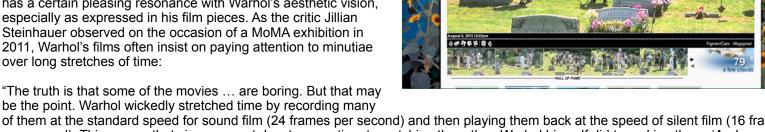# Slate

The Best Way to Celebrate Andy Warhol's Birthday? Watch His Grave.

By J. Bryan Lowder
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Andy Warhol, had he not died in 1987 due to complications from gallbladder surgery, might have lived to see his 85th birthday today. While many cultural institutions are celebrating the anniversary by posting favorites from Warhol's extensive body of work, the Andy Warhol Museum took a different—and more thematically appropriate—tack: In partnership with EarthCam, they're live streaming a shot of Warhol's gravesite in Pittsburgh.

According to the museum, the point of the project (called "Figment" after Warhol's unheeded desire to have the word printed on his tombstone) is to offer fans a way to visit the site virtually if they can't make the pilgrimage in person. But after watching the feed for a while—art students mulling around, tacky balloons twirling in the breeze—it's clear that "Figment" also has a certain pleasing resonance with Warhol's aesthetic vision, especially as expressed in his film pieces. As the critic Jillian Steinhauer observed on the occasion of a MoMA exhibition in 2011, Warhol's films often insist on paying attention to minutiae over long stretches of time:

"The truth is that some of the movies … are boring. But that may be the point. Warhol wickedly stretched time by recording many of them at the standard speed for sound film (24 frames per second) and then playing them back at the speed of silent film (16 frames per second). This means that viewers must devote more time to watching them than Warhol himself did to making them. 'Andy … had the patience never to be bored; or else he'd learned to plumb boredom's erotics,' writes critic Wayne Koestenbaum in a 2001 critical biography. 'Warhol's ability to enjoy boredom is a secular artistic translation of saintly patience, of stoicism—the willingness to wait for the Messiah.'"

Whether you spend 30 seconds or many hours watching Warhol's grave on the feed, remember Koestenbaum's point: For Warhol, the sublime was always hiding in the boring and the mundane, revealing itself only to those who take the time to look. Give it a try with "Figment." I can't think of a more fitting tribute.