Andy Warhol: Silver Clouds
Museum of Contemporary Religious Art (MOCRA), Saint Louis University
September 10 – December 17, 2006

for more information
call (314) 977-7170

The Silver Clouds at MOCRA

It is difficult to describe the Silver Clouds installation. Saying that it involves almost 70 large silver mylar pillow-shaped balloons tumbling around MOCRA’s spacious gallery with its 30-foot high ceilings doesn’t convey the captivating experience of walking through the Clouds, or lying on the floor as they float overhead, or having one nudge you as if inviting you to come play.

This interactive exhibit was described by one sixth grader as “dazzling, stunning, dancing, unreal, humble, acrobatic, joyous, amazing, complete, magical pillowy.” Yet for some people the Clouds also have been agents of calming and of healing, providing momentary respite from the stresses in their lives, or giving embodiment to deep, sometimes difficult emotional experiences.

MOCRA’s presentation is the largest ever installation of the Clouds. The Clouds installation is a visual, auditory and tactile experience that appeals immediately to the child in everyone.

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Museum hours: Tuesday through Sunday, 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Admission is free, though there is a suggested donation of $5 for adults and $1 for students and children.

MOCRA is happy to work with educators to arrange class visits during and outside of regular gallery hours, as well as to arrange group tours for other organizations. Please contact MOCRA for more information.

Saint Louis University’s Museum of Contemporary Religious Art (MOCRA)
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Saint Louis University’s Museum of Contemporary Religious Art (MOCRA) is the world’s first museum of interfaith contemporary art. Officially opened in 1993, MOCRA is dedicated to the ongoing dialogue between contemporary artists and the world’s faith traditions. Located in a spacious chapel that was used for over 35 years by Jesuits studying philosophy at Saint Louis University, MOCRA’s exhibitions demonstrate the range of contemporary religious and spiritual artistic expression, presenting the work of artists of regional, national and international stature.

Andy Warhol, Silver Clouds, 1966. Silver mylar, helium, air. Installation at MOCRA. Photo: Jeffrey Vaughn.
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Andy Warhol and the Silver Clouds

Andy Warhol (1928–87) is among the most notable and influential of twentieth-century artists. He worked in many media, including painting, sculpture, filmmaking, and publishing. Though best known for his images of consumer culture icons like Campbell’s soup cans and pop icons like Marilyn Monroe, Warhol’s wide-ranging artistic legacy has been explored with a recent major retrospective show in Berlin, London, and Los Angeles. Some art historians have detected a sensitivity to religious imagery in Warhol’s work, perhaps influenced by his lifelong ties to the Carpatho-Rusyn Byzantine Catholic Church. Dr. Jane Daggett Dillenberger has examined this aspect in her groundbreaking work, The Religious Art of Andy Warhol. It is from this vantage point that Saint Louis University’s Museum of Contemporary Religious Art (MOCRA) once again presents the largest ever installation of Warhol’s Silver Clouds.

The Silver Clouds debuted 40 years ago in 1966 at the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York City. Warhol explored new technology and media throughout his career and engaged in a number of fruitful collaborations with people in a variety of disciplines. The Silver Clouds were created with the assistance of engineer Billy Klüver (1927–2004), who worked with other notable artists such as John Cage and Robert Rauschenberg. They were later incorporated into a 1968 dance piece by choreographer Merce Cunningham titled Rainforest. Mercurial and buoyant, these pillow-shaped silver mylar balloons roam the air currents of MOCRA’s spacious nave gallery and respond to the touch of the viewer.

MOCRA introduced St. Louis audiences to the Silver Clouds in 2001 and reprised the exhibition in 2002. The exhibition offers a visual, auditory and tactile experience that appeals immediately to the child in everyone. As Jeff Daniel wrote in 2001 in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, the Clouds at MOCRA move beyond “time-honored and somewhat kitschy images of a cloud-filled heaven” to a “true, meditative effect,” “a spiritual quality,” and “a calming effect when one literally walks through the clouds.”

MOCRA welcomes all visitors to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Clouds this fall at MOCRA.

One St. Louis sixth grader who visited the earlier Silver Clouds installations at MOCRA in 2002 described the Clouds as
“dazzling, stunning, dancing, unreal, humble, acrobatic, joyous, amazing, complete, magical pillowy.”

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