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National College of Art and Design
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Framing*Camp*

Identity in the Work of Andy Warhol

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Intro*duction*

In mid 1987 Andy Warhol(1928-1987) died in a New York hospital from complications arising out of a routine surgical operation. It was a low key and ultimately mundane way to die for an artist famed for his excess and one whose name is known universally as much as, if not more than any of the old masters. One of the late twentieth centuries most celebrated artists and one many credit with a single handed revolution had departed leaving behind a prolific body of work and volumes of intelligent (and not so intelligent) criticism. Within this vast quantity of written work much is repetitive, some tedious and even more sycophantic. Some of this has come from Warhol himself with the much discussed diaries and numerous interviews. Warhol has been interpreted by countless commentators as being ultimately separated from his work. But his remark that 'I am in the surface of my paintings' has been ignored by many critics, and yet is telling in its incisiveness. Like all artists Warhol is asking us to read his work and bring to it our own value structure. One can read his work by many means, from a Marxist critique, a structuralist view point, a Jungian analysis but it is the intention of this essay to view it from the point of view of his identity, more specifically, that of him as a pre-politicised gay man. The term gay in this context used to indicate not only his orientation but also the vast amount of recent thinking that now lies behind it. Although this sounds frighteningly like yet another label upon which to hang his work it is one created by the limitations of both the language and the meaning we bring to the term 'gay'.

The last 25 years has seen the rise of gay liberation politics both as a political struggle and as a philosophy, the term 'queer' has been appropriated to define this struggle in the 90's. A word which for many still carries a great discomfort. It has been taken by some who feel the need to continue the search for an identity disassociated from assimilationist ideals. It is interesting to note that the beginnings of a Gay political identity walked hand in hand chronologically with Warhol's own career. We shall see that it is by

the use of camp, that Warhol facilitated a questioning of the authenticity of persona itself. In this case the use of camp in its broadest sense as a means of signifying things as something other than their appearance would suggest.

Within the art establishment Warhol was surely its greatest self publicist and his own greatest creation. For many he is credited with the invention of pop art, a notion he liked to perpetuate. Even though pop art proper stemmed years earlier from another ideal with Rayner Banham and Richard Hamilton and their associates at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Britain. Indeed it was their fascination with popular American iconography in all its forms that enabled them to introduce it into their paintings and collage. Warhol differed from them in his popularisation of his images. Deliberately taking popular, easily accessible images and making art for the masses. He proclaimed the death of the author but became arts greatest auteur. He claimed his work was objective, outside himself, yet he controlled its every avenue of production including the lives of the actors in his movies. He perfected an androgeny aided by his albino-like appearance, yet his personality towered like any of the skyscrapers of his beloved Manhattan. Now ten years after his death and with the establishment of the 'Queer' agenda it is significant that we look at his work in the light of this aspect of his life. An aspect he kept very much in the background and would claim had very little to do with his work. This thesis is not intended as a revision in the reading of his work but rather an addition to the already voluminous criticism of his work, world and those who inhabited it.

1 Framing *Camp*

Caning the Soup - The Arrival of Warhol

Camp Traces: The Hidden Expression

The Origins of Camp - Delsarte, Balzac and Wilde's Endeavours

Defining Camp

Ross and Sontag - Politicization Vs. Aestheticization

In the early 1960's in New York every other gallery seemed to be dripping with the last mannerist swoon of abstract expressionism. The rather irreverent slang on the streets for all of this dribble and splash painting was 'soup'. When one ventured into the very first one man gallery show by the artist Andy Warhol(1928-1987) at the Ferrus Gallery in Los Angeles one was greeted by 32 paintings of individual soup cans. Each had a label stating its particular flavour. At that time on the art scene there was a little ritual that one could engage in upon entering the Warhol show. If one wished to partake in the role of the innocent. One would exclaim "where is the soup?" at which point should there be members of Warhol's following present they would reply "It's in the can." This was in keeping with Warhol Factory argot-to get things perfectly wrong, by taking the inside and putting it outside and taking the outside and putting it inside. Warhol was obsessed with upsetting the dominant cultural balance of the time. With his first one man show he was canning abstract expressionism in no uncertain terms and exploring, and exposing the nature of taste and connoisseurship.

Having been free to examine all of the flavours of the soup represented one was free to choose one's favourite according to taste.

Warhol's art was indeed working from an understanding of the the degree to which images are bound by context. He understood their virtues and how language describes them. He inscribed in his accommodation of images to slogans of his time - but in a way that no other artist had done - he had made them perfectly wrong. His language was one of deconstructing content and context to generate a certain transgression and inappropriateness. His grand

scheme was to achieve artistic visibility and notoriety by acquiring the wrong image for the right place and by accommodating his images for criticism in exactly the wrong way.

What one could suggest is that Warhol created the possibility of a post-modern future by making visible in the modern present the invisible cultural heritage of a pre-modern past (In his reinvigouration of patronage and consultation practises that had dominated the procedures of art making in the West from approximately the 16th century onwards and that had remained under the cloak of romantic and classical modernism).

Camp TracesThe hidden expression.

Confronted by a culture whose aggressive priorities and primitivist frontier values marginalised him as a human being and trivialised him as an artist he had no choice but to rewrite its subtext. While never dealing head on with his own homosexuality in his work there was clearly a continued tribute to a 'gay regard' (Worman 1991) - a flooding of dominant discourse with residues and traces through the contagious yet subterranean power of metonymic conjunction' (Beaver after Todorov, Douglas, Croker 59)¹. James C Scott calls this type of resistance 'the hidden transcript', that is the mode by which marginalised insinuate their own voices albeit in masked form into official public discourse.

It has always been recognized that the male homosexual component is important to the whole development of western European art. A number of male figures in this tradition are known to have been homosexual or bisexual and their sexual orientation unquestionably coloured their work (Michelangelo and Leonardo are cases in point). Whether we move to discuss Michelangelo's David or the drawings of Leon Cogniet (ill. 1) we see both

these artists attempting to do the same thing - describing something something other than the reality of flesh. in both cases the male figure is more than just an exercise in academic study. It is presented as a finite ideal. These figures are without doubt homoerotic. Allen Ellenzweig in his essay entitled ' Picturing the homoerotic' regards homoeroticism as having '.....to do with feelings of desire and affection between members of the same sex, but not necessarily their physical expression which is more properly the provenance of pornography especially when that expression is sexual. These feelings can encompass the full range of male or female bondings from friendship to teacher -student relations to the fellow feeling of brothers or men at war; and often an erotic aspect to these relationships may lurk like a phantom in the background.'²



III. 1
Leon Cogniet
Academic study
of a male nude
c. 1815

American artist Marsden Hartley (1878-1943) memorialized his affair with a German officer of the first world war, Lieutenant von Freyburg, who was killed in battle, in several of his works. Hartley's paintings are densely coded works. So much so that it was not until long after his death that their homoerotic subtext was interpreted. In his 'Painting no.47



III. 2
Marsden Hartley
Painting No. 7
Berlin
c. 1915

B e r l i n ,
c.1915(ill.2) we
see an array of
German military
emblems, but
still it is difficult
to understand



Ill. 3
Paul Cadmus
The Fleet's In
1934

the significance if we do not know the story of the relationship behind the paintings content. Much art produced by in the closet gay men tends to have two parallel meanings -one that is evident to all viewers and one that is clear only to those who sympathise with the artists sexual orientation. A very worthy example is Paul Cadmus (b.1904) and his painting entitled ' The fleet's in' 1934 (ill.3). This painting completed for a public works project exhibition at Washington's Corcoran gallery was pulled from the exhibition prior to opening at the request of the then assistant secretary of the United States navy, H.L. Roosevelt. He claimed that the painting was a defamation of the American sailor. The censorship of the painting was enthusiastically seized upon by the press. Roosevelt, interestingly failed to read the homoerotic subtext inserted by Cadmus his difficulty with the work was; 'This painting represents a most disgraceful, sordid, disreputable, drunken brawl wherein apparently a number of enlisted men are consorting with a party of street walkers and denizens of the red light district. This is an unwarranted assault....and evidently originated in the sordid imagination of someone who has no conception of actual conditions in the service. ³

It becomes increasingly clear that a considerably encoded language is in operation in much homoerotic art for only some to decipher. The artist Keith Haring(1958-1990) regards this coded language as a sense of 'double vision'

' as a gay person, one grows up with the people around you, including your parents assuming you are straight. At some point of course you know different and so you acquire a sense of double vision. You are

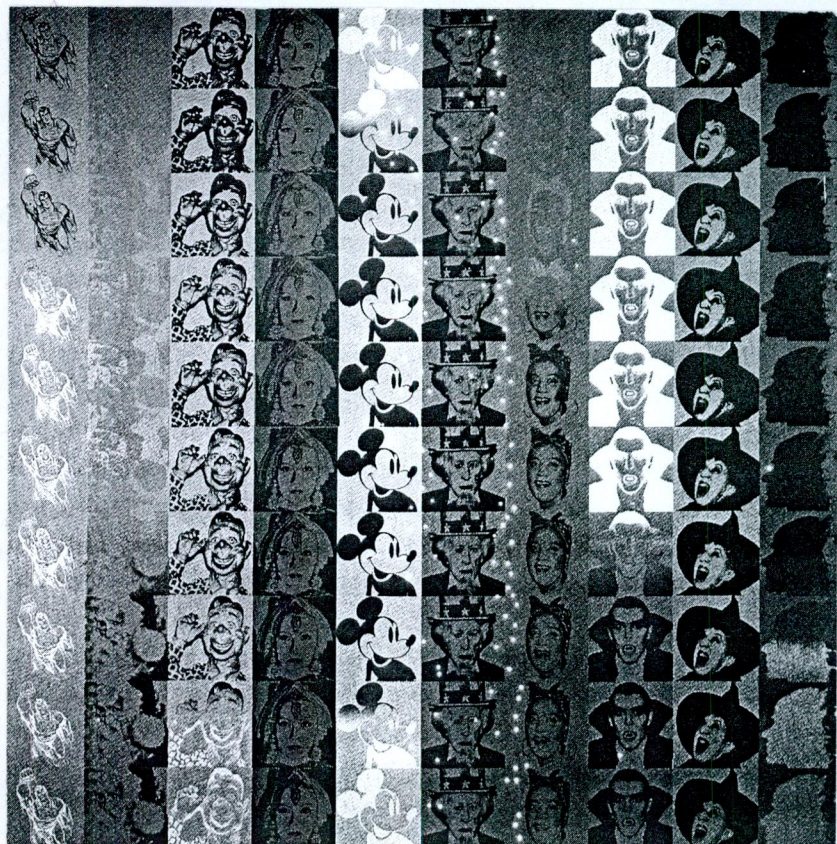
able to see the truth behind the illusion. Growing up with this double vision helps you to practice it on art, on cinema, or in writing. You imagine all sorts of things in order to create a world where you exist.⁴

Undoubtedly the artist who most successfully exploited this is Warhol. Anyone capable of reading Warhol's symbols (his Elvises, Liz Taylors, his tabloid presentations understand them to be 'camp'. Sontag regards camp as'.....a vision of the world in terms of style,...a particular kind of style. It is the love of the exaggerated , the 'off', of things being what they are not.' ⁵

We have only to look to Warhol's 'myths' series (ill.4) of 1981 to appreciate this. Here Warhol's title reveals that he is encouraging us to question the validity of the processes involved in the making of icons of dominant cultural production and mass media. By far the most potent are the image of 'Uncle Sam' and 'Garbo'. Uncle Sam representing the great American way (which has traditionally excluded the homosexual from its vision of a productive America) and secondly we have Greta Garbo as Hollywood's creation of an

icon for all
'decent'
heterosexual
Americans,
who was in
reality a
lesbian.

Vito Russo in
his 'The
Celluloid
Closet'
considers



III. 4
Andy Warhol
Myths
1981



that the major concern for homosexuals involved in cultural production has always been how to be 'out' in production, or indeed whether to be out at all. Camp has been recognised as the very first tool that gay men and lesbians could use to reverse or at least question the terms of dominant cultural production and reading.

The origins of camp

Delsarte, Balzac and Wilde's endeavours

In 1909, the word camp entered into the dictionary of victorian slang by J. Redding Ware entitled passing english for the victorian era, (an accompaniment to the foremost English slang dictionary of that era 'Slang and it's Analogues' published between 1890 and 1904). Camp was a 'new' word at that time. Ware defined camp as actions and gestures of exaggerated emphasis; 'probably from the French, used chiefly by persons of exceptional want of character.' The accepted interpretation of Wares' definition of camp concludes that the word camp has a french etymology. We can safely interpret that ware supposes that the gestures and actions were integrally french and as if by extension of a certain franco-phobia, that Homosexuality was a French creation imported into England.

It is at this point in the history of camp that we must turn to Oscar Wilde and his trip to the United States in 1882. Wilde had met and become a close friend of a Mr. Steele Mackaye during his visit to New York. Mackaye had become one of the foremost teachers of acting in New York at that time, having originally studied acting in France under Francois Delsarte. Delsarte had given his name to a system of voice training employed by public speakers and actors in France between 1839 and 1871.

Working intensively with Delsarte during the latter years of the masters life, Mackaye had become his only American student and the first to introduce

Delsartian methods of acting to the United States. While Mackaye studied he became as much a partner of Delsarte as a student. Indeed it was Mackaye who introduced physical gestures and movements into Delsarte's system of voice training, including a technical science of signifying gestures and postures. Wilde may have been drawn to the Delsartian system because of its echoing of Balzacian ideas that had been of interest to him since his reading of Balzac's 1830 essay 'Traite de la vie elegante'. In this essay Balzac attempted a scientific approach to self-representation by 'Scrutinizing the signs transmitted by different kinds of character, profession- habits and style of life, he formulated the laws that govern the body.' (Stanton)⁶

Balzac named four practices of signification that would enable a classification and decoding of any individual. These four practices were - speech, gesture, costume and posture. Delsartes system allowed a classification of all behavioural phenomenon in terms of a trinitarian system - thus he identified three signifying codes; speech gesture and posture. By Wilde combining both the Balzacian and the Delsartian systems he had the ideal recipe; to exaggerate and appropriate mannerisms to affect continual self promotion.

Art making for the Delsartian apostle involved the construction of an art object to represent an exterior surface. This would by its very nature essentially represent the artists interiority. In order that this should be achieved the artist firstly creates a sign or an exterior display object(that signifies a displaced interiority). Secondly by composing oneself as the work of art itself the artist was consciously appropriate the sign back onto themselves. Thus converting an interiority into an exteriority. For Wilde the real value of the Delsartian system was in its approach to the notion of exteriority. While exteriority would reflect an already posited interiority it could also offer the creation of an entirely new interiority and thus a new notion of personal identity.

Wilde's problem was that of a crisis in language- for there was yet to be a homosexual social identity for him to register with. Wilde's social identity was very unclear to him as he struggled to fashion it out of its only available source - Homoerotic desire. At that time Homoeroticism was only conceived as relational, organized around the performance of a particular sexual act. Any extension into a notion of a sensibility or an identity. simply didn't exist at this point in time. Before visiting the United States in 1882 Wilde had concentrated his endeavours into the making of himself into the aesthete . Donning knee briches, a lilly, a velvet jacket and green tie made him well known as 'the great aesthete' and the 'professor of aesthetics'. Upon his return from the United States he abandoned his previous incarnation for a slightly altered version of the Balzacian dandy.

Wilde's new dandyism was his own, not simply the inheritor of a continuous tradition, Oscar Wilde injected his creation with a homoerotic presence. Previous 'versions' of the dandy often aroused suspicion around the sometime effeminacy which was seen as peculiar. But even so the concerns rarely contained anything more than a simply implausible allusion to the love that dare not speak its name, for dandyism was mostly seen as simply referring to a disinterest in sex - and not an interest in same sex sexual activity. If Wilde was to be successful he would produce a homosexual identity free from engaged sexual acts. It was very new territory indeed for him to explore - a growing awareness of difference.

While much has been written about Wilde's trials what is most important to us at this point is the realization that Wilde's entering into legal processes was not because of an actual act of perverse sexual activity but because of his signifying of that which refers to the perverse. Indeed Wilde was the perfect semiotic criminal - not a sexual one. In an attempt to construct an

autonomous identity through a Delsartian inspired appropriation of the sign he had transgressed the conditions under which his masculine privileges of inscription could be articulated. Wilde had collapsed the interior and exterior divide in his creation of himself as a surface (or artifact) purely for articulation and manipulation of the self.

Wilde had become the homosexual as individual and not simply the sodomite. And what he had come to represent incited fear in dominant society at that time. As Frederic Jameson has explained ; ' To name something is to domesticate it, to refer to it repeatedly is to persuade a fearful and beleaguered middle class public that all of that is part of a known and catalogued world and thus somehow in order...' ⁷

Innumerable commentators on gay politics have remarked in support of Wilde and his endeavours. For example, Michael Bronski in his 'Culture Clash' honours Wilde as 'perhaps the most important figure in the history of gay sensibility'⁸ Stephen Gee's History of Gay activism suggests that both Wilde and camp are 'perfect models for the study of Gay resistance that are hidden in history'. Susan Sontag has dedicated her notes on camp to him.

Defining Camp

There are very few concise definitions of camp. While there have been practically no deviations in formal recognition there have been variable analyses of context. By far the most concise elaboration on camp has been proposed by Jack Babuscio⁹ who refers to four basic characteristics or features of camp.

- (i) Irony - any highly incongruous contrast between an individual or thing and its context or association.

(ii)Aestheticism - Style as a means of self projection, a conveyer of meaning and an expression of emotional tone.

(iii)Theatre - To take life as particularly in terms of sex role playing, is fundamental to both camp and gay consciousness.

(iv)Humour- As strategy for reconciling conflicting emotions - it is a means for dealing with a hostile environment and in the process of defining a positive identity.

Ross and Sontag

Politicization versus Aestheticization

Significantly Babuscio argues that camp humour is much more than mere mockery as it always relies on a strong involvement with a situation or object while comically appreciating its contradiction. In this sense camp humour is quite different from mere mockery which simply requires a detachment from the object of parody. Susan Sontag in her essay 'Notes on camp' (1964) begins her discussion by disassociating herself from any personal association with a camp sensibility ;'.....no one who shares it can analyse it '.¹⁰ It is as if she feels the need to remain a distant, somewhat sterile observer.

Sontag is clearly aware of the role of contradiction in camp. While a camp object is so beautiful, so good, or so wonderful. They are also so ugly, so awful or so bad. This is significant of Sontag's attempts to aestheticize camp, to apoliticize it and to remove its deconstructive properties. Even when camp is used to describe a person it is used to transform that person, to make them 'a camp'. This objectivist bias that reduces people to a 'thing like' status is

used to assist in the making of 'pop camp'. Sontag attempted to minimise the link between camp and male homosexual sub-culture, by drawing considerable connections between camp and the art world. Since her writing on the subject camp has been used and indeed co-opted by the media world (Television, radio, film, music, advertising etc.). There is a tendency for mass culture to grab hold of almost anything new or different or novel to add to a livening up of somewhat jaded tastes. Indeed, the media worlds absorption of sub- cultures is almost part of the structure of contemporary cultural practice.

Sontag was clearly down playing camps deconstructive potential when she said: 'Jews pinned their hopes for integration into modern society on promoting the moral sense. Homosexuals have pinned their integration into society on promoting the aesthetic sense. Camp is a solvent of morality. It neutralizes moral indignation - it sponsors playfulness'.¹¹ What is entirely excluded from Sontag's discussion is the possibility that camp might perhaps be a discursive mode which allows homosexuals to adapt to the conditions encouraged by heterosexual homophobia.

In a much acclaimed (but often overlooked in the recent climate of a reappraisal of Sontag) essay entitled 'The Uses of Camp', Andrew Ross (1989), discussed the motives and techniques of appropriation that have occurred since Sontag's 'Notes' and which went to underlie the formation of Pop camp. Ross suggests that appropriation of camp occurs 'when the products...of a much earlier mode of production which has lost its power to dominate cultural meanings become available in the present for redefinition according to contemporary codes of taste'.¹² If we take Anthony Giddens' definition of dominance as the power to control the construction of cultural meanings then the 'mode of production' that Ross mentions is actually a mode of discursive value production - not industrial production.

Ross cites several moments in the history of cultural production that have acquired camp status. One of the earliest occurred in 1961 in the film 'Whatever Happened To Baby Jane'. The film closes with the faded star Baby Jane Hudson lying comfortably in a sun chair on a beach, she is in a world of her own quite detached from the group of young people that are beginning to gather around somewhat amused at her continuous rantings about a world and characters they know nothing about. Similarly in 'Sunset Boulevard' another female character Norma Desmond completely enters a world of her own as the film comes to a close. She dramatically leaves her home in the belief that she is being called upon to take on a new role in a silver screen blockbuster - as the star she once was. She departs her Hollywood mansion in the belief that the camera lights are waiting to capture her perennial beauty not just once more, but again and again.

Interestingly, for her role as Baby Jane Hudson, Bette Davis insisted on controlling how her face would appear on screen-and it was to look as jaded as possible. Davis would do her best to shatter the image of the silver screen female star.

Without doubt these women signalled the end of an era in Hollywood, taking a moment to re-surface like a rediscovery of history's waste and entering into camp history. Ross is concerned with the discursive potential of camp. It exists as a pulse against the predictable and the expected. What is crucial for Ross in the defining of female gay icons is that they are image personified, they are acting and they are fake. They attempt, for Ross to deconstruct and challenge assumed gender roles by the very virtue of the fact that what they are is nothing but representations of womanliness that vary from moment to moment.¹³ The camp palette, in savouring these representations, assumes that there is no escape from these roles. In appearing to be almost opposed to the search for new alternative utopian values and essentialist ethics camp may be pre-political even reactionary.

For Ross a throwaway culture contains a message about the historical production of material and conditions of taste- knowledge of this is where camp steps in. It looks over the found wanting, the unsatisfactory, the picked over by the purveyors of the antique. The neglected one time star suddenly unfashionable, would be welcomed by the camp heart. George Melley praised camp as being'.....central to almost every difficult transition moment in the evolution of pop culture, it helped make a forced march on good taste'.¹⁴ Garbo would claim camp icon status as soon as she proclaimed ' I want to be alone ' and proceeded to retire at the age of thirty-four. She was turning her back on the cameras and reclaiming her beauty , stealing it back from the heavily patriarchal Hollywood establishment proving that camp indeed lies in the smirk of the beholder.

Sontag seems to ignore all of these potentials of camp and stays within a reappraisal of an aestheticization of - camp for all. It is only upon reaching note number 50 that she feels she needs to explain the '....peculiar relation between camp taste and homosexuality ' . In perhaps her most telling remark she proposes that aristocracy exists vis a vis culture which in turn exists via power and that 'the history of camp taste is in turn the history of snob taste. Since authentic aristocrats in the old sense rarely exist today who bares taste? - an impoverished self elected class, who constitute themselves as the aristocrats of taste.' ¹⁵

She continues; ' While it is not true that camp taste is homosexual taste there is no doubt that there is a peculiar affinity and overlap.' Then she proceeds; 'But homosexuals by and large constitute the vanguard and the most articulate audience of camp.'¹⁶

For Ross Sontag signified the arrival of the camp appropriator or camp liberator, the parasite who would focus almost exclusively on aestheticism and would represent the homosexual referent only on its own terms as a frivolous aesthete.

However Ross locates a pre-potent position within the objectivist manoeuvring of camp into dominant culture by indicating a way the homosexual referent can reintroduce the discursive potential of camp back into discourse. This can be done by identifying the social knowledge displayed by camp 'agency'. As Ross describes 'pop experience already contains the knowledge that it will soon be outdated, spent, obsolete, or out of fashion'.¹⁷ In other words the power of camp relies on an awareness of its own mutability and its position as an appropriated commodity. Warhol most definitely read camp as a discursive element and infused his work-and pop with it.

2 Making *Waves*

Post World War 2 - Artist as hero

Other Voices - Warhol as Outsider

Seeking Definition

Fitting In - Superman, Superstar

Post World War Two- The Artist As Hero

Much has been written about the Abstract Expressionist movement in the United States in the period just after the Second World War has been explored in innumerable dissertations. However it is essential at this point that we pause briefly to formulate a backdrop to Warhol's, and pops, emergence.

In America, post world war two the production of visual art was dominated by the abstract expressionists, namely Jackson Pollock (b.1912-d.1956), Willem De Kooning (b.1904), Franz Kline (b.1910-d.1962), and Robert Motherwell (b.1915-d.1991).

Most notable, for our purposes, was Jackson Pollock or 'Jack the dripper' as he was also known. Pollock would come to represent the epitome of white American male artist as hero.

By the time of his sudden death in a car accident (associated with much alcohol abuse) in 1956, his canvases had become notorious tributes to pure gesture. Created beneath him, with the unstretched canvas lying on the floor, Pollock's figure looming above as his brushes, sticks and other implements ejaculated liquid pigment in his frantic attempts to detach himself from the artist's signature brush stroke.

His series' were one continuous paint scape, chopped and shaped by Pollock and his agent upon requiring finite productions for the eager art market. The resulting stretched and hanging canvases represent altars to the artist's pure gesture.

As Pollock remarked; 'When I am in my painting, I'm not aware of what I'm doing. It is only after a sort of 'get acquainted' period that I see what I have been about' ¹

Should we begin to believe that Pollock really had detached himself from authorship and the classical caress of the craftspersons brush he would salvage his endeavours ; ‘ Because painting has a life of it’s own, I try to let it come through. It is only when I lose contact with the painting that the result is a mess. Otherwise there is pure harmony...’²

Pollock was continuing the true romantic tradition bringing his creations firmly back under his wing, echoing Frederich Schlegel in 1803; ‘Painting must be painting and nothing else, it’s one proper aim is not life and strength alone, but the one incomprehensible union of, soul, expression and individuality.’³

In 1953 Robert Rauschenberg(b.1925) produced ‘Erased De Kooning drawing’ which must have been a defining moment for Warhol. While Rauschenberg remarked in an interview that he was using the process of erasing as a ‘drawing tool, trying to purge myself of my teaching and at the same time exercise the possibilities,so I was doing monochrome no image’⁴ significantly Rauschenberg had asked De Kooning for an important drawing that the abstract expressionist would miss. Warhol would remark; ‘John’s and Bob Rauschenberg and others had begun to bring art back from abstraction and introspective stuff.’

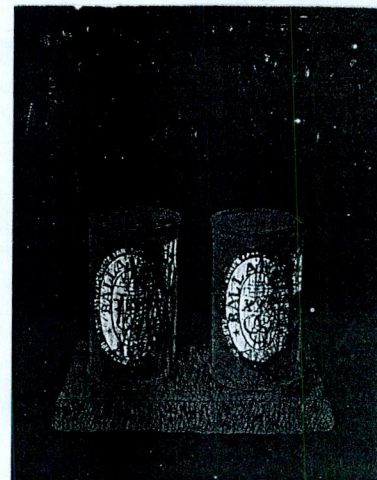
While Rauschenberg had appropriated an art image from a hugely successful abstract expressionist painter,and to all intents and purposes erased it, he still, in it’s title refered to it as a De Kooning drawing that had been destroyed. This would pave the way for Warhol and pop- the master of passive manipulation.

The examples of Rauschenberg and Jasper John’s(b.1930) provided the means and attitudes to formulate a ‘new’ painting style that used Duchamp’s notion of art to offer a critique of art.

In an interview in 1946 with James Johnson Sweeney, Duchamp(1887-1968) elaborated on the artistic condition according to the Dadaist position; 'Dada was an extreme protest against the physical side of painting...it told you 'don't forget you are not quite so blank as you think you are'. Usually a painter confesses he has his landmarks. He goes from landmark to landmark. Actually he is a slave to landmarks - even to contemporary ones.'⁵

Rauschenberg and Johns showed a keen interest in following the path of the Dadaist master. In 1954 they visited the Louise and Walter Arensberg collection of Duchamp's work at the Philadelphia museum of art. Rauschenberg stole, as a kind of relic, the thermometer from Duchamp's ready made; 'Why not sneeze - Rose Selavy ' (1921) being openly displayed.

In 1960, as if by further insult to De Kooning, Johns made 'Painted Bronze (ale cans) (ill.5). Two cylinders, not beer cans, are cast in bronze and then painted to simulate the original 'Belantine' ale label. According to Johns this work was made as a response to a remark made by De Kooning about Leo Castelli, Johns' agent. De Kooning apparently said '...You could give him two beer cans and he could sell them.'⁶



Ill. 5
Jasper Johns
Bronze Ale Cans
c. 1960

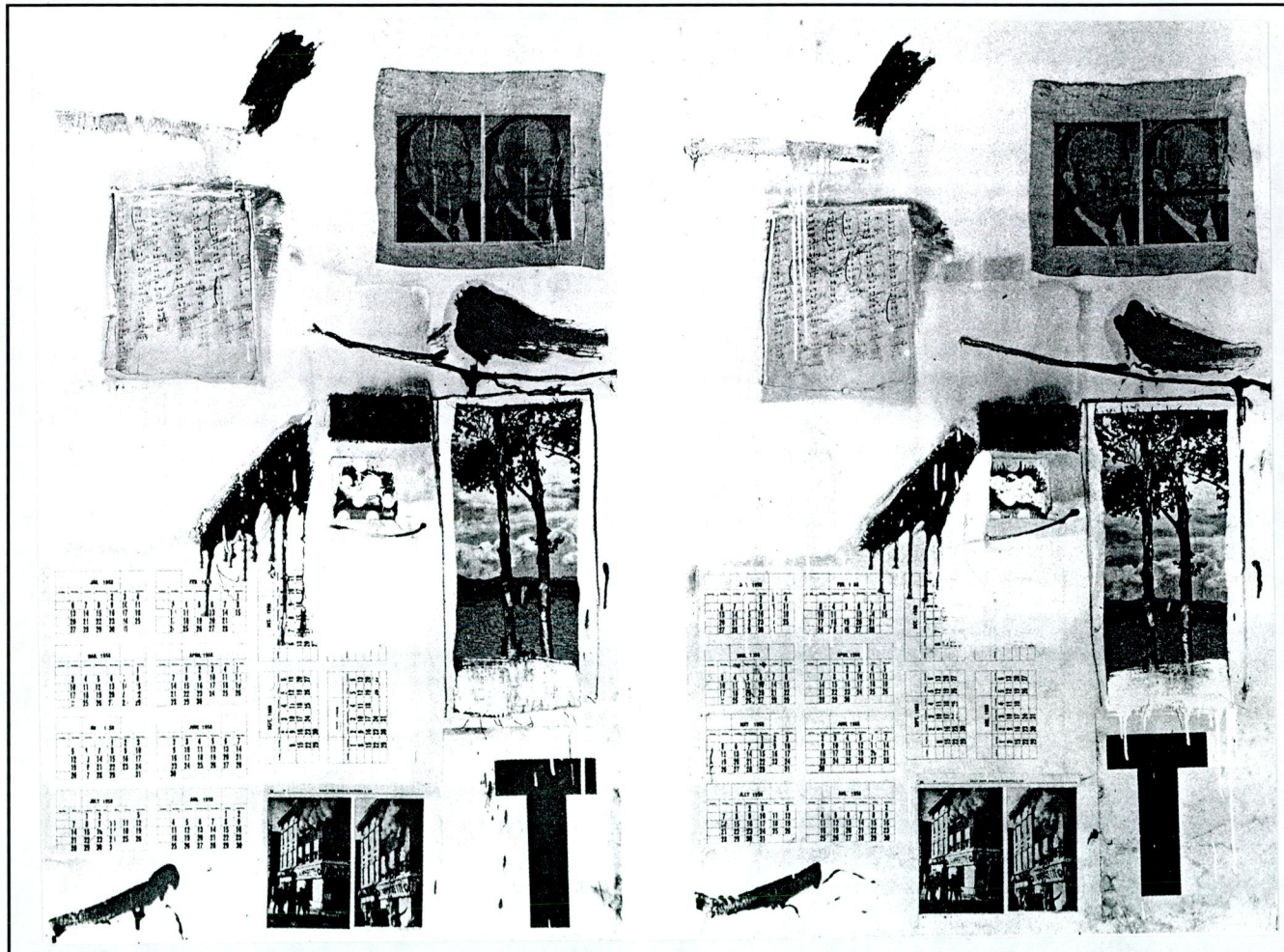
Johns' art is clearly not only art about Duchamps art but Abstract expressionism as well. Duchamp would have simply acquired two ale cans while Johns makes two objects that simply imply that they are originals. But they are definite 'creations' in the true spirit of the artist as maker and craftsperson.

In 1961 Johns and Rauschenberg would be included in a show entitled 'The art of assemblage' at the Museum of modern art, New York. In the accompanying catalogue essay William C. Seitz wrote

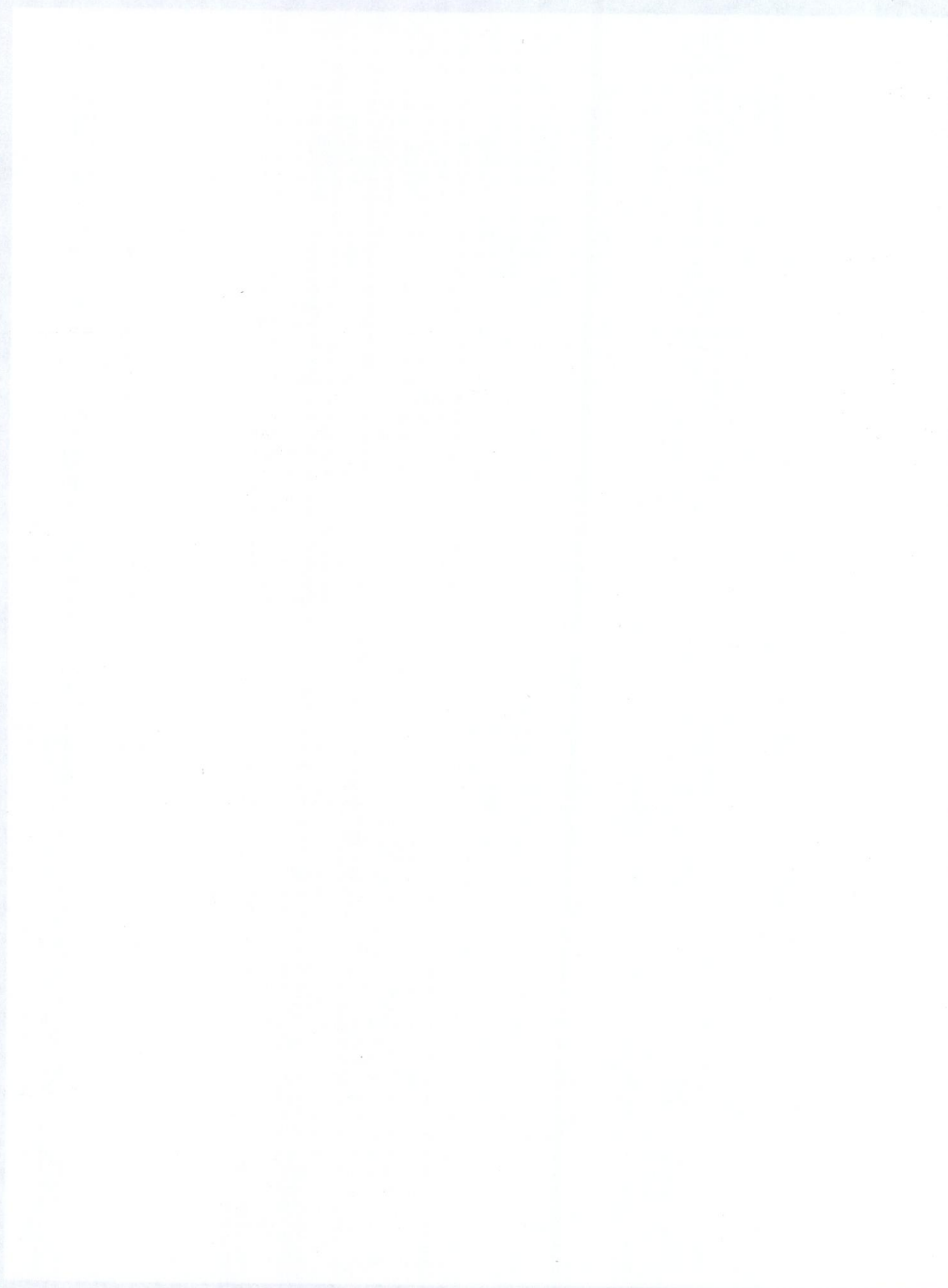
'The current wave of assemblage marks a change from a subjective, fluidly abstract art toward a revised association with the environment. The method of juxtaposition is an appropriate vehicle for feelings of disenchantment with the slick international idiom that loosely articulated abstraction has tended to become, and the social values that this situation reflects ...wordlessly associative, it has added to abstract art the vernacular realism that both Ingres and Mondrian sought to exclude by the process of abstraction.' ⁷

Rauschenberg would almost obsessively appropriate ready made objects for his paintings. His surroundings were incorporated, not by way of intentionally documenting a personal portrait but rather as a means of encouraging a questioning of authenticity and supremacy of the 'art' object. A perfect example is his 'Factum I' and 'Factum I I' (both 1957) (ill.6) which bring into question the very nature of authenticity that had been typically advocated by the Abstract expressionists. These two paintings are identical, not only in the images they contain but also in the construction and positioning of each drip of paint. This is a direct affront to Pollock and the drip aesthetic. If we combine Rauschenberg's 'Factum' pieces with Johns' Flag series, beginning 1955 (ill.7) we have the foundation for Warhols pop works. Johns takes an easily recognizable 'image' and leaves it intact, disinterested in the abstract expressionists' gesture.

However, while Johns does indeed appropriate an object he chooses to paint it -and with an interest in the aesthetic of surface.



III. 6
Robert Rauschenberg
Factum 1 and Factum 2
c. 1957





III. 7
Jasper Johns
Flag
c. 1955

According to Johns, his use of commonplace subjects makes it easier to concentrate on the display of an image;

‘ Using the design of the American flag took care of a great deal for me because I didn’t have to design it. So I went on to things like the targets- things the mind already knows. That gave me room to work on other levels’⁸

These ‘other levels’ would be of great concern for Warhol, allowing him to stand back and relish displaying the already known, leaving a reading of content to the receiver / viewer of the art object. Warhol, through leaving the appropriated image as is, permitted a free reading, the eye of the beholder bringing with it its owners previously formed interpretation.

Other Voices - Warhol as Outsider

‘All thursday night he’d left the electric light burning in the strange room, and read a movie magazine till he knew the latest doings of the Hollywood stars by heart, for if he let his attention turn inward even a second he would begin to tremble’⁹



The third son and youngest child of Ruthenian immigrants, Andrew Warhola seems to have had a difficult childhood on many counts, perceived as being passive, physically weak, effeminate and weird to the point of the uncanny, he spent many years enduring harassment at the hands of other children. In the first chapter of *The philosophy of Andy Warhol*, entitled 'Love(puberty)', Warhol mentions his childhood; 'I had three nervous breakdown's when I was a child, one when I was eight, one at nine, and one at ten. The attacks- St Vitus Dance- always started on the first day of summer vacation. I don't know what this meant. I would spend all summer listening to the radio and lying in my bed with my Charlie McCarthy doll and my un-cut cut out cut-out paper dolls all over the spread and under the pillow.

My father was away a lot on business trips to the coal mines, so I never saw him very much. My mother would read to me in her thick Czechoslovakia accent as best she could and I would always say 'Thanks, mom,' after she finished with Dick Tracy, even if I hadn't understood a word. She'd give me a Hershey Bar every time I finished a page in my colouring book.'¹⁰

In a photograph of Warhol by his former classmate George Klauber(ill.8) we have an image documenting Warhol's tribute to two of his heroes - Truman Capote, the renowned American writer , and the Hollywood legend Greta Garbo. Capote representing for Warhol the epitome of success and talent, achieving a very high profile, and Garbo the ultimate screen goddess representing the original Hollywood system of star production. Both 'icons' were part of the 'in' crowd for Warhol, accepted and approved of, he would cast himself in their light. In 1929 Greta Garbo was 23 years old and photographed by Edward Steichen (ill.9). Positioning the camera quite low and establishing an intimate feel gives Garbo almost iconic status. Her raised hands cupping her head drawing all attention to the face she appears shrowded and without finery or decoration. Her presence is all consuming,

and her expression quite one of ambivalence. The viewer will never doubt the power this representation holds. The star becomes at once desire and fulfillment, and yet elusiveness and absence.



III. 8
George CKlauber
Portrait of Andy Warhol
c. 1951

Garbo's persona is a screen persona and just as Steichen requests that she hold her face for the camera, and Hollywood, he cultivates and perpetuates image separated from flesh. The reproduced image is a mask cultivated completely for the acquisition of status as star. As an archetype of attractiveness and fascination, Garbo retained her role as patron and model long after her retirement in 1941 at the age of 35.

The star, while remaining unreachable in life has a sheer presence in the reproduced image that is continually nourished by the publicity apparatus of Hollywood and that cultivated image carries considerable power. Dependant on an audience and composed as an ideal a stars private life becomes public and public life becomes publicity. Still Garbo's request to be left alone upon her retirement has become part of her legend.



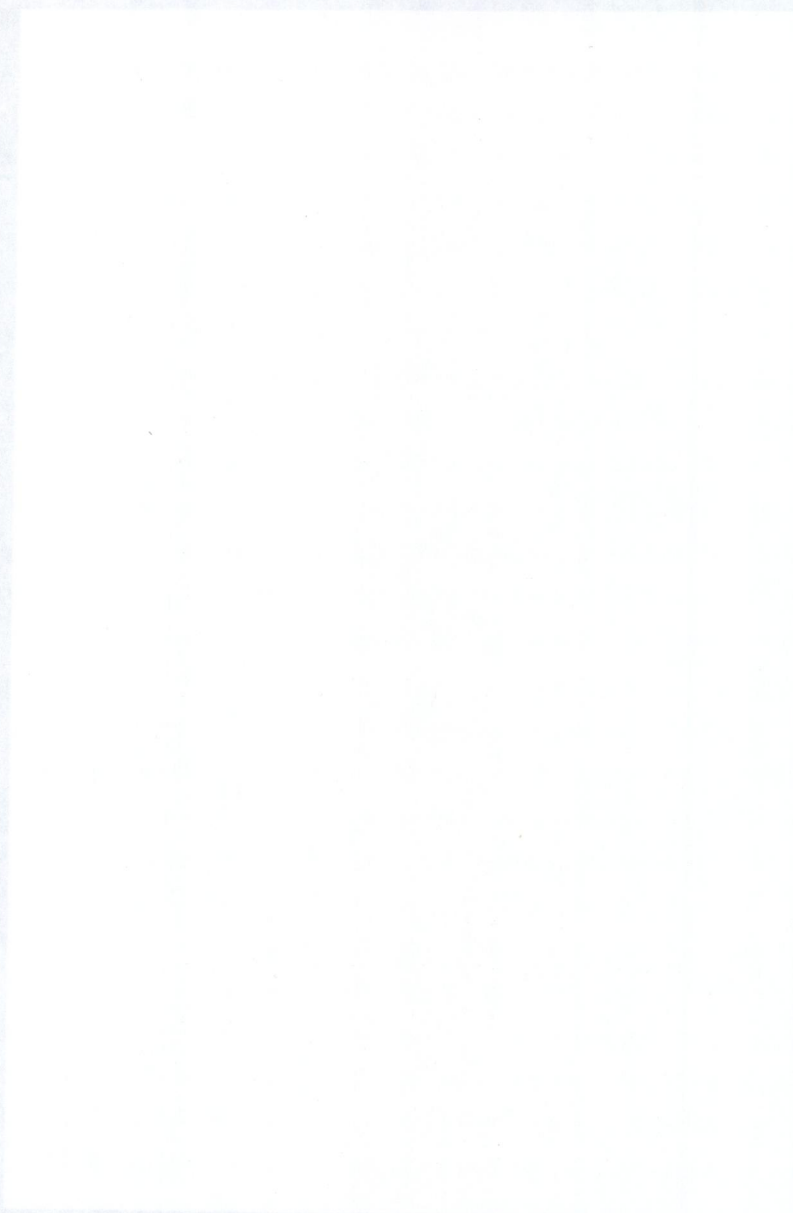
Warhol was aware that the poetics of publicity were those of a certain sense of mourning. For the famous, the star, gets to see themselves as others do, in innumerable eulogies as if one is deceased. Jonathan Flatley expands on this; 'When we acquire a public persona or identify with public bodies we participate in



III. 9
Edward Steichen
Greta Garbo
c. 1929

'Utopias of self abstraction' that enable us to feel as if we have transcended our particularity...to be public is to transcend our embodiment.'¹¹ Michael Warner suggests that we consider our position in the public sphere in terms of embodiment and negativity or in being a body, a physical entity or being public. The two are quite separate, the internal and the external or visible. The individual needs to feel that they are publicly representable, or at least imagine that they are, in order to 'be' at all.

Judith Butler remarks on the notion of self image when she approaches the process of self recognition ; 'I can only say 'I' to the extent that I have first



been addressed, and that address has mobilised my place in speech ; paradoxically , the discursive condition of social recognition preceeds and conditions the formation of the subject ; recognition is not conferred on a subject but constitutes that subject.'¹²

By becoming 'Warhol' the star, 'Warhola' the meek faintly voiced youth, would no longer exist as an absolute particularity, for particularity would be lost, and recognizable identity would follow. And this identity he could reappropriate back onto himself.

An example of Warhol's obsession with the whole notion of the 'Star' is given by Stephen Koch author of 'Stargazer; Andy Warhol's world and his films' (1973). Koch remarks on Warhol's devotion to Capote;

'When he got to New York he wrote Truman Capote every day for a year ... Capote didn't answer. They finally did get to know each other...it was a moment when Truman Capote was extremely visible in a way that Andy probably admired and was very interested in...and the fact that he was also...a cultivated figure ...a homosexual literary figure.'¹³

Warhol would sit in the lobby of the exclusive hotel 'The Plaza' in order to be mistaken for Capote and would be extremely pleased when he was. It was around this time that he played with the idea of changing his name. Initially he toyed with 'Andre Warhola' but settled on Andy Warhol. There is the often cited tale of Warhol asking his friend Emile de Antonio why his fellow artists - and fellow Homosexuals - Johns and Rauschenberg routinely snubbed him. de Antonio replied 'You're too swish, and that upsets them.'

He also mentioned Warhol's habit of collecting(which was already a conspicuous aspect of his persona) and his habit of signing his commercial

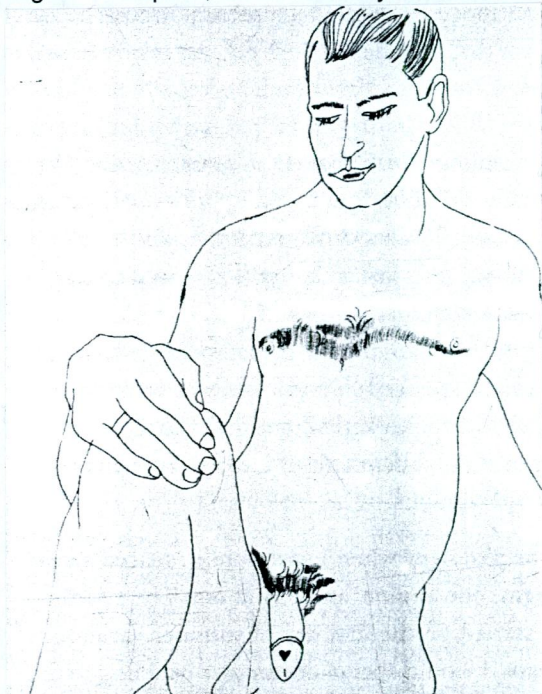
works and window displays (although, interestingly both Johns and Rauschenberg both completed window displays for Tiffany's under a discreet pseudonym). If he was to enter the arena of fine art he would have to carve his own niche.

Seeking Definition

Since his arrival in New York in 1949, right throughout his life there, Warhol had continually drawn erotic illustrations of the male figure, but mainly for his own purposes, these drawings rarely finding a successful place in either his commercial or pop works. In the fifties his repeated attempts at gaining recognition by the 'high' art establishment were unsuccessful. A series of exhibitions of his drawings, featuring images of cupids, beautiful boys faces and penises festooned with bows and lipsticked kiss marks (ill.10), somewhat predictably, attracted little attention- overshadowed by the grand, elaborate works of Johns and Rauschenberg and the expressionists.

Clearly the establishment of the day failed to acknowledge that Warhol was expressing himself, requesting a position to voice his

sexuality, however tentatively. The first gallery show of these drawings was in 1952. Opening on June 16 and running until July 3 at the Hugo gallery New York, the show was entitled 'Andy Warhol;¹⁵ Drawings based on the writings of Truman Capote', none of which sold.



III. 10
Andy Warhol
Untitled
c 1952

One art critic did however take note, and posit Warhol amongst a family of somewhat monumental sexual complexity; 'For various reasons one thinks of Beardsley, Lautrec, Demuth, Balthus and Cocteau...'seeing in the work an air of carefully studied perversity'.¹⁴ For a later show, in february 1956, at the Bodley Gallery, New York entitled 'Drawings for a Boy Book' Warhol took the erotic element further. Affiliated to a bookshop, the Bodley gallery attracted a rather liberal arts audience, Warhol succeeding in being invited back to show on several more occasions, despite the show's attracting just one review that is known of. These Drawings were quite bold and controversial for their time and would prove prophetic of the move toward the permissiveness that characterised the next decade.

The museum of Modern Art's Charles Demuth (b.1883-d.1935) retrospective in 1950 had chosen to ignore Demuth's homoerotic works fearing that the content was too controversial. Demuth, in his lesser known erotic works, merely explores the seductive potential in given situations. His work remains dressed in phantasy, whereas with Warhol we see the male figure moved to an altogether different arena. The figure is handled matter of factly with little in the way of decoration, and there is little room for escape into a painterly aesthetic. Warhol was ahead of the posse, so to speak, testing the waters before the arrival of David Hockney (b.1937) or Robert Mapplethorpe (b.1947-d.1989).

Fitting in - Superman, Superstar

'If you want to know anything about me must go to the surface
of my paintings its all there'¹⁵

Warhol knew he would have to adopt a new approach in his art practice if he was to achieve the success of his contemporaries. In late 1959 Warhol visited the art lending department of the Museum of modern art with his friend Ted

Carey. Upon coming to a collage by Rauschenberg, Warhol remarked 'I've got to think of something different.' Through considerable foresight he would manage to secure a position within his POP art production enabling reflection on his own position within society while commenting on the boom in commodification that arose in the 1950's in the United States alongside consumerism which had come to justify decades of over production in the manufacturing industries. He knew that his homoerotic drawings were not going to make him the toast of the establishment and that also simply joining the 'assemblage' line would not carve a niche that was his creation.

In 1960 Warhol and his friend Henry Geldzahler destroyed literally hundreds of his commercial blotted line drawings that had been the founding stone of his career in the fifties.

In April 1961 Warhol had the first public showing of his new POP art works in - as was ideal- the window display of Bonwit teller, New York.

This display was crucial in shaping a way for Warhol to articulate an extremely subtle subtext, appropriate 'readymade' images and market his sexuality, all in one department store window. As surely as Warhol was obsessed with star mystique here he was hidden behind the facade of Superman, (ill.11) the glass screen of the window being all he needs as his audience go by. Surely this would be worthy of-a very fine piece of camp.

In her 'Famous for fifteen minutes; My years with Andy Warhol' Ultra Violet recounts a conversation she had with Warhol about his childhood fascination



III. 11
Andy Warhol
Superman
1960

with cartoon characters. When he was eight years old Warhol spent an entire summer confined to bed. He would listen to the radio with his Charlie McCarthy doll. Enquiring about that period 'violet' asked Warhol;

'Did you play with dolls?'

'Gosh, no'

"Who were your heroes?'

'Dick Tracey. I scotched taped his photograph
on the bedroom wall'¹⁶

Warhol was indeed insinuating a sense of 'self' into his work. In typical Pop artist form he appropriates an image easily recognizable to the public walking down Broadway . By doing so warhol could defend his claim to be taking the 'Outside' of traditionally accepted Fine Art practice(i.e; a Graphic illustration), and putting it 'Inside'. But also another reading will reveal that he was taking the traditionally socially excluded (homosexual subculture) and attaching a prepotent traditionally heterosexual ('in'cluded) 'hero' figure to it.

His confession that he was right on the surface of his paintings holds true in this piece of proto-Pop. Superman hovers above a section of forest, coated in thick black smoke, having just extinguished a huge fire. A speech bubble loses the clarity of several of it's words under dashes of paint from warhol's brush. This is no mistake or error of judgement on Warhol's part, he has intentionally disturbed our reading forcing our attention back to the figure of Superman and the exceptionally clear word 'Poof' which appears over the blast of air from his lungs, substituting the characteristic superman 'S' which is absent, by virtue of Warhol's drawing. He is a caped camp crusader. His potential to be 'too swish' for Johns or Rauschenberg is irrelevant.

Superman's rejuvenation as hero for Warhol is disguised only slightly - for he is extremely close to acquiring the word 'Poof' as a motif - and all of this is three decades before the post- liberationists and post- assimilationists would don their 'QUEER AS FUCK!' Tee shirts and march in the name of true self definition.

Also part of this display for Bonwit Teller is a curious variation on the criminal 'mug shot' entitled 'Before and after' (ill.12) illustrating the profile of a face before and



III. 12
Andy Warhol
Before & After
c1960

after cosmetic surgery on the nose. This piece provides an interesting point from which to explore the similarities between the prosopopoeias(or 'giving of face', implying that the true, or original facial identity can be either lost or nonexistant) of Warhol's later portraits and the tremendous investment in commodity aesthetics and design that were coming to under write modes of advertising and consumption.

While serving as a comment on the transgressive potential of the star- celebrity system this piece almost serves to advertise Warhol's portrait service. Go with Warhol and you'll experience rebirth. His new products will offer you another edition of commodity. The alterable face, the notion of surface identity as commodity and as such continually expendable is perhaps the pinnacle of the consumerist pyramid.



The Bonwit Teller 'Before and after' piece was a precursor to Warhol's portraits that were to follow in profusion. While in 'Before and After' an illustration represents the profile of a mannequin slickly rendered, Warhol's portraits reveal themselves to be representations of easily identifiable celebrities. They can be seen to inhabit a special place between prosopopoeia and hypogram (hypogram being Ferdinand de Saussure's adaptation from the greek *hypographein* meaning to underscore the features of the face using makeup. de Saussure using hypogram to imply the underscoring of a word or name by a repetition of its syllables and, thus attributing to it's original mode of use, a more artificial mode.)

As an ideal example, his Marilyn series come to personify this special space he occupies. Marilyn is 'acquired' by Warhol soon after her death (the demise of her physical, or 'real', identity) while her status as star allows her image and it's recognizeability to prosper. Another example is in the series of Elizabeth Taylor portraits that he began after the rumoured near fatal illness that the star was supposed to be suffering from on the set of Cleopatra in 1962.

While, as we have seen, the nature of publicity involves a certain loss of self, for Warhol the mourning of Marilyn would give added power to the perpetuation of her image just as Garbo's retreat into early retirement had done for her status as star. Warhol adapts and expands on his 'Before and after' in his Marilyn, 1964 (ill. 13). While this is 'Marilyn's image in no uncertain terms, she is represented in bright inorganic colours reminiscent of a Disney character. Warhol has re-animated her, almost to status of simulacrum. While no one doubts that this *is* Marilyn she has truly become pure image. Standing as a testament to Camp and the economy of recycling



III. 13
Andy Warhol
Marilyn
c1964

(Ross), Marilyn has been dressed up in flesh tint and blusher, embalmed for all eternity. Her image so defined that whatever may lie beneath the surface is long gone. In the words of Wilde in 'The portrait of Dorian Gray';

'There is something fatal about a portrait. It has a life of it's own.'¹⁷

His portrait of her can be seen as lacking any signifying content, but if we look at the hypogramic potential we see a comment on the instability of recognizeability. Warhol's representation of Marilyn's lips, mass produced, exist as syllables that assist in the pronunciation of her public persona. Her identity is not given a space in the arena of public recognizability, only her commodification. Warhol has brilliantly thrown into question the reliability of social identity. An attempt at 'reading' an identity through a compilation of the elements that constitute a public persona render that persona a surface, and thus a fictive identity.



His 'Superman', 'Before and After', and 'Marilyn' all serve to deconstruct any notion of identity in the social sense as factual.

If we look to Warhol's Myth's series(ill.4) we see an array of ten 'characters', Warhol included, all reproduced vertically ten times.

Each image a replica of the one that appears directly above it. Here 'Mickey Mouse' sits neatly between 'Uncle Sam' and Greta Garbo. Father Christmas is next to Superman, and Dracula is between the witch from 'The Wizard of Oz' and the American 'Mammy'. Warhol places himself on the end, his profile cast in shadow, as if calling our bluff.

We are practically begged to enquire if the 'real' article, the subject made of flesh would step forward for identification as original. In placing himself 'as is', undecorated, as it were, and casting a shadow warhol leaves himself vulnerable to inspection. He is no shapeshifting Vampire that casts no shadow. This is the artist positioning himself amongst the easily identifiable, domesticated, the commonly spoken of- the accepted as part of the whole. He once remarked '...I'm still obsessed with the idea of looking into the mirror and seeing no one, nothing...'¹⁷ In case we forget he repeats himself ten times, until the man who is flesh and blood is accepted. Echoing Wilde's adaptation of Delsarte Warhol becomes part of his artistic production and attempts to create a reality of what is his interiority. Which had been traditionally excluded from dominant cultural production.

Through the wholesale reproduction of 'persona'lities, reflecting commodification, Warhol attempts to deny the importance of myth and archetype itself. He appears with Garbo in a role presenting a united front for camp, for all those who are reviewed and found lacking or outdated, appealing to those who can read into his messages and these are thoroughly

discursive. However in the 'Myths' series something definite is implemented; a cataloguing of an alternative, an 'other', an unknown, and the catalogue is repeated and repeated until the viewer knows it by heart.

Those Who have made a claim for the absence of any emotion, of any real content, in Warhol's work must be encouraged to focus on his use of mechanical device and appropriation of the everyday. But this is not something that Warhol ever attempted to hide - it was crucial to the work. The Mass production, and multiplication that are so much a part of today's world were born as Warhol came to prominence. And when that reflection entered his work it did lead to the apparent killing of emotional involvement, which was a direct result of his experiences while attempting to articulate his sexuality visually. It was then that he excelled, to status of legend, all the while infusing his work with the deconstructing of identity values, and a better understanding of those who produce them.

It is to the founding of Warhol's 'Art Factory' in 1963 that we must now move. For the gathering together of a collection of overlooked individuals marked a full frontal attack on cultural production.

3 Politicizing *Camp* Queer *Concepts*

Counter Culture - Counter Public
Identity and Gender - Warhol's Drag Queens
Positioning Warhol within the Queer Arena
Visualising Contemporary Queer Identity

COUNTER CULTURE- COUNTER PUBLIC

'I exist only through them who are nothing, existing only through me' ¹

It has been our concern so far to propose a reading of Warhol's work in terms of a deconstructing of identity. Now we must move to his creation of the notorious 'Factory' in 1963. Where before Warhol had proposed a new, more contemporary approach to art production that stood both as an affront to the abstract expressionist aesthetic, and to notions of public identity, it was in the forming of his Factory that he moved this process a stage further.

The unprecedented equalizing status of the 1960's was of great importance to Warhol's work. The notion that the everyday could carry cultural capital was proven to him in the success of his POP works. Placing so much trust in the value of his Marilyn's, Liz's, and Superman's he had explored the value of the already loaded symbol. As he remarked; 'In the 1960's everybody got interested in everybody else. Everybody was equal suddenly- debutantes and chauffeurs, waitresses and governors...'2.

This notion provided Warhol with the means to provide himself with his own 'stars' through his own version of Hollywood. If the image of the star was simply a cultivation of a persona by a system of production then Warhol would take on that system that had dictated who was 'in' and who was 'out'. If patriarchal Hollywood could make stars then he could do it. Without just appropriating the readily available icon he could create his own.

The Factory was a large warehouse where anyone could approach Warhol and become involved in his system of cultural production, which was of course counter- dominant cultural production. It secured a silver foiled tribute to Hollywood by having a great many mirrors and screens(often covering scenes of casual sex and drug deals.), the windows were painted black and a large ballroom globe hung from the ceiling casting some light around the dimly lit loft.

what is crucial about this move by Warhol is that in moving to a factory he was, in effect, creating a community and one that was significantly exclusive. The Factory would collect the 'excluded' for Warhol; 'Naturally the Factory had fags; we were in the entertainment business and that's entertainment. Naturally the Factory had more gays than, say , Congress, but it wasn't even as gay as your favourite TV police show....I often wondered, 'Don't the people who play these image games care about all the miserable people in the world who can't fit into stock roles?'³

Warhol would preside over the groups activities almost as 'Den mother' a matriarch subtly directing events for the better of the whole. Nancy Fraser proposes that Warhol accessed the notion of a 'subaltern counter public' in his constructing of the Factory. Fraser suggests that the notion of a public as a singular body has functioned as a mechanism of exclusion rarely allowing for subordinated social groups to articulate and circulate counter discourses. She proposes that a counter public allows for the creation of arenas for such groups to 'formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs.'⁴

The Factory can be considered a counterpublic in that it provided Warhol with an alternative to the 'inside', to the 'accepted' of dominant culture, and allowed for a feeling that once one became involved with the Factory group

one was no longer part of the 'outside' the 'excluded' of society. Warhol wrote; 'I was reflecting that most people thought that the Factory was a place where everybody had the same attitudes about everything. The truth was, we were all odds-and-ends misfits, somehow misfitting together.'⁵

In this light Warhol's POP work, and his homoerotic drawing's can be seen as an extension of this utopian ideal and as attempts at turning the commercial world of Galleries, museums, and cinemas into 'counterspaces' of articulation.

IDENTITY AS GENDER - WARHOL'S DRAG QUEENS

'Holly Woodlawn' the name of one of the Factory's Stars, serves as an analogy for Warhol's eagerness to offer an alternative to the dominant system of star identity manufacturing . Her name brought him a small snippet of well groomed soil, right to the Factory where it would hopefully assist in the germination of future Warholian creations.

Holly, typical of the numerous drag queen's that frequented Warhol's group at the Factory facilitated a parodying of the old style Hollywood female star.

These drag queens represent something quite different from the every day woman on the street. They are typically exaggerated representations of everything that is considered feminine by a patriarchal culture.

Clearly they are not female- but yet they aspire to the 'feminine'. As much as Bette Davis attempted an assault on the establishment's idea of the beautiful star in 'Whatever happened to Baby Jane', Warhol's 'women' aspire to that myth created by a bygone age. They are plastic icons. Extensions of Warhol's two dimensional portraits they come alive in the candied light of

the Factory. In Warhol's film 'Lonesome Cowboys' (1967-68), 'Viva' turns to her co-'star' Tom Hopertz, after a rather climactic sex scene, and asks for the same union in death that they have had in sex, with little mention of life. This seems an acknowledgement of the surreality of it all. Warhol has remarked; 'Among other things drag queens are living testimony to the way women used to be, the way some people want them to be. Drags are ambulatory archives of ideal movie star womanhood. They perform a documentary service, usually consecrating their lives in keeping the glittering alternative alive, and available for (not- too-close) inspection'.⁶

The pre-stonewall camp role of Warhol's drag queens is in keeping with non-essentialist feminist thinking on camp as a sophisticated means of dealing with an increasing awareness of sexual difference. Through an attempt at being what they are not these drag queens contribute to a refusal to be what they are expected to be. Warhol immediately drew these people around him, promoting a continuing refusal of stock roles.

Warhol's films also illustrate his refusal of the role of the commercial film maker. His films typically involve the use of a 'static' camera where Warhol gives absolute attention to an object or situation, creating a single viewpoint, which is his. Concern is neither with fulfilling any preconceived cinematic or visual ideal or with satisfying the narrative needs of a viewer.

The viewer is left to decide whether to sit and contemplate or to simply turn away. In traditional Hollywood cinema a film consists of a rather condensed narrative consisting of an edited down series of shots originating in several takes. However in a typical Warhol film the result is from one long take. The result is a wearisome voyeuristic effect, of Warhol staring at his idols, that leaves the viewer wondering if they should be engaging with the series of images, and more importantly doubting whether their presence is necessary

at all. The long take is surely a measure more of the voyeurs vigil than of the viewers staying power. Here the cast, the 'stars', seem to be celebrating their sheer existence as a role in itself. Warhol can therefore be seen to be rejoicing in his own visibility at last. When he is behind the camera, unseen, there is no doubt that the eye is his own.

The argument that Warhol continuously promoted him'self' can of course also be proposed- but clearly the self he canvases is vacuous, drained of substance. Warhol seems desperate for a reflective surface. Just as his own nudity terrified him, he was left stranded as a voyeur staring at a screen of able characters. The Factory offered him a cast of his own making, creating a means for him to articulate his search for identity. The drag queens epitomising 'things being what they are not', surface image being irrelevant to identity.

POSITIONING WARHOL WITHIN THE QUEER ARENA

Warhol's continual refusal of stock roles as discussed to this point lends itself very well to a re-evaluation, and a proposing of his work, as one of the earliest 'Queer' artists. Of course, one should be aware of the difficulties in doing so in an era that is pre-political. After all, Warhol grew up in a generation or urban milieu that did not hold a concept of articulating homosexuality politically-he was 'A homosexual', constituted by an intense social shame. But if one places him in the context of a history of homophobia and its resistances, Warhol proves his worth.

Just as Warhol's implementation of camp means of expression in his approach to pre- political issues of gender and identity proved useful in articulating his sensibility, post -Stonewall intellectuals would challenge

attempts to do the opposite, or to apoliticise camp(As Sontag had done). Many of the questions posed during the decades following Sonewall relating to definitions of femininity and masculinity have focussed on what camp had already highlighted.

As Wilde and Warhol had proven, Camp has long been a way of articulating what non- essentialist feminists would come to call, sexual 'difference'. If we see camp activity in queer praxis, reflected in a refusal of accepted stock roles, then we can posit Warhol as politically 'queer'.

If we turn to Moe Meyer we have a verification of this proposal. Meyer defines camp as the 'total body of performative practises and strategies used to enact a queer identity, with enactment defined as the production of social visibility.'

For Meyer the implementation of camp procedure facilitates an articulation of contemporary queer expression.⁷ This lending of performativity, the use of specific signifying codes, in order to achieve social visibility, links Queer with camp.

'Queer' serving as a rather challenging alternative to either 'Lesbian' or 'Gay' is a fairly recent re-appropriation of the negative term used in the past to label the excluded homosexual. Simon Watney in his attempts at defining the positivisation of the term identifies it as a generational phenomenon, one that has been used by younger gay men and lesbians who have come out during the AIDS epidemic, seeking to define themselves against the predominate mood of assimilationism. More importantly these individuals seek to differentiate between themselves and those who have not come out in the time of AIDS. However Watney's argument seems fraught with both ageism and a critique of class, implying that age equates with middle class and that a singular style of life is acquired by all who have reached a certain age, regardless of gender.

A more informed definition is provided by Meyer, suggesting that 'queer' signals an assault on notions of the self as abiding, and continuous, replacing it with a notion of the self as performative, improvisational, discontinuous and processually constituted by stylized acts. In Warhol we have a perfect example of this thinking- his work has been built on driving home to the viewer the very stylization of surface identity. Further to this queerness can be seen as the taking of a stance that is in opposition to not just essentialist notions of sexual identity but also to wider systems of class based practices of which gender and sex are only a part.

The emergence of queer identities over the last decade may result from 'new' or emergent sexualities that have proved previously unclassifiable. Identities such as celibate gay men and lesbians, heterosexuals who have sex with same sex partners but feel disinclined to take on an identity that is based on that activity, 'S and M' lesbians and others who feel that an easily classifiable identity is inappropriate. Taken as a dissertation on a *social* identity that is constructed out of various *sexual* activities, then, queer identities should be classified with various *gender* activities rather than sexual activities. significantly, queer identity is not just another clear cut category of sexual acts- because on its own, sexual behaviour is not the single determining factor.

VISUALISING CONTEMPORARY QUEER IDENTITY

While much has been written, from a chronological approach, documenting the work of lesbian and gay artists it is most appropriate for our purposes to select artists who are working in the area of identity and gender-related social issues.

As a means of exploring queer identity many of those working in this area do not feel the need to express their identity singularly through the homoerotic, thus lending their work to queer theory. In a sense 'queer' and 'camp' have come of age. With greater acceptability and understanding both are slowly fusing as we approach the next century. The fight for gay liberation, regardless of the language used to define it, is focusing the debate on cultural identity in and outside art. The need to shock with explicit imagery is becoming redundant as the mainstream adopts a queer vocabulary with which to read these new images. The work of photographer Robert Mapplethorpe, once the bete noir of the establishment now seems strangely dated in his explicitness and can hold a retrospective in Ireland with no public outcry. Much of the language inherent in his work is now known and used within the mainstream. Ultimately this language conveys understanding and with understanding there is little shock of the new.

Exploring issues of cultural currency, Deborah Bright(b.1950) appropriates well known film stills and manipulates them into lesbian scenarios. In a piece from her 1990 series 'Dream Girls'(ill.114) George Peppard's proffered match appears rather redundant as Audrey Hepburn receives 'a light' from a character that never appeared in the original film. A woman is collaged into a

space between the two stars. Wearing a suit not far removed from Peppards, her pose imitates his, while not smoking a cigarette she holds a glass in



Ill. 14
Deborah Bright
From the series
Dream Girls.

1990



her left hand as does he. Typically, Bright's work sets about upstaging carefully set up scenarios and introducing herself into the proceedings, almost as a restructuring of visual history. She is clearly inserting herself into accepted everyday cultural iconography in the hopes of securing a greater lesbian cultural capital. The choice of the film itself, 'Breakfast at Tiffany's', being both loved and adored by the general audience, resonates with cultural (and consumerist) meaning. In one move Bright has subverted traditional Hollywood values and with great humour leads one to review the original film in this light.

Where Warhol places himself amongst a cast of Hollywood 'myths', promoting his image to achieve celebrity (and thus cultural capital) Bright does the same using an 'actor'. Both artists attempt to retrace history and find a reflection to assist in formulating an identity. Judith Butler, in her 'Bodies that Matter; On the Discursive Limits of Sex' (1993) remarks on the need that an individual has to feel representable. She considers; 'I can only say 'I' to the extent that I have first been addressed, and that address has mobilized my place in speech...the discursive condition of social recognition preceeds and conditions the formation of the subject...' ⁸ in other words one cannot formulate an identity unless one has a previous recognisable role model. Bright is certainly looking back over her shoulder at visual culture to see if *she* has been addressed. And if she hasn't been, she re-invents a position for herself.

Another artist that appropriates established cultural imagery and facilitates a re-reading of content through manipulation of the original is Jean Fraser (b.U.K.1955). In 'Blasphemy Communion' (ill.15) from the series 'Celestial Bodies' (1990) a naked young woman sits out of doors with two fully habited nuns. Based on the painting 'Dejeuner sur l'Herbe' by Manet where the scene is similar except Bright's nuns replace Manet's clothed men. The use of the

two nuns is emblematic of enclosed orders, where men play no part. The young woman gazes out to us through the photographic



Ill. 15
Jean Fraser
*Blasphemy
Communion*
1955

frame and sits next to a basket of fruit while about to drink from a wine glass, symbolic of temptation, but the only temptation available seems to exclude the viewer.

While Bright and Fraser seek a rehistoricising of popular cultural imagery Rosy Martin (b.U.K.1946) seeks a deconstructing of popular stereotypes. Martin's work examines stereotypes and categories proposed by 'experts' on lesbian 'characteristics'. She offers an interpretation of Havelock Ellis's 'Sexual Inversion'(1897) in her series of photographs entitled 'Transforming the suit; What do Lesbians look like?'(1989)(ill.16). Martin explains;'I restaged, examined and exploded the mythologies of the butch/femme and masculine/feminine, my 'alter ego', and the lesbian still closeted in a heterosexual marriage. My aim was to challenge any reductionist notions of my 'identity-as-a-lesbian',to break the concept of a fixed immutable sexuality, to destabilise female/male stereotypes and to foreground role play.'⁹ The degree to which Martin is successful or not, ultimately rests with the viewer although it must be said that in a time where women dress in traditional men's clothes such as jeans, shirts and jackets the surprise value and the reading of the imagery as she has suggested is greatly lessened. Levi's after all make jeans that are unisexual.

Alvin Orloff, is an artist who brings much needed humour to the subject while applying a comic strip approach to confront assimilationist ideals. His 'Poets beware, nothing rhymes with domestic partner.' (ill.17), which first appeared in 'Tantrum 'zine', an underground magazine in 1991, combines various illustrations in a collage like manner. Reminiscent of 1950's and 60's magazine

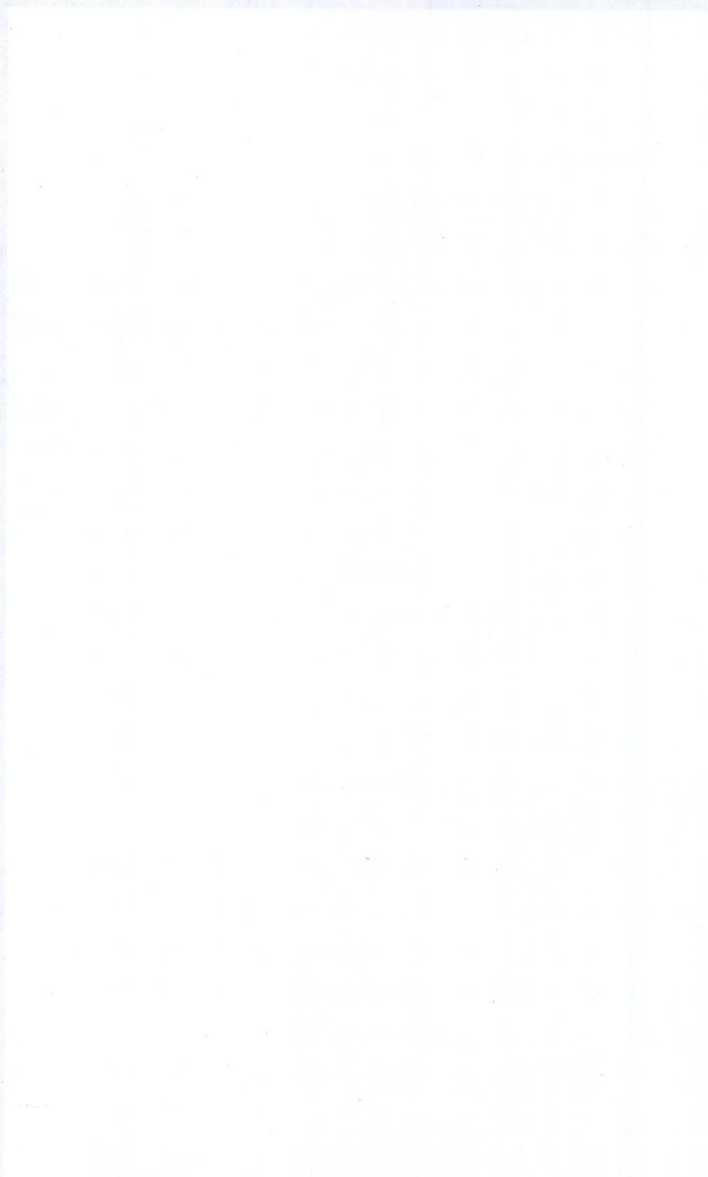


III. 15

Rosy Martin
*Transforming the
suit: What do
lesbians look like?*
1989

style advertisements, Orloff inserts a new interpretation through superimposing seemingly unrelated text that irreverently ignores the original artwork. His characters acquire a gay identity through the content of Orloff's narrative dealing with contemporary issues of gay identity. While the characters represent white middle America (and middle classes everywhere) fully equipped with Norman Rockwell smiles, the narrative reflects a concern about the validity of those traditional stock roles for gay people. The type layout, uneven and poorly spaced lends it an added urgency and humour.

Warhol's use of the mass media's influence on popular culture has been accessed by several contemporary queer artist's seeking to explore further



the area of public recognizeability. Felix Gonzales-Torres' billboard photographs, including one of an empty bed, with crumpled sheets, recently vacated, thrusts his identity right into the public domain. Gonzales-Torres' work brings the homoerotic to the 'public' without the defining,

erotic use of figurative elements. This is a sexually charged image containing elements we are all familiar with from experience but where most would chose to forget the soiled, post-coital aftermath Gonzales-Torres' has taken it from the bedroom and placed it 48 sheets high and confronted us with his image and its multilayered subtext.

Throughout the work of contemporary queer artists there runs a single thread of how to be speakers, makers and 'doers' of a cultural imagery and iconography. The mechanisms of cultural production that lead to the structuring of identities, accessed originally by Warhol have been the foundation stones of much contemporary queer art since. Camp as used by Warhol has continued to be a crucial vocalizing tool, allowing an exposing



III. 17

Alvin Orloff
Poets beware
nothing rhymes with
domestic partner
1991

POETS BEWARE, NOTHING RHYMES WITH DOMESTIC PARTNER.



of the way cultural icons come to dominate identity formation. While it would be nice to assume that Warhol was acting out of a full understanding of his position and his contribution to camp the truth is probably rather less spectacular.

Conclusion

In common parlance the word camp would seem to have very little meaning except as a cruel definition of an effete gay man. The years have not been particularly kind to it and have rid it of greater meaning other than insult. Slang words and meanings aside it has greater cultural significance than that. When J. Redding Ware defined Camp in 1909 as 'actions and gestures of exaggerated emphasis' camp was given an importance. It showed that there was a 'something' however ill defined, to attempt to give emphasis to. Oscar Wilde proved to be a useful starting point in an investigation into camp uses. He would attempt to articulate what non-essentialist feminists would come to call an increasing awareness of sexual difference. While sexual difference had been around since the beginning of humankind it is only now that official recognition was being afforded. Camp as we have seen provided Warhol with the means to promote himself into dominant discourse while attempting to disarm his insecurities and uncertainties. The degree to which these stemmed from his sexual orientation is debatable but never-the-less must not be disregarded or undermined. As Simon Watney has said, Warhol attempted to persistently search for a means to express his identity in an urban milieu that did not hold a concept of articulating homosexuality politically - Warhol was a 'homosexual' constituted by an intense social and cultural shame.

In the 1960's Susan Sontag led an aestheticization of Camp which has been confronted by Andrew Ross and others. Where Sontag attempts a de-homosexualization of camp, Ross attempts to reinstate the homosexual as essential referent. Sontag's attempt while now seen as somewhat misguided and even anti-homosexual, as there is only scant reference to camp's homosexual links in her work never-the-less gave it a much needed acknowledgement and placed it within the realm of legitimate intellectual and academic discourse. It took Ross to re-appropriate camp for its gay referent and to reinterpret it within this context.

In the 1960's as the West and in particular the United States fractured along the traditional lines of new vs old, the emerging Warhol knew that he would have to either contradict the dominant cultural practices or comply with what was an acceptable, if steady art practice. The resulting body of work and contribution to art history is without doubt. Warhol's place within contemporary art discourse is assured. He popularised it, gave it form for a generation in need of change and more importantly gave it the imagery with which to define itself. Like that period in our own history, it seems somewhat naive and simple in its approach as we view it now. Like the children of the sixties he seemed peculiarly out of place in the late 70's and 80's. An artist eclipsed by his own success whose work was so imitated that the graphic artist turned artist proper was having his own art ripped off as a graphic style for magazines and posters. An unwelcome if inevitable post modernist full circle.

The creation of the factory facilitated the creation of a counter public where Warhol could manufacture his own cultural icons facilitating a reinterpretation of traditional means of identity making. It also enabled him to exist in a safe environment of his own making, populated by his 'stars', films and musicians.

Throughout Warhol's work identity appears unstable. It is the founding stone of his POP work that image is thoroughly reproduceable and is devoid of substance. Identity taken as image is therefore, in turn, devoid of substance. Thus 'Image' would hold the potential for Warhol to shed, or cast aside, his own interiority or sexuality (which explicit expression thereof had been significantly discouraged by the establishment) replaced with a fictive, entirely surface persona. His myths series is a perfect example.

In the cultural and political turmoil of the 1960's, in the great modernist experiment that is New York city, at a time when television unified and defined one of the largest nations on earth he pilfered its common icons, those that lay in every household kitchen and entered its living rooms each evening. A product of his time, he was the first to do what he did and while it is arguable that there have been better artists in his field and more succinct camp proponents since, he did however pave the way for a generation of new artists, spurred on by sexual politicization. Probably the greatest problem with reading him in a new light is his accessibility and widespread appeal. Thirty years as an art eccentric has bestowed upon him the label of political lightweight and if we are to appreciate him into the future we must rescue him from the doldrums of saccharin coated frivolity and imbue him with a new sense of worth. Whether he would thank us for this is another question?

Footnotes

Notes

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