



ANDY WARHOL

(Pittsburgh 1928 - 1987 New York)

Superman. 1981.

Colour screenprint with diamond dust. 8/200. Signed in pencil lower right: Andy Warhol. On the reverse with the stamp: © D.C. COMICS, INC. 1981. THIS INTERPRETATION CREATED BY ANDY WARHOL IS DERIVED FROM AN ORIGINAL VERSION OF SUPERMAN COPYRIGHTED BY D.C. COMICS. Sheet size 95.2 x 95.2 cm on Lenox Museum Board. Published by Ronald Feldman, New York (with the stamp on the reverse). Printed by Rupert Jason Smith, New York (with the blindstamp). From the 10-part portfolio "Myths".

Provenance: - Barrington Gallery of London. - Purchased from the above by the present owner, since then

private collection Germany. Catalogue raisonné: Feldman/Schellmann, no. II.260. With his 1981 series "Myths", Andy Warhol demonstrated his profound knowledge of the society of his generation. The founder of Pop Art revolutionised the art of the second half of the 20th century, by elevating to the status of art the mass-produced products, everyday objects and celebrity images, which dominated the lives of a large portion of society and made them accessible to everyone through works in series. In the "Myths" series he chose the "gods" of that time, the symbols and icons of a society in which mass consumption was becoming more and more important, and whose inspiration was shaped increasingly by mass media and Hollywood. He did not therefore compile a list of impeccable exemplary qualities, but showed a representative cross-section of shady, reckless, cunning, humorous and good characters, known and beloved worldwide through the films and serials of the 1950s. These included internationally renowned heroes such as Mata Hari, Dracula, Greta Garbo and Santa Claus, but also typical American characters such as Howdy Doody, Uncle Sam, The Wicked Witch of the West. Of course, Superman could not be omitted from this line-up. Superman was the first superhero in comic book history. In 1932 two teenage science fiction enthusiasts in Cleveland, Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, decided to publish the magazine "Science Fiction". In the first edition was a story about a bald-headed villain Super-Man, whose story over the subsequent years was completely reworked, and so from the villain with mental powers, came the "fighter for good", equipped with physical superpowers. Between 1934 and 1938 they tried unsuccessfully to place their Superman comics in newspapers and with publishing houses, until in the spring of 1938 National Publications included one of their comics in the new "Action" format, and enjoyed such success with Superman that from that point onwards the stories became a major series. The Superman comics soon had a worldwide distribution. During the Second World War they were taken up by the GIs (in Germany the comics were forbidden since Superman was considered a "Jew") and during the Cold War, Superman was used for propaganda as a symbol of freedom, honesty and representative of American values. Even today the fascination with Superman has not waned, as shown alone by the numerous successful film adaptations.

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In his screen print, Warhol shows the typical unmistakable pose of the flying superhero in his blue and red costume with the S emblem on his chest and his fist reaching forward. In addition to the representation and its symbolic power, the incredibly elaborate and meticulous technique of the screen print using diamond dust must also be mentioned. Warhol developed this technique in order to create as many prints as possible to a consistent standard. Bearing in mind that for each colour and each nuance of colour a separate screen was produced, the richly detailed image of Superman with its superimposed outlines is a rarely surpassed tour de force of printmaking.

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