1960s Americana: Andy Warholâs Fabric

Description

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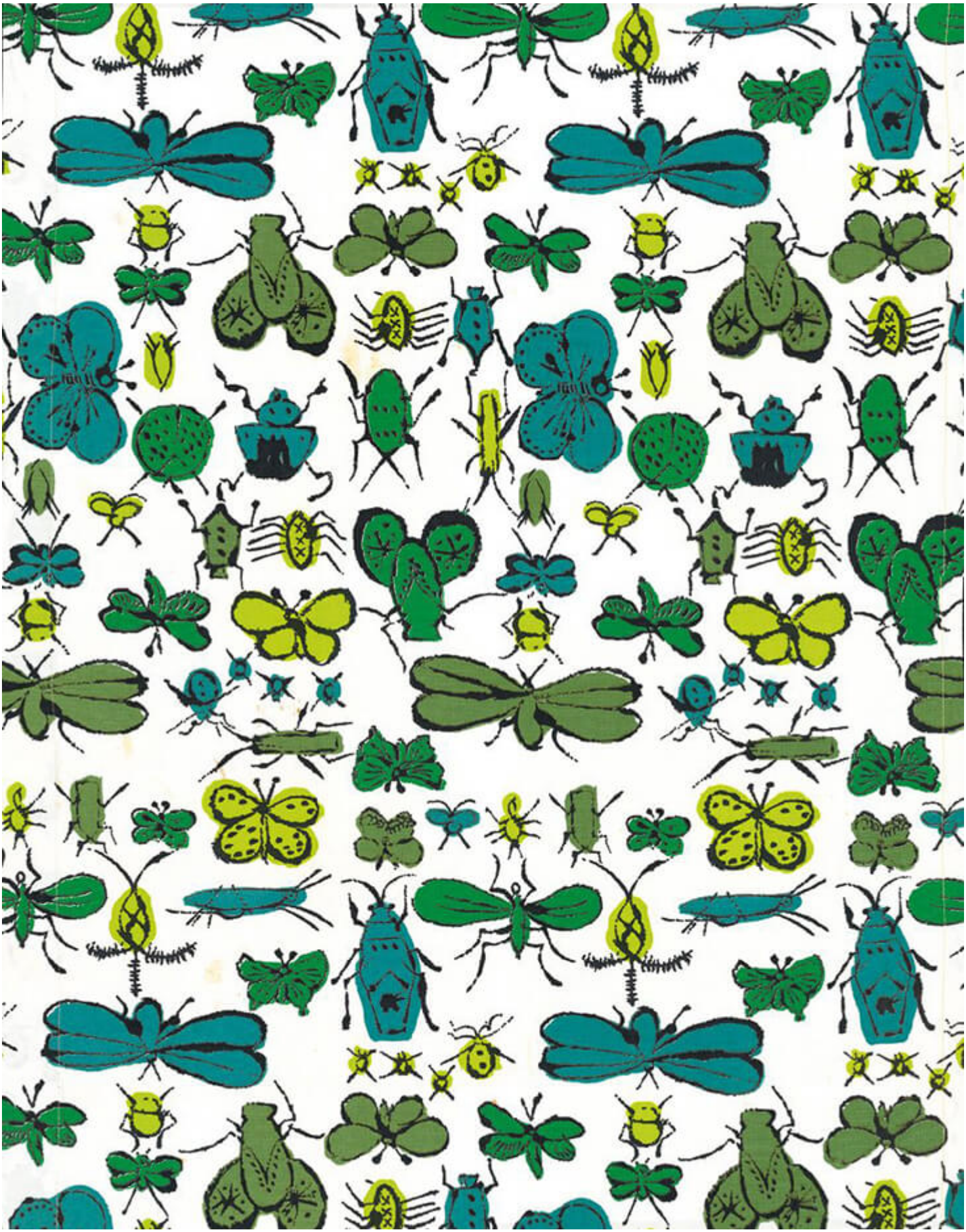
ornate fabric patterning, 1950s

Andy Warhol is the undisputed king of American Pop Art, creating some of the worldâs most iconic and emblematic works of art. Multiples, seriality and repetition were key themes in his art â think Campbellâs Soup Cans or Marilyn’s face â so perhaps itâs no surprise that among his many creative ventures he turned his hand to printed textiles. Much like his art, Warhol brought the symbols of 1950s and 60s Americana into his fabric patterns, creating playful, whimsical and vibrant designs that celebrate the lighter, more frivolous side of life in America, from indulgent ice-cream sundaes to day-glo butterflies, colourful buttons and blooming flowers. As his career grew, Warhol also demonstrated a love of fabric by transforming himself into a fashion icon, one that is now forever bound to life in 1960s New York.

Andy Warhol shoe illustration for I. Miller and the New York Times, featuring ornate fabric patterning, 1950s

Warholâs artistic career began as a freelance illustrator for a number of leading fashion and lifestyle magazines in New York City. His early illustrations demonstrated just how much he adored fashion, particularly the drawings he made in collaboration with the celebrity shoe designer I. Miller, which featured in the weekly Sunday supplement of the New York Times.

Made with graphic black lines and adorned in indulgent patterns and colours, they revealed Warhol’s fascination in the way patterns and clothing could lift one above the ordinary and into a fantasy realm.

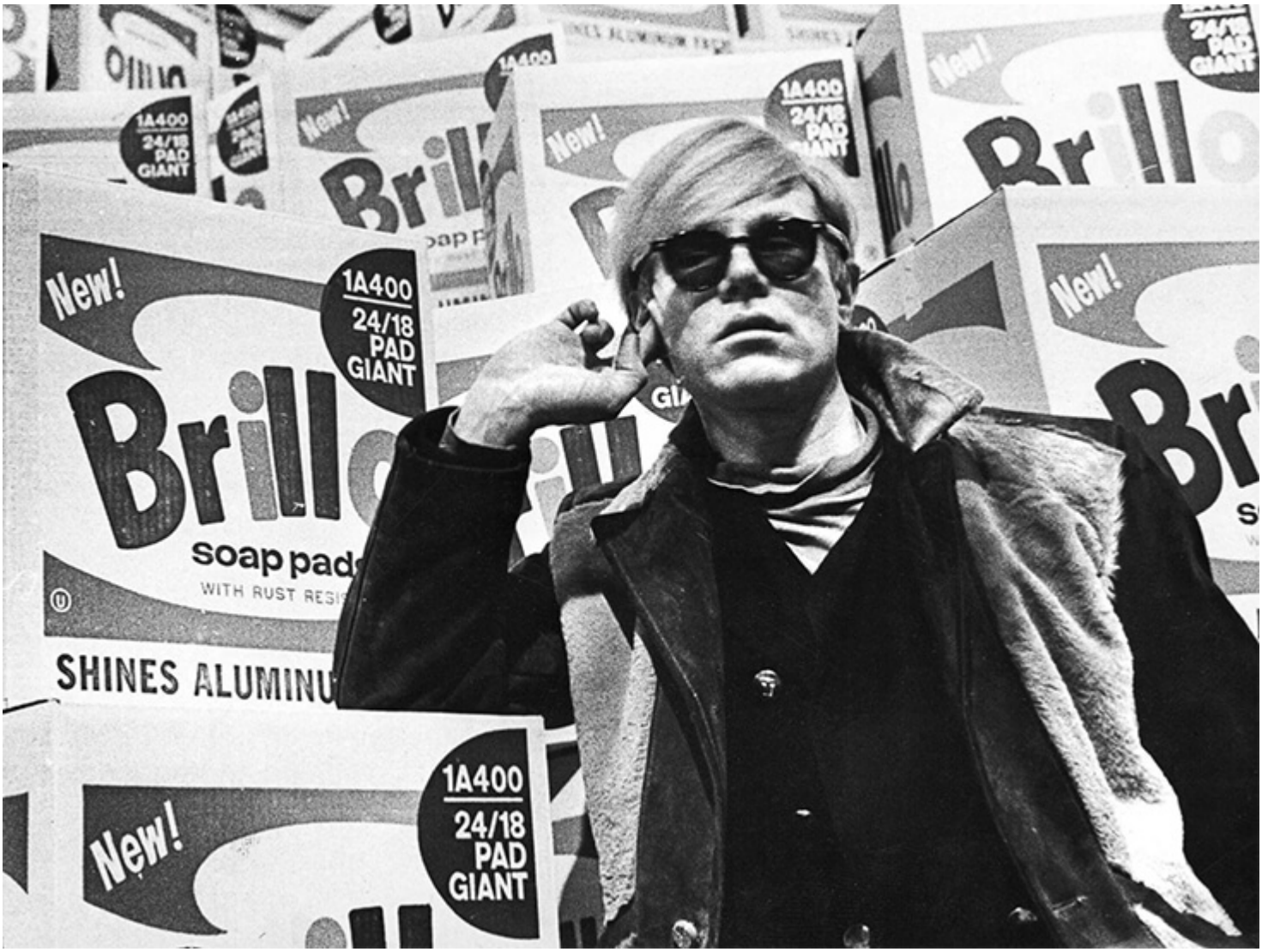


Andy Warhol’s ‘Happy Bug Da’ textile print for Fuller Fabric in the 1950s

As his reputation gradually grew, Warholâs repertoire expanded far beyond illustration into a wide pool of disciplines including printmaking, photography, film and more. He was famously indiscriminate, never turning down an opportunity to work with someone new, and this attitude paid off well, earning Warhol a wide social circle of contacts and friends across the city. From the 1950s onwards Warhol designed a series of repeat print textiles for Fuller Fabrics which echoed the playful, whimsical quality of his illustrations, with quirky line drawings of everyday ephemera that seemed to capture and celebrate the spirit of the times, including food, household objects, flowers, insects and animals, coloured with his trademark, eye-catching artificial hues.

Andy Warhol and Campbellâs Soupâs âSouper Dressâ, 1960s

Even in the 1960s when Warholâs career as a Pop artist was gathering pace, he still turned his hand to fashion, famously reproducing his iconic Campbells Soup Cans onto paper dresses which became highly desirable among New Yorkâs socialites. Campbellâs Soup even picked up on the publicity, creating their own âSouper Dressesâ (made in an 80/20 blend of cellulose and cotton) featuring Warholâs design, which anyone could buy for $1 and two soup labels. Unsurprisingly these are now collector's items that can sell for anything between $5,500 to $25,000.



Andy Warhol with his Brillo Boxes motifs, photographed in 1968

Throughout the 1960s Warhol began cultivating his own image, and his inimitable style is as instantly recognisable today as it was in his heyday â that of dark sunglasses, white blonde/silver hair, black and white clothes, smart jackets and jeans. He took this style with him to the glittering parties he frequented across New York City, including the star-studded nights at Studio 54, and his trademark look became its own form of branding, helping him sell himself as a commodity in an increasingly commercial world. In 1969 Warhol further deepened his connection to fashion by founding *Interview* magazine, which regularly printed articles and interview on leading designers.

Andy Warhol in New York City, c 1949,Â Philip Pearlstein

Since the 1960s, Warholâs voice has perpetually infiltrated the fashion world, through his multi-channel work as a textile designer, artist and fashion icon. In the 1980s, French fashion designer Jean Charles de Castelbajac paid

tribute to Warhol with a riff on the âSouper Dressâ, creating a dress shaped and decorated like a Campbell's Soup Can. Just a few years later, Italian designer Gianni Versace made a dress printed with Warholâs famous Marilyn motif as a bold repeat pattern. More recently, it is perhaps Warholâs own brand that has endured the test of time – in 2014, Danish fashion designer Peter Jensen styled his runway models to look like Warhol, with monochrome outfits, dark glasses and short silver hair, and he is just one of many who continue to replicate Warhol's style. All this afffirms that Warhol's image lives on today, not just for its effortlessly cool vibe, but the way it encapsulated the spirit of the time in which he was living, a hedonistic era of glamour, indulgence and escapist fantasy.

CATEGORY

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