

The New York Times

May 19, 2011

ANDY WARHOL: 'Colored Campbell's Soup Cans'

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L&M Arts

45 East 78th Street, Manhattan

Through June 11

This might be the most beautiful [Andy Warhol show](#) you'll ever see. In 1965, three years after creating his first paintings of Campbell's tomato soup cans, Warhol produced a series of 20 in an eye-ravishing range of tropical colors on canvases measuring 3 feet high by 2 feet wide. This exhibition, the first ever to focus on the series, presents 12 of them, each silk-screened piece a finely tuned orchestration of four or five colors plus black and sometimes white.

Mechanical repetition is usually what you get in Warhol. His first [soup can paintings](#) mimicked the standard red, black and white of the original Campbell's product. They could be taken as a commentary on the standardization of all things under the aegis of industrialized consumerism. You are what you eat. But for a few years in the mid-'60s, something changed. There was an upsurge of joyous optimism signified most conspicuously in art by a dazzling flood of color in all forms of visual expression, from the high art of the [Color Field](#) painters and the sculpture of Anthony Caro to the mass arts of advertising, fashion, illustration and television programming.

What is remarkable here is how different each painting looks. The shift from one in two shades of semigloss plum on a Kelly green background, for example, to another in peach and aqua is startling. Each piece looks fresh and new every time you go back to it. The series should be installed permanently in a Warhol chapel to offset the existentialist gloom of [Rothko's](#).