

Andy Warhol's grave site to get 24/7 streaming webcam

By Alice T. Carter
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It's hard to pick out a birthday gift for anyone, says Eric Shiner, the director of the Andy Warhol Museum.

It's particularly difficult when the recipient is Andy Warhol, who died in 1987 in New York City at age 58.

Shiner and EarthCam CEO Brian Cury think they've picked out the perfect gift.

They're giving Warhol an [EarthCam](#) for his 85th birthday.

At 12:01 a.m. Aug. 6, Warhol received what is believed to be the first 24/7 [live streaming coverage of a grave site](#).

When it goes online, live streaming video and digital SLR webcams will allow virtual visitors around the world to pay their respects to Warhol at his resting place in St. John Baptist Byzantine Catholic Cemetery in Bethel Park by linking to [www.warhol.org/figment](#).

Grave site images will update every 15 minutes and one-of-a-kind artwork with Warhol-inspired image effects will be integrated into the grave-site snapshots.

The website will offer an opportunity to purchase memorial gifts that will be delivered to the tombstone.

"The idea of a video camera that was on 24/7 watching him has its roots in Warhol's work," Shiner says.

Warhol was a voyeur who liked to watch, an interest that was reflected in his eight-hour-long film "Empire," which turned an unblinking camera on the Empire State Building, and "Sleep," which showed John Giorno sleeping for five hours.

Shiner was unable to put a price tag on the project.

"EarthCam covered all the expenses," Shiner says, adding that, for the Warhol, it might be an example of re-gifting.

"The ECam is an added bonus to see more people being part of the journey," says Upper St. Clair artist Madelyn Roehrig, who stops by the burial plot almost every day to film and interact with visitors, then post a report on Facebook. "He would have wanted this. His memory lives in people."

Every year, hundreds of people pay a call to Warhol's grave site in person, Roehrig says. Many bring flowers or cans of Campbell's soup or leave him notes with questions — such as "Is Heaven glamorous?" — or asking for advice or help with relationships.

"It's like going to St. Andy for help," Roehrig says.

Warhol is the cemetery's only celebrity, says the Rev. Thomas Schaefer, who, as the pastor of St. John the Baptist Church on the South Side and St. John Chrysostom Byzantine Catholic Church in Greenfield, where Warhol was baptized, is responsible for the cemetery.

When Shiner and Cury first approached Schaefer with the idea, he listened with an open mind.

"It's an opportunity for people to come and pay respects," Schaefer says. "It will be interesting to see if it will spike their interest."

Schaefer, Shiner, Cury and Roehrig will be among those at the cemetery for a celebration of Warhol's 85th birthday that begins at 3 p.m. Aug. 6.

This is the fourth year that a large group of fans have shown up for what Roehrig calls "a vivid birthday party." As in previous years, Roehrig expects there will be dancing, musicians, people telling stories and lighting candles. People will sing "Happy Birthday," and there will be a birthday cake.

"Elvis is coming and maybe Marilyn Monroe. ... People dress up and do their thing," says Roehrig, who adds it's a celebration that's done with respect and reverence.

So, what would Andy think of being available on camera 24/7?

"I think he loves it," Roehrig says. "It's getting him out from being bored. I think he enjoys it. He likes people coming. There is never a quiet moment with him, even in the afterlife."



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Andy Warhol's grave in St. John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Cemetery in Bethel Park is often covered with memorabilia left by fans.

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Alice T. Carter is a features writer for Trib Total Media. She can be reached at 412-320-7808 or acarter@tribweb.com.