014 in the Peter Jay Sharp Building, Diker Gallery, 30 Lafayette Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11217. www.bam.org

They include a selection of 12 screen tests by Andy Warhol from 1964, 1965 and 1966. They spotlight Lou Reed, Bob Dylan, Nico, John Cale, Sterling Morrison, Maureen Tucker, Cass Elliot, Gino Piserchio, Ed Sanders, Cathy James, Antoine, and Eric Andersen with Debbie Green.