

Andy Warhol finds fame in cemetery, too

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By Maria Sciuillo / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

We've all visited Andy Warhol's grave, one way or another.

An online Web cam makes this visually possible, and his reach extends well beyond. That giant yellow duck that so captivated Pittsburgh last summer? The Knit the Bridge" project? Even the fierce but beloved Hays eagles become interesting to us because Warhol cultivated the kind of cultural zeitgeist that made it OK to be passionate, as a society, about pop art and birds in the wild.

Iconic images of our Pittsburgh native artist, who belonged to the world, can be found in a gift shop in the Louvre in Paris, alongside Marilyn Monroe and Audrey Hepburn. But the man himself was laid to rest in a small cemetery in suburban Bethel Park, on a grassy hillside overlooking the steady rush of Route 88 traffic. Warhol Museum reveals renovations, new Halston exhibit

Nicholas Chambers, curator, and Lesley Frowick, niece of the designer Halston, talk about renovations and a new exhibit at the Andy Warhol Museum. (Video by Nate Guidry; 5/13/2014)

Once upon a time, Warhol mused that he wanted his headstone to read merely "Figment." Instead, visitors will find a simple carving of his name and the dates of birth (August 6, 1928) and death (February 22, 1987). They also might discover an assortment of gifts left in tribute: Campbell's soup cans, flowers, wreaths, religious objects, little rubber ducks, lanterns, writings, a fake human skull, action figures, notes and the stray sheaf of poetry.

A project from [EarthCam](#), The Andy Warhol Museum and St. John Chrysostom Byzantine Catholic Church set up two Web cams last August to provide a 24/7 online window on Warhol's grave site at St. John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Cemetery.

During the past nine months, the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette has snapped dozens of screen shots representing the good, the weird and the wonderful nature of visits to Warhol's grave.

The images, courtesy of EarthCam, show museum employees and visitors — one of whom is dressed as Elvis Presley — celebrating with birthday cake. The live streaming at www.EarthCam.com/warhol has documented some rather interesting visitors through the change of seasons.

Recently, someone dressed as the Easter Bunny hopped up to the site, basket in its paws. There have been Christmas wreaths, first fresh, then abandoned. Other screen shots reveal visits from high schoolers on a class trip, a group of people and a white dog, deer, rabbits and crows in the dark of night, footprints in the snow and a man in a kilt playing a trombone while a woman stands by with a red-and-white-umbrella, looking all the world like a cover from The New Yorker.

At some point, the headstone was wrapped like a birthday gift. Another time, foil was placed over both ends. Flowers and shrubs were planted, removed and others took their place.

On the day before Halloween, a woman dressed as Frida Kahlo was joined by a child in Marcel Marceau clown garb. A big brown dog makes a few appearances over the months, sniffing out remnants of the latest gifts to Andy.

Pittsburgh artist Madelyn Roehrig has been visiting Mr. Warhol's grave daily for years. Her collection of photographs, notes and anecdotes are part of the book project, "Conversations With Andy."

Ms. Roehrig, who maintains a Facebook page, "Conversations With Andy," will be conducting another video shoot from 5-6 p.m. on Memorial Day. Fans, she said, can talk with Warhol for the project. She will be visible on the EarthCam when she visits the grave site this afternoon at 1 to "tell Andy all about it."

Judging from the steady stream of visitors, Warhol's grave certainly is getting more than 15 minutes of fame.

