INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI

A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

SHALLOW SUBJECTS: ANDY WARHOL AND THE PAINTED SURFACE

by

Jennifer Burns

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1997

This manuscript has been read and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in Art History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

9/19/97
Date

Carol M. Armstrong
Chair of Examining Committee

9/19/97
Date

Executive Officer

Professor Rosemarie Bletter

Professor Marlene Park

Professor Nancy K. Miller
Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Works are by Andy Warhol unless otherwise noted.

Introduction

REVEALING THE SURFACE

> It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances.
> The mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible.
>
> —Oscar Wilde

In 1967, Andy Warhol told an interviewer that "if you want to know all about Andy Warhol, just look at the surface of my paintings and films and me, and there I am. There's nothing behind it."[1] Warhol places his paintings, his films and himself in a series. None of these surfaces, he claims, have any depth. To discuss Warhol's art in terms of the surface is therefore not particularly original. His earliest critics commented on Warhol's superficiality and attempted to convict or to defend him on that basis. What has been less noticed, however, is that Warhol's paintings themselves propose an understanding of the surface. Eager to pummel Warhol with existing prejudices about the surface or to protect him from them, critics have not looked closely at what Warhol's surfaces reveal about their own nature.

In part, this neglect stems from a widespread belief that surface itself is trivial and insignificant. Since Warhol's art and his persona are so completely associated with the surface, we will have difficulty understanding his artistic project until we challenge this view. To that end, the dissertation charts the existence of a potent and durable metaphorical cluster that designates surface as the negative marker of triviality, frivolity, and insubstantiality, while making the physical quality of depth the positive sign of seriousness, essence, and meaning. Understanding this metaphor allows us to consider Warhol's work afresh and to achieve a more satisfying sense of his artistic project. Of

[1]Gretchen Berg, "Andy: My True Story," *Los Angeles Free Press* (March 17, 1967), 3.

necessity, these two projects are intertwined in my account of Warhol's paintings from 1962 to 1966.

THE LANGUAGE OF SURFACE AND DEPTH

For a generation of critics who admired abstract expressionism's exploration of the unconscious, Pop's focus on the surface of things apparently cast away not only art's exalted purpose, but the very depths of human subjectivity. As Erle Loran wrote:

> Abstract expressionism was certainly disturbing and the bold possibilities that Hans Hofmann's teaching and painting held out for emulation and further development by painters like Jackson Pollock, to be specific in one case, constituted a major revolution in twentieth-century art. It was not easy to take then. It is not easy to take even now. But depth and richness of human experience and intuition will always be difficult for superficial observers.[2]

In the transition from abstract expressionism to Pop what seemed to get lost was the possibility of 'deep and rich' human experience. It was this experience, first and foremost, that Loran was trying to protect by attacking Pop art's defenders as superficial.

The belief that the surfaces of Pop painting entail a loss of human depth runs, both implicitly and explicitly, throughout Pop criticism. To accept Pop's painted surfaces is somehow to assent that the depths of human experience have been lost to us. In Warhol's particular case, this problem of superficiality is intensified by his notoriously shallow public persona and his evident obsession with the trappings of fame and wealth, all of which is further compounded by the unembarrassed comment already mentioned: "If you want to know all about Andy Warhol, just look at the surface of my paintings and films and me, and there I am. There's nothing behind it."[3]

This remark of Warhol's is cited again and again in the literature, and a brief inventory of the responses to it will allow us to put disparate critical views of Warhol into dialogue. For Robert Hughes, writing in disbelief at the positive press generated by the

---

[2]Erle Loran, "Cézanne and Lichtenstein: Problems of Transformation" (1963), in *Pop Art: The Critical Dialogue*, ed. Carol Anne Mahsun (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989), 84.

[3]Gretchen Berg, "Andy: My True Story," *Los Angeles Free Press* (March 17, 1967), 3.

show of Warhol's portraits at the Whitney Museum in 1979, Warhol's comment is just one more piece of evidence for his artistic bankruptcy. Hughes responds:

> For without doubt, there was something strange about so firm an adherence to the surface. It went against the grain of high art as such. What had become of the belief, dear to modernism, that the power and cathartic necessity of art flowed from the unconscious, through the knotwork of dream, memory, and desire, into the realized image? No trace of it; the paintings were all superficies, no symbol. Their blankness seemed eerie.
>
> They did not share the reforming hopes of modernism. Neither dada's caustic anxiety, nor the utopian dreams of the constructivists; no politics, no transcendentalism.[4]

Hughes' quarrel in this essay is not so much with Warhol as with the cultural conditions in which a figure like Warhol makes sense. Warhol's rejection of depth involves a rejection of high modernism's aspirations to political activism, psychic expression, or transcendence of the everyday. But for Hughes, these rejections do not provoke questions about our conventional, modernist definitions of art and the artist, but rather simply disqualify Warhol as a proper artist. Thus Hughes criticizes Warhol as a 'walking void' and describes him as possessing a 'bland translucency, as of frosted glass.' The first comment is fairly clear: Warhol is a void, there is nothing at all to be found behind the mask of his persona. But the second is more equivocal, suggesting that Hughes has attempted to peer into the depths behind Warhol's mask, but has been prevented from doing so by the opacity of Warhol's surface. Despite the critic's best efforts, nothing but a dull, diffuse light gets through. In any case, Hughes seems to regard this lack of depth as one of Warhol's chief faults, as both an artist and a person.

In his sympathetic monograph on the artist, Carter Ratcliff attempts to use this same comment of Warhol's as a rallying point around which a defense can be marshaled. After citing Warhol's remark, Ratcliff writes:

> This, we assume, is not true. In fact, we tend to believe that the more an individual, an art form, even a culture insists on its outward image, the more there is going on behind it. The seemingly absolute impenetrability of Warhol's surfaces is what gives him and his art their

---

[4]Robert Hughes, "The Rise of Andy Warhol," in *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, ed. Brian Wallis (New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984), 49. Originally published in *The New York Review of Books* (February 18, 1982): 6-10.

> persistent interest. We are drawn by what stays hidden, all the more so because Warhol's pop imagery seems to veil something basic—perhaps disturbing—about our culture, about us. Since there is no question of revealing this secret directly, we must gather what we can from the surface of the artifacts he is willing to provide us.[5]

As in Hughes' response, the opacity of Warhol's surfaces creates a desire to look beneath them, imagining that something of value is buried there. Ratcliff maintains that there is such a depth to Warhol's art, but cautions that it must remain concealed. If viewed head-on, our own culture would blind us: Ratcliff sees Warhol as providing the pinhole camera through which we can glimpse our radiant core. Warhol's secret—and ours—lies hidden beneath the shimmering enigma of his surfaces, its very inaccessibility the source of its allure and the guarantee of its abiding value. The surface in this way becomes a protective mask that conceals our own cultural essence from view.

Reading Ratcliff's comments on the subject, however, one gets the distinct feeling that a defense is organized around this point precisely because it is felt to be vulnerable. Ratcliff goes on to write: "There is always the chance that [Warhol] is correct when he says that he and his art are all surface, with nothing hidden underneath. Warhol's art may, in fact, offer the allure of absolute nothingness."[6] Ratcliff's position is a difficult one: there is 'always the chance' that nothing will be found behind the surface, that Warhol's surfaces conceal not the fullness of meaning, but Hughes's 'walking void.' Thus it would seem that the only way to save Warhol from his attackers is to posit a full depth behind the glamorous surfaces of his art. If there is 'nothing behind' Warhol's paintings, apologists and antagonists seem to agree, then his paintings must be either meaningless or utterly indeterminate in their meaning.[7]

---

[5]Carter Ratcliff, *Andy Warhol* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1983), 9.

[6]Ibid., 23.

[7]The sense that Warhol's work produces a radical relativism with respect to meaning is expressed by Peter Bürger as well: "the painting of 100 Campbell's soup cans contains resistance to the commodity society only for the person who wants to see it there. The Neo-avant-garde, which stages for a second time the avant-gardiste break with tradition, becomes a manifestation that is void of sense and that permits the positing of any meaning whatever." *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1974), trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 61.

And so it is that authors of otherwise incompatible readings of Warhol join hands in equating lack of depth with lack of meaning. Philosopher Daniel Herwitz writes that to interpret Warhol's paintings one must forcefully probe past their surfaces:

> One must look beneath the surface of the mass-produced object to find traces of our connection to it. And similarly, one must look beneath the Warhol image, not in it, in order to find conditions for attachment to it. One wishes one did not have to look to Warhol's words or to his mother or to his life to find out that he is attached to eating his Campbell's soup. One wishes Warhol's art were less resistant to revealing its attachments to the objects and persons it cherishes; one wishes it were less resistant to revealing Warhol himself. One must fight the resistance to speech in Warhol and in his art.[8]

Herwitz's crescendoing syntax, 'one wishes...one wishes...one must fight,' points to a rising aggression toward the work, perhaps provoked by the repeated 'resistance' of Warhol's work to attempts to penetrate its surface. Like Ratcliff, Herwitz imagines these canvases as concealing valuable secrets; but where Ratcliff handles these impassive surfaces with kid gloves, Herwitz is provoked to thrash their secrets out of them. When this operation fails, the interpreter proclaims that Warhol's paintings have no meaning:

> [Warhol's art] elicits meaning or interpretation and then trashes these. It follows from the ambivalence in Warhol's art toward meaning—call it toward art—that Warhol's artworks are, in fact, indeterminate as to their meaning. They suggest a hundred different interpretations but deliver the visual or theoretical goods for none.[9]

Herwitz equates art with meaning. When no secrets can be coaxed out of a painting's hidden depths, therefore, the work fails to be a piece of art.

This procedure is reversed in Thomas Crow's "Saturday Disasters: Trace and Reference in Early Warhol." Crow begins by asserting that Warhol's art is meaningful.[10] In order to sustain this assertion, he creates a depth both behind Warhol's canvases and behind their maker. If Warhol's neutral, affectless presentation of his subject matter leads

---

[8]Daniel Herwitz, *Making Theory/Constructing Art: On the Authority of the Avant-Garde* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 258. This is not the only passage that manifests violence toward the object. Herwitz also writes that "an authentic response to Warhol's essential ambivalence toward meaning is to force meaning out of his art the way others try to squeeze musical orange juice out of the score of John Cage's *4.33*," 268.

[9]Ibid., 247.

[10]Thomas Crow, "Saturday Disasters: Trace and Reference in Early Warhol," in *Reconstructing Modernism: Art in New York, Paris, and Montreal 1945-1964*, ed. Serge Guilbaut (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1990): 311-331.

Herwitz to assume that Warhol is incapable of distinguishing the wheat from the chaff, Crow maintains that Warhol's true feelings were concealed. Thus Herwitz concludes that the work is meaningless, while Crow treats it as containing an emotional core that, if carefully excavated, will reveal the truth of Warhol's feelings about these subjects. These four critics, wildly disparate in their interpretive programs, share a common belief: without depth, no meaning and without meaning, no art.

Ironically, critics like Ratcliff and Crow are left to obfuscate the terms of Warhol's project as a means of redeeming Warhol's artistic seriousness, while critics like Hughes and Herwitz perceive Warhol's work fairly accurately but can see its superficiality only as the basis for a contemptuous dismissal of the art. The eerie blankness and detachment of Hughes' account reads far more convincingly than the veiled secrets of Ratcliff's. Can we find a way to acknowledge the accuracy of Hughes' descriptions of the oeuvre while retaining Ratcliff's sense that there is an interesting project here?

This will be somewhat difficult, since our language honors depth over surface. The superficial person, or the profound one, the shallow conversation, or the deep one, explaining in greater depth or just skimming the surface: these everyday figures of speech demonstrate the extent of our reliance on metaphors of depth and surface. With these critics we share the intuition that the surface is trivial: decorative and alluring perhaps, but insignificant and lacking in substance. If we want to see something as meaningful and important, 'deep' is our positive term. By reveling, visually and verbally, in the surface, Warhol in fact solicits responses in this kind of language.

Given the opposition between depth (the sign of serious purpose, substance, truth and meaning) and surface (the sign of frivolity, triviality, deception and meaninglessness), we are faced with different options. One would be to simply reverse the positive and negative charges attached to these terms, to celebrate the pleasures of the surface over the stuffy seriousness of depth. (This option is probably closest to Warhol's stated views of his project.) Another would be a deconstructive approach, aiming to show how the two

terms mutually constitute each other and thus that the positive term always implies the tacit acceptance of the negative one. The option I have chosen to follow here is to note that a whole world of meanings lies on the surface. These meanings are not particularly 'deep' or 'serious'; rather, they involve precisely the world of appearances that we are accustomed to disparaging as deceptive. Nonetheless, we ought to devote some attention to those appearances, and a study of Warhol's painting can help us in this effort. For the significance of Warhol's surfaces, following Oscar Wilde's suggestion, lies precisely in their engagement with the visible mystery of the world.

A Feminist Perspective

Although the language of surface and depth is pervasive in Warhol studies, the *question* that has almost exclusively occupied the critics is whether or not Warhol can be considered a vanguard artist. Put baldly: was Warhol a critic of the commodity form and the social relations it incarnated, or was he a willing, even cheerful accessory to capitalist reification? Both positions have been argued at length, often quite subtly and ingeniously, and for many critics this question has been a fruitful one in coming to understand Warhol's art.

Yet there are problems with the question itself. The question assumes that the formal revolution instigated by vanguard artists runs parallel to political revolutions that create new forms of social organization, and suggests that vanguard artistic projects will have some capacity to spur progressive action in the political sphere. This progressive action tends to be pictured solely as some form of opposition to capitalism. Carol Duncan has pointed out one major limitation of such a view, noting that the historical avant-garde's opposition to the social order actually relied upon and shored up the inequality of women: "Far from contesting the established social order, the male-female relationship that these paintings imply—the drastic reduction of women to objects of specialized male interests—

embodies on a sexual level the basic class relationships of capitalist society."[11] Even if we remain within a modernist view that assumes art will be critical of society, one person's criticality may be another's domination.

This fairly narrow conception of what it means to be critical has worked to the detriment of Warhol's reputation. Where critics working within a Marxist framework find Warhol's art complacent, the same work produces an uneasiness in me as a feminist critic, and a dissatisfaction with the categories that have been marshalled to contain that disturbance. By shifting to a different analytic frame — one provided by feminist thought — not only Warhol's oeuvre but the questions traditionally asked of it appear in a new light. It becomes evident that the critical language of surface and depth has strong gender resonances and that the condemnation of Warhol as a capitalist dupe is partially determined by his embrace of the 'feminine' qualities of the surface, namely its cosmetic, decorative, reproductive, and spectacular aspects.

Warhol couples his stylistic interest in surface with the most superficial products of the culture industry. He focuses on the pulp sentiment of the tabloids, the glamorous faces of movie stars, the canned pleasures of domestic consumerism: these subjects form a virtual catalogue of a 'feminized' culture. Not only Warhol's style, but his subject matter is feminized through association with the stuff of mass culture. Again, however, we need to suspend the rush to judgment. Warhol saw something of value in the surface, and if we dismiss it too quickly as trivial, we will lose the opportunity to find out what that was. In short, Warhol's work poses a challenge to our accepted ways of thinking and even our forms of social organization, but this challenge cannot be grasped adequately within a Marxist framework. A feminist perspective — one sensitive to the gender ideology that anchors the aversion to the surface — is needed if we are to understand Warhol's surfaces.

---

[11]Carol Duncan, "Virility and Domination in Early Twentieth- Century Vanguard Painting" (1973), revised for inclusion in *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany*, ed. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 311.

Within the discipline of art history, feminist analysis has tended to focus on the study of women artists or an examination of gender in painted subject matter. In this study, stylistic analysis is coupled with an interest in gender. But this project is not exactly intended as a contribution to 'feminist art history.' Rather, it is feminist in the interdisciplinary sense: it uses the lens of gender to get at a belief that underlies many domains of thought and action.

My working assumption is that gender is a system that assigns different roles to men and women. Although their restrictions and rights differ from those of women, men are equally subject to this system. For example, it is socially acceptable for men to display greater aggression, bravery, and initiative than women. While this is problematic for women who are abundant in these traits, it is equally problematic for men who do not possess them. A corollary is that women who want to fight have an inordinately difficult time being accepted as full-status members of the military, while all men, regardless of temperament, skill and inclination, are required to register for the draft.

If one model of gender relations implies that women are the victims, and men the beneficiaries of social rules governing appropriate gender behavior, the model used here is more like the famous scenario from Greek myth. Procrustes, a legendary highway bandit, compelled his victims to lie down on a bed. If the victims' bodies fit the bed precisely, they were released. But those whose legs dangled over were chopped off, and those who were too short were stretched to the length of the bed. Which of these victims is better off? In this model, the problem is not men or women but a system of power that divides human qualities between the two.[12]

Along these lines, this study tries to understand surface and depth as a gendered metaphor. There is no natural or intrinsic connection between women and the surface. I will nonetheless discuss the surface as 'feminine,' where feminine is understood to mean a

---

[12]A similar model informs Dorothy Dinnerstein's *The Mermaid and the Minotaur: Sexual Arrangements and Human Malaise*, (New York: HarperPerennial, 1976). She intended this work as a contribution to "the project of loosening and restructuring the rigid forms of symbiosis, of fixed psychological complementarity, which have so far dominated relations between women and men," 2.

conventional, culturally determined attribute of women. In chapters one through three I simply let this conventional association stand; it is not until the last chapter that I explore the problems produced by considering the surface as somehow uniquely or specifically the property of women. In the last chapter it becomes clear that ideas about surface and depth are closely related to our understanding of subjects and objects. In Western philosophical thought, subjectivity has typically been located in the internal regions of the self, whereas the object is seen to exist on the surface. By shifting the terms of surface and depth away from their gender assignments, we are able to recognize that it is our human lot to be both subjects for ourselves and objects for others, regardless of our gender.

ANDY WARHOL AS A PAINTER

Recent Warhol scholarship has been dominated by the assumption that Warhol's subject matter documents the rise of consumer culture during the prosperous post-war decades in the United States, and that his style is a relatively transparent means of conveying that subject matter. Thus Warhol's paintings have been considered as sociological documents of American obsessions: with glamor, death, consumerism, the media. There is no doubt that Warhol's imagery invites analysis in terms of the immediate cultural context, but it is both possible and productive to locate his work in broader traditions of image-making.

Although my account diverges from his in many ways, the most significant attempt to come to terms with the historical roots of Warhol's style is Benjamin Buchloh's. Buchloh provides a detailed account of Warhol's work from the sixties, which, as he points out, makes extensive use of the formal strategies current in that decade. Serial imagery, monochrome, and the ready-made are important aspects of Warhol's art that could be seen in the work of his immediate predecessors Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns. Buchloh goes on to argue that these strategies were borrowed by Johns and Rauschenberg from New York Dada and therefore that Dada is Warhol's tradition in the broadest sense. When contextualized within a Dada frame of reference, it becomes clear that Warhol's use

of mechanical reproduction, his challenges to the uniqueness and authenticity of the art object, and his questioning of the artist's role, all take up and extend Dadaist projects.

Despite the wealth of visual evidence, Warhol's importance as an inheritor of the Dada tradition was, according to Buchloh, largely ignored by critics:

> The recognition of Warhol's ingenuity and radicality obviously depended to a considerable degree on the historical limitations of his original audiences: in fact his strategies could appear to be scandalous only in the face of the New York School climate and that generation's general indifference, most often fused with aggressive contempt—as exemplified by Clement Greenberg—for the Dada and Duchamp legacy. By contrast, Warhol's interventions in the aesthetics of the early sixties would seem fully plausible and necessary to a viewer aware of the implications of the Dada legacy in terms of that movement's continual emphasis on and reflection of the symbiotic ties between the aesthetics of art production and those of commodity production.[13]

This assertion is surprising on several counts. First, the Dada label was frequently invoked in early Pop criticism. For example, in a defense of Pop art, Barbara Rose wrote that "Pop art bears roughly the same relationship to abstract expressionism as dada did to cubism; like dada it is primarily idea art, in which a perverse disjunction of form and content replaces their formerly harmonious integration."[14] In a negative vein, Hilton Kramer used his allotted minutes in "A Symposium on Pop Art" to blast both Pop and the tradition he sees it stemming from: "...pop art does, of course, have its connections with art history. Behind its pretensions looms the legendary presence of the most overrated figure in modern art: Mr. Marcel Duchamp. It is Duchamp's celebrated silence, his disavowal, his abandoment of art, which has here—in pop art—been invaded, colonized and exploited."[15]

Second, Buchloh suggests that Clement Greenberg's restrictive theory of modernist practice was to some degree responsible for the critical inability to see Warhol as a Dadaist. Although Greenberg was indeed hostile to Pop (as well as to Dada), there were a number of critics who at the time perceived a continuity between the formal preoccupations of the abstract painters Greenberg favored and those working in a Pop mode. Peter Plagens

---

[13]Benjamin Buchloh, "Andy Warhol's One-Dimensional Art: 1956-1966," in *Andy Warhol: A Retrospective*, ed. Kynaston McShine (New York: MoMA, 1989), 56.

[14]Barbara Rose, "Pop in Perspective" (1965), in *Pop Art: The Critical Dialogue*, 201.

[15]Hilton Kramer in "A Symposium on Pop Art," held December 13, 1962 at the Museum of Modern Art. The proceedings were edited by Peter Selz and printed in *Arts Magazine* 37 (April 1963), 38.

writes that "the formalist differences...between Abstract Expressionism and Pop are the differences of adjacent, rather than oppposed, qualities; one group supplements, rather than negates, the other."[16] He compares the two in terms of their color and brushstroke and how these work to produce a flat surface. Similarly, Barbara Rose insists that

> stylistically, the work is linked with that of the young abstract artists. Like them, pop artists work in the flat, on the surface, usually with closed, two-dimensional shapes having legible contours. Often they use the same 'nasty' brash commercial colors and resistant surfaces found in the work of such young abstractionists as Poons, Williams, Bannard and Krushenick.... Linking the pop artists again to the abstract artists of their generation is the bland impersonality, aloofness, disavowal of emotion or 'message,' and the amount of playing with vulgarity, unpleasantness and bad taste which tends to characterize the art of all these young painters, both pop and abstract.[17]

For Henry Geldzahler it was the scale of the Pop paintings that marked their strongest point of connection with their immediate predecessors:

> The best and most developed post-Abstract Expressionist painting is the big single-image painting, which comes in part out of Barney Newman's work—I am thinking of Ellsworth Kelly, Kenneth Noland, Ray Parker and Frank Stella, among others—and surely this painting is reflected in the work of Lichtenstein, Warhol and Rosenquist. Each of these painters inflates his compulsive image. The aesthetic permission to project their immense pop images derives in part from a keen awareness of the most advanced contemporary art. And thus pop art can be seen to make sense and have a place in the wider movement of recent art.[18]

Even Greenberg himself recognized the stylistic filiation of pop with his privileged mode of modernist painting:

> Well, there are all these manifestations in all their variegation, yet from a steady and detached look at them through their whole range some markedly common stylistic features emerge. Design of layout is almost always clear and explicit, drawing sharp and clean, shape or area geometrically simplified or at least faired and trued, color flat and bright or at least undifferentiated in value and texture within a given hue. Amid the pullulation of novelties, advanced art in the 60s subscribes almost unanimously to these canons of style—canons that Wölfflin would call linear.[19]

---

[16]Peter Plagens, "Present-Day Styles and Ready-Made Criticism: Two Views of Post-Abstract Expressionist Styles, Part II, in Which the Formal Contribution of Pop Art Is Found to Be Minimal," *Artforum* 5 (December 1966), 37.

[17]Rose in *Pop Art: The Critical Dialogue*, 195.

[18]Henry Geldzahler in "A Symposium on Pop Art," 37.

[19]Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde Attitudes: New Art in the Sixties," (1968) in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, ed. John O'Brian, Vol. 4: *Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957-1969* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 294. In this context, Greenberg does not specify which artists were good and which bad, leaving us to recall his positions from his other writings.

Although Greenberg did recognize a stylistic consistency in the work of this generation, he rejected most of it out of hand: "what at first did surprise me in the new art of the 60s was that its basic homogeneity of style could embrace such a great heterogeneity of quality, that such bad art could go hand in hand with such good art."[20]

Warhol's artistic concerns were thus understood by contemporaries both in relation to Dada *and* to modernist painting in a Greenbergian vein. Nonetheless I think Buchloh is right to see these two traditions as existing in tension with each other. These tensions inform his own account of Warhol's oeuvre, which he describes as:

> oscillating constantly between an extreme challenge to the status and credibility of painting and a continued deployment of strictly pictorial means operating within the narrowly defined framework of pictorial conventions. Inevitably, the question arises (and it has been asked again and again) whether or why Warhol never crossed the threshold into the actual conception (or, rather, reconstitution) of the ready-made object. Except for the occasional joke campaign, such as signing actual Campbell's soup cans, Warhol would never use the three-dimensional ready-made object in its unaltered industrial existence, as a raw object of consumption. Yet at the same time he would go further than any of his peers in Pop art (not, however, as far as many of his peers in the Fluxus movement) to challenge the traditional assumptions about the uniqueness, authenticity, and authorship of the pictorial object, the very foundations upon which high modernist art had rested until Duchamp defined the Readymade in 1917, and upon which the reconstruction of modernism had rested in the New York School until the arrival of Warhol in 1962.

In this passage, Buchloh establishes several positions: 1) that Warhol's art, while remaining within the domain of painting, goes farther than most Pop art in presenting a strong challenge to painting 2) that Warhol is a figure with strong parallels to Duchamp and 3) that Warhol did not go as far in transgressing against painting as did his contemporaries in Fluxus and his predecessor Duchamp. By contextualizing Warhol's oeuvre within Dadaist tradition, Warhol's decision to make paintings comes to seem like a failure of radicality. The question becomes why Warhol *didn't* make pure readymades, why he *didn't* go further in challenging the terms handed down by painting. So Warhol's paintings come to look like failed attempts to not make paintings.

---

[20]Ibid., 297.

Certainly Duchamp's response to Warhol's Campbell's soup can paintings suggests the possibility of reading Warhol as a Duchampian artist: "If you take a Campbell's Soup can and repeat it fifty times, you are not interested in the retinal image. What interests you is the concept that wants to put fifty Campbell's Soup cans on a canvas."[21] Here Duchamp claims that the repetition of the soup can could not possibly be a painterly project (presumably he finds the motif devoid of visual interest), and therefore he assumes that the motivation must be conceptual. Duchamp's remark rests on a division between art as a process of crafting objects and art as a conceptual endeavor. This relocation of 'art' from the sphere of craftsmanship to the sphere of thought began in the Renaissance with attempts to raise the status of artists from artisans to liberal thinkers. In the twentieth century, this was updated by Duchamp, whose Readymades can be seen as lifting authorship from a material plane and to a conceptual one.

But Warhol had something rather different to say about the conception and execution of paintings:

> When I have to think about it, I know the picture is wrong. And sizing is a form of thinking, and coloring is too. My instinct about painting says, 'If you don't think about it, it's right.' As soon as you have to decide and choose, it's wrong. And the more you decide about, the more wrong it gets. Some people, they paint abstract, so they sit there thinking about it because their thinking makes them feel they're doing something. But thinking never makes me feel I'm doing anything. Leonardo da Vinci used to convince his patrons that his thinking time was worth something—worth even more than his painting time—and that may have been true for him, but I know that my thinking time isn't worth anything. I only expect to get paid for my 'doing' time.[22]

Here Warhol explicitly rejects a division between conceiving and executing a painting — or rather, he admits a distinction only to reject conceptual work as something to be avoided. As his reference to Leonardo shows he was aware, Warhol knew that privileging conception over execution was a way to claim prestige for one's painting, to elevate painting from a craft involving mere manufacture to a liberal art on a plane with other

---

[21]Quoted in Rosalind Constable, "New York's Avant Garde and How It Got There," *New York Herald Tribune* (May 17, 1964), 10.

[22]*The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again)* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1975), 149.

humanistic inquiry. Thus, in Warhol's paraphrase, a new category of labor was introduced ('thinking time'), paid at a vastly higher rate than 'painting time.' In convincing his patrons to accept this, Leonardo made use of the mind-body split in Western thought: rather than arguing that conception was in the fingers, he sapped the fingers both of their knowledge and of their economic worth, and relocated artistic value to the brain.

By saying "I only expect to get paid for my 'doing' time," Warhol resists a notion of conceptualization separate from manual skill. He goes farther, insisting that execution must be swift and automatic or the painting will be ruined. When we factor in the anecdotes about Warhol 'buying' his ideas from various sources, we see Warhol doing everything he can to militate against the idea that he was a conceptual artist. Duchamp's response to Warhol's Campbell's Soup Cans thus indicates not an affinity, but a gap between his understanding of the art object and Warhol's.

By assuming that Warhol's project harmonizes with Duchamp's, Buchloh is left to downplay discontinuities. So, for example, Buchloh writes of Warhol's early paintings:

> In [the Elvises, the Disasters, and the *Thirteen Most Wanted Men*] the silkscreened photographic imprint remains the only trace of the pictorial manufacturing process, and this technique *assaults* once again one of the central tenets of the modernist legacy—forcing those eager to rediscover medium-specific painterliness, individuality, and the uniqueness of the painterly mark to detect it in the accidental slippages and flaws of a casually executed silkscreen process. In the following statement, a fervent admirer of Clement Greenberg's painterly norms, confronted with Warhol's work, makes a grotesque attempt to regain discursive control and tries to *accommodate the blows* that the modernist painterly aesthetic had received from Warhol's propositions: "He [Warhol] can in fact now be seen as the sensitive master of a wide variety of surface incident, and a major effect of the experience of looking at his paintings is an unusually immediate awareness of the two-dimensional fact of their painted surfaces....Both factors underline the reality of the paint itself as a deposit on the surface, quite apart from its interdependence with the image it supports.[23] [italics mine]

Because he assumes that Warhol was not attempting to make, or should not have been attempting to make paintings, Buchloh does not want to treat his paintings as such. Instead he emphasizes Warhol's 'assault' on painting and writes that "Warhol came closer than

---

[23]Buchloh, 50. The citation is from Richard Morphet, "Andy Warhol," in *Warhol* (London: Tate Gallery, 1971), 6.

anybody since Duchamp (in the Western European and American avant-garde at least) 'to [giving] up the making of paintings entirely."[24] Despite marked differences in intent and interpretive project, this tendency to prefer conceptual maneuvers to physical objects links Buchloh's writing on Warhol with Arthur Danto's. While Buchloh sees the work as a series of sophisticated interventions in the discourse of painting, Danto sees it as a prod to philosophical speculation on the nature and role of art.

Thus Danto writes

> First of all, I came to feel that with the *Brillo Box*, the true character of the philosophical question of the nature of art had been attained. Closely connected with this, I began to believe, appropriating a famous thesis of Hegel's, that with the disclosure of discovery of its true philosophical nature, art attains the end of its history—that that exhibition in the Stable Gallery marked what I somewhat impishly called the End of Art.[25]

For Danto, works like the *Brillo Box* raise philosophical questions, which are then considered within the realm of philosophical thought, without reference to actual objects. The *Brillo Box* is a springboard which bounces us into the realm of philosophical speculation. In fact, Danto claims that with Warhol, art turns into philosophy. Thus Danto treats Warhol less as an artist and more as an occasion for philosophical speculation.

Both of these Warhols — the Dadaist and the philosopher — have their interest. The Dadaist Warhol, especially, is an important figure, and the aesthetic discourse that Buchloh reconstructs is richer for the inclusion of Warhol. But I also find myself sharing David Bourdon's sense that "the least interesting aspect of Warhol's theatrical gift was exercised in the Dada gestures that made him so famous. Likewise, the Dada gesture, the put-on, in these early works has obscured their sumptuous beauty."[26] In order to get at the 'sumptuous beauty' of these works, we may need to screen out the Dada label for the moment. (Another option would be to retain the Dada label, noting its internal variety and the number of different artistic practices and ideologies it was able to sustain.)

---

[24]Ibid., 45.

[25]Arthur C. Danto, *Beyond the Brillo Box: The Visual Arts in Post-Historical Perspective* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1992), 6.

[26]Stephen Koch, *Stargazer: Andy Warhol's World and His Films* (London: M. Boyars, 1985), 35.

Although Warhol worked in a variety of media — painting, sculpture, film, performance — and a great deal of his importance to future artists resided in the multiplicity of the practices he took up, I focus my account on Warhol as a *painter*. As David Antin explained, "I call [Warhol] a painter since he generally uses canvas and colors it."[27] This inevitably produces a partial and tendentious view of his activity, but it will enable us to see aspects of his work that have gone unrecognized. By looking at Warhol's art as painting, rather than as a kind of conceptual art, we can consider how Warhol's painted surfaces a) relate to the surfaces of other painters and b) change our minds about the status of the surface.

As a result of this shift, the terms typically used to take hold of Warhol's style are less in evidence here. The readymade, the grid, the silkscreen, and the commodity are implicit in, but not identical with, the references invoked here: cosmetics, wallpaper, photography, objects. There is some overlap between these terms, but by starting in a different place we are able to discover a different Warhol.

WARHOL MEANT IT

When he is not dismissed as a buffoon, the literature on Warhol is shot through with the suspicion that he was the ultimate ironist.[28] In part, this belief is related to the understanding of Warhol as a Dadaist provocateur. But it is more far-reaching, since critics

---

[27]David Antin, "Warhol: The Silver Tenement," *Art News* 65 (Summer 1966), 58.

[28]One difficulty is that Warhol is either seen as the ultimate in cool, always above everything he paints, or he is seen as genuine, in which case he is treated gently, as if a saint, primitive, or moron. Thus in a review of Warhol's November 1962 show at the Stable Gallery, Gene Swenson wrote: "Andy Warhol confounded one at first. He paints a can of Campbell's soup with such complete innocence and simplicity that it was tempting to find as much humanity and mystery in it as there is in good abstract paintings. But, unlike the other 'New Realists' with whom he is sometimes linked, he makes no attempt to bare his soul; he is quite ingenuously interested in his subject matter. If he paints Marilyn Monroe 20 times, it is because that is the way she seems to him—20 times different and yet always as if from a movie magazine. He never uses satire. He simply likes the people he paints; even Troy Donahue comes off looking human and friendly, although at the same time the actor may look merely like a product in the photo from which the artist's silk screen was made. Warhol thinks the paint-by-number idea is beautiful, and so he makes it beautiful by the altogether obvious means of leaving many numbered areas unpainted. Meyer Schapiro says of Henri Rousseau that he saw marvels which 'spelled modernity for the popular mind...with the same wonder as the man in the street and painted them with the devoted literalness of a modern primitive.' These canvases are full of that spirit, full of good will and a large natural talent." G[ene] R. S[wenson], "Andy Warhol," *Art News* 61 (November 1962), 15.

who do not subscribe to this view nonetheless seem to believe that Warhol manipulates his subject matter with cynical detachment, in the absence of conviction or passion. Understanding Warhol as utterly aloof from and superior to what he depicts, his interpreters try rather desperately to show that they, too, are possessed of such sophistication: no-one, it seems, wants to be caught finding Warhol's work attractive and appealing.

Certainly there is a rebellious and playful streak in Warhol's work, a certain mischievous glee taken in bringing together the extremes of high and low. Nonetheless I find little in Warhol's work to suggest that he saw himself as superior to the subjects he depicted. Quite the opposite: he identifies with his subject matter, with the world of Campbell's Soup and Marilyn Monroe. As Kenneth Silver has pointed out, the world Warhol depicts is first and foremost the world of lower middle-class women: "Yet something remarkable happened when Warhol left commercial art for his own art — although he still thought about commerce, he now thought about commercialism and consumerism not through the eyes of a *Vogue* reader or Bonwit shopper, but through his mother's eyes....It was a 'blue-collar' woman's world that Warhol offered New York's sophisticated art consumers."[29]

This fact should not, in the absence of supporting evidence, lead us to assume that Warhol's attitude toward this world was satirical. In fact, Peter Schjeldahl has argued:

> The son of an immigrant Czech laborer, Warhol is one of very, very few modern artists from an authentically working-class background. A lot of what has seemed miraculous, angelic oddity about him is explicable in this light. For the most part, the American working class in our time has been characterized by avidity for the products and values of capitalist popular culture; ambivalence about these things usually has been the province of a middle class able to take their availability for granted from birth....By comparison to [Warhol's] still galvanically powerful Marilyns and electric chairs of 1962-66, the work of the other Pop artists seems distanced, even debilitated by middle-class irony. What was for them 'material' was for him subject matter, form and content. The occasional imputation of naïveté (or cynicism, for that matter) to Warhol is itself a species of naïveté (or cynicism), the failure

---

[29]Kenneth E. Silver, "Modes of Disclosure: The Construction of Gay Identity and the Rise of Pop Art," in *Hand-Painted Pop: American Art in Transition, 1955-62*, ed. Russell Ferguson (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1992), 197.

> to imagine that our culture presents a radically different face when seen from its periphery.[30]

In other words, Warhol's subject matter contains highly specific class and gender associations, and to assume that this material is meant to be condescended to is to assume a great deal indeed. To expect that this kind of subject matter can only enter art through quotation marks is to assume a definite class position in relation to this work: namely, to imagine that the relation to this kind of subject matter could only be one of fascinated condescension. But Warhol, Schjeldahl argues, was not condescending to this world, he came from it. Although Warhol went through many class positions in his own life, from working class Pittsburgh kid, to successful New York businessman, to bohemian artist, to ultra-rich jet-setter, his pictures continue to provide ample evidence that he identified with women, and specifically with the aspirations and desires of working-class women. Obviously this will have to be substantiated through careful readings of his work, but my initial assumption, which I will hold until proved otherwise, is that *Warhol meant what he said and what he painted.* What he said and painted are, of course, far from self-evident; reconstructing them is the task I set myself here.

Michel Foucault is often cited in support of the idea that Warhol was an ironical annihilator of meaning. This is what Foucault says:

> This is the greatness of Warhol with his canned foods, senseless accidents, and his series of advertising smiles: the oral and nutritional equivalence of those half-open lips, teeth, tomato sauce, that hygiene based on detergents; the equivalence of death in the cavity of an eviscerated car, at the top of a telephone pole and at the end of a wire, and between the glistening, steel blue arms of the electric chair. 'It's the same either way,' stupidity says, while sinking into itself and infinitely extending its nature with the things it says of itself; 'Here or there, it's always the same thing; what difference if the colors vary, if they're lighter or darker. How stupid life is, how stupid women are, how stupid death is! How stupid stupidity is!'[31]

---

[30]Peter Schjeldahl, "Warhol & Class Content," *Art in America* 68 (May 1980), 117.

[31]Michel Foucault, "Theatrum Philosophicum" (1970), in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 189. This short essay is a review of two books by Gilles Deleuze. The last two lines follow the more literal translation suggested by Benjamin Buchloh when he quoted this passage in "The Andy Warhol Line," in *The Work of Andy Warhol*, ed. Gary Garrels (Seattle: Bay Press, 1989), 66.

Here is the familiar refrain that Warhol's work is both undifferentiated and indifferent. Foucault suggests that Warhol's subject matter involves a series of equivalences, posited without affect and without intelligence.

Yet Foucault goes on to challenge the notion of 'stupidity' itself in ways that must inflect his stated position on Warhol. He begins by saying that "intelligence does not respond to stupidity, since it is stupidity already vanquished, the categorical art of avoiding error. The scholar is intelligent."[32] The intelligent scholar does not bother with stupidity, but the thinker, the philosopher deals with stupidity, turning it over carefully to see what it holds:

> At the limit, thought would be the intense contemplation from close up—to the point of losing oneself in it—of stupidity....The philosopher must be sufficiently perverse to play the game of truth and error badly: this perversity, which operates in paradoxes, allows him to escape the grasp of categories. But aside from this, he must be sufficiently 'ill humored' to persist in his confrontation with stupidity, to remain motionless to the point of stupefaction in order to approach it successfully and mime it, to let it slowly grow within himself (this is probably what we politely refer to as being absorbed in one's thoughts), and to await, in the always unpredictable conclusion to this elaborate preparation, the shock of difference.[33]

The scholar dismisses stupidity, but the thinker engages it. This 'perversity' allows the thinker to discover new ideas; if this 'perversity' is accompanied by 'ill humor,' then the thinker has the patience to wait through the arduous process of allowing stupidity to 'slowly grow within himself.' As it turns out, thought itself, 'the shock of difference,' is obtained through this labored confrontation with what the scholar finds beneath notice.

After an excursus on the ways in which LSD can assist in this thoughtful confrontation with stupidity, Foucault concludes: "At any rate, in a state deprived of drugs, thought possesses two horns: one is perversity (to baffle categories) and the other ill humor (to point to stupidity and transfix it)."[34] Being both perverse and ill-humored

---

[32]Ibid., 190.

[33]Ibid. In saying this, Foucault is not so far from Wittgenstein: "My aim is: to teach you to pass from a piece of disguised nonsense to something that is patent nonsense." Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 3d ed. (1945), trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1953), §464, 133.

[34]Ibid., 191.

myself, I feel qualified to undertake this study of Warhol: to appreciate the ways in which his art 'baffles' our categories and to allow his stupidity to ripen until the point at which it blossoms into something else.

****

This study is organized as a consideration of Warhol's style, which I isolate into three constituent parts. Chapter 1 deals with his application of paint, Chapter 2 with repetition, and Chapter 3 with the use of the photograph. Rather than assume that it is a more or less neutral means of presenting his subject matter, the first chapter relates Warhol's paint application to what I term the 'cosmetic' tradition in French painting, where paint is treated as an artificial, beautiful means of making up an attractive surface. This tradition is subsequently picked up and developed in American painting as well. This chapter locates Warhol in relation to debates between color and design that have flared up repeatedly since the Renaissance, and particularly to predecessors such as François Boucher, Èdouard Manet, Carolus Duran, John Singer Sargent, Henri Matisse, and Willem de Kooning, who were also seen as siding with the pleasurable, superficial effects of the colored surface.

The second chapter links Warhol to the serial surfaces of modernist painting as theorized by Clement Greenberg. This is a bit perverse, as Greenberg only mentioned Warhol twice in print, and never dealt with Pop art beyond a few casual dismissals.[35] By reconstructing Greenberg's views on the pictorial surface and juxtaposing these with Warhol's surfaces, however, it is possible to register important stylistic similarities as well as significant differences. In both of these chapters, I will be trying to show that the category of surface itself is one with a pedigree, and that Warhol's embrace of it, far from

---

[35]The first mention was a brief comment on Warhol's celebrity in "Where Is the Avant-Garde?" (1967), in O'Brian, 4: 261. The second was in an interview conducted by Edward Lucie-Smith in 1968, 4: 282.

making him an embarrassingly superficial and ignorant exception to a tradition, *is* his means of connecting his work to an influential strand of Western art.

Although Warhol's use of photography has contributed substantially to the understanding of his style as transparent, my third chapter will see photography as an inflecting rather than a neutral component of Warhol's style. In general, I will be trying to move beyond our common sense understanding of the 'superficial' to note the variety of surfaces engaged by Warhol's art. Although Warhol exploits the proximity of these surfaces, for heuristic purposes we will separate and analyze them before putting them back together. Differentiating these surfaces—of *belle peinture*, of modernist painting, of the photograph, of popular culture—will help us to understand Warhol's surfaces and to challenge the valuations made of them.

Having considered Warhol's focus on the painted surface within a much broader art historical context than has previously been attempted, I subsequently try to chart a range of consequences that flow from seeing Warhol's advocacy of the surface as a historically significant and programmatic feature of his art. Once Warhol's work has been connected to its historical precursors in this fashion, it becomes clear that the critical vocabulary used to describe his art has its own history as well. The opposition between surface and depth that so often appears in discussions of Warhol's art is in fact antique in origin, dating to the idealist formulations of Plato. For Plato, the shifting appearances of the sensible world were at best a pale reflection of an intelligible reality of immutable forms. At worst, those appearances actively deceived us as to the nature of the world. Painting, of course, deals with what can be seen, and whatever claim it stakes to truth must come through the visible world. Platonism would thus seem to be essentially hostile to an activity like painting, yet a great deal of art criticism and art historical writing remains Platonic in its orientation.

The language of surface and depth is a spatialized variant of the Platonic distinction between appearance and essence, and as we have already seen, this vocabulary has frequently been applied to Warhol's paintings. The unreflective use of surface/depth

metaphors has had a strong impact upon the way in which we have formulated a number of questions that are currently of importance not only to the field of Warhol studies, but to art historians generally. It is our reflexive equation of the surface with the meaningless, and the deep with the meaningful, that has led to several interpretive conundrums. Reading Warhol's art as an explicit engagement with, and transformation of, the painted surface allows us to rethink our use of these metaphors and the philosophical commitments they imply. The point of such an analysis is not to indict previous critics for their use of certain metaphors, but rather to show how firmly entrenched those metaphors are and to what extent they affect our thinking about a range of phenomena. In the third chapter I consider in turn the assumptions of formalist and iconographical modes of interpretation, the significance of authorial intention, and the contested dividing line between elite and popular culture, arguing that each debate could be substantially reconfigured if we took into account the metaphors of surface and depth in which these problems are formulated. And in the fourth chapter I show how the metaphor of surface and depth has affected our understanding of human subjectivity. Subjectivity is usually seen as deep while to be an object is to exist on the surface. Rethinking surface and depth therefore helps us to rethink the gendered division between subject and object as well.

Chapter One

COSMETIC CHANGES
Warhol in the Colorist Tradition

The art of Andy Warhol can be divided into four periods. His early work, which encompasses both fine and commercial art, was made between 1950 and 1960. In 1960, he began painting on canvas and engaging closely with the work of Jasper Johns. This period, from 1960 to early 1962, I designate as his pre-Pop art. In 1962 his own style began to crystallize out of his confrontation with Johns: 1962-1966 is Warhol's Pop period and the focus of the dissertation. In June of 1968 Warhol was shot and, as this more or less marks the end of the Factory, this date is conventionally used to divide his career. His late painting, from 1970 until his death is 1987, was one of many business ventures occupying his time; during that period, his painting was a lucrative sideline rather than a central category of artistic ambition.[1]

This chapter begins with a brief discussion of Warhol's early and pre-Pop phases, because this will help us to locate the distinctive features of his Pop style as they crystallize. (Although I occasionally refer to Warhol's later works, for example the *Mao* series and the *Rorschach* series, this phase of his work does not particularly concern me here.) My goal is to provide an account of Warhol's style that is based on seeing the figure of Marilyn Monroe as central to his artistic development. Subsequently I situate Warhol within a genealogy of painters, predecessors who also identified paint with cosmetics and their practice of painting with feminine display and artifice.

---

[1]In Thomas Crow's view, Warhol's ability to cross boundaries between media was his most valuable legacy to subsequent generations of artists. Although my account focuses on the Pop paintings and does not try to deal with Warhol's manifold creative enterprises, Warhol's concern for celebrity, for wanting to be at the cultural center, does help us to understand his transformation from painter to film-maker to publisher. It also explains why his painting is relatively uninteresting when he returns to it: it is one more entrepreneurial venture, not an arena in which he stakes a claim to historical importance.

DEVELOPING A STYLE

In the summer of 1949, after graduating from the Carnegie Institute of Technology, Andy Warhol moved from Pittsburgh to New York City.[2] During the ensuing decade, while Warhol was building a career as a graphic designer, he was simultaneously attempting to gain visibility as a fine artist. Although he published a number of artists' books and showed his drawings regularly in one-person exhibitions, his fine art attracted little attention. In April 1956, one of his shoe drawings was selected for inclusion in "Recent Drawings USA" at the Museum of Modern Art. In January 1957 his shoes fashioned out of gold leaf were featured in a two-page spread in *Life* entitled "Crazy Golden Slippers." Despite these modest successes and in contrast to the acclaim he received for his commercial work, Warhol remained more or less an unknown in the art world.

The "Crazy Golden Slippers" reproduced in *Life* are a series of shoes, each crafted to evoke the personality of a different celebrity [Figure 1]. Warhol is already searching for ways to represent celebrities, a subject that will come to dominate his Pop art. But there are significant differences between these shoes and his celebrity silkscreens from the early sixties. First, Warhol's choice of 'famous people' is rather more idiosyncratic than it will later become — James Dean and Elvis Presley are accompanied by Truman Capote, Julie Andrews, Kate Smith and Zsa Zsa Gabor — a campy assemblage if ever there was one. Warhol's love of eye-catching surface is apparent in these matte golden shoes, yet the use of gold leaf suggests that value accrues to the subject matter primarily through its rendering in a precious material. And stylistically speaking, the "Crazy Golden Slippers" are remote from Warhol's Pop work: Warhol's style of drawing in this period has been compared to "the decadence of Beardsley, Cocteau, and Demuth, the neoclassical linear elegance of

---

[2]For a general sense of Warhol's activities at Carnegie Tech (now Carnegie Mellon University), see the recollections of his classmate Bennard B. Perlman, "The Education of Andy Warhol," in *The Andy Warhol Museum*, (Pittsburgh: The Andy Warhol Museum, 1994): 147-166. Nan Rosenthal discusses the school's design curriculum in relation to Warhol's later approach to art-making in "Let Us Now Praise Famous Men: Warhol as Art Director," in *The Work of Andy Warhol*, ed. Gary Garrels, (Seattle: Bay Press, 1989): 34-51.

Matisse, the realist attention to vernacular detail of Sloan, and the cynical anti-aesthetic of Picabia and Man Ray."[3]

The text that accompanies "Crazy Golden Slippers" in *Life* indicates the initial signs of a persistent anxiety that surrounds the interplay between Warhol's fine and commercial art:

> While drawing shoes for advertisements, Andy Warhol, a commercial artist, became fascinated with their designs and began to sketch imaginary footwear as a hobby. His work grew more and more ornate until he completed some 40 slippers made entirely of gold leaf ornamented with candy-box decorations. Each was created to symbolize a well-known personality. Recently Warhol exhibited them at New York's Bodley Gallery, priced at $50 to $225 each. To his astonishment, they were eagerly bought up for decorations, and Warhol is now busy creating a whole new set of crazy golden slippers.[4]

The text informs us that Warhol draws shoes for advertisements, and follows his name with the tag 'commercial artist' lest there be any doubt about his status. To reinforce the commercial connection, it lists the prices his work commands, although the prices are not for his commercial work but for these golden shoe drawings, which derived from his commercial work but were exhibited in a gallery and were evidently purchased enthusiastically by buyers who regarded them as art. *Life*, not knowing quite what to make of this, asserts that they are 'decorations' that Warhol made as a 'hobby,' and highlights his 'astonishment' that the whole lot sold.

What the "Crazy Golden Slippers" piece inadvertently clarifies is that it is difficult to divide Warhol's work of this period neatly into graphic design and fine art. Warhol borrows the subject matter of shoes from his commercial art, but not the principle of repetition: each of his celebrity shoes is different, evocative of an unique personality. This individuality is underlined by the 'handmade' appearance of the work. If one is seeking evidence of what Warhol's style would eventually become, it is more easily found in the commercial work than in his fine art production. As Benjamin Buchloh has argued,

---

[3]This range of stylistic references is summarized in Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "The Andy Warhol Line," in *The Work of Andy Warhol*, ed. Garrels, 53. Buchloh also mentions the late 1940s illustrations by Saul Steinberg as a source"locally close at hand but art historically not exactly quite as ennobling," 52.

[4]"Crazy Golden Slippers," *Life* 42 (January 21, 1957): 12-13.

Warhol's advertisements for I. Miller shoes demonstrate a great pictorial sophistication and a special familiarity with the work of Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg. Warhol's work for the I. Miller campaign [see, for example, Figure 2] prefigures his Pop style in its use of "extreme close-up fragments and details, stark graphic contrasts and silhouetting of forms, schematic simplification, and, most important, rigorous serial composition."[5]

In 1960 Warhol began to make paintings on canvas in addition to works on paper, inaugurating a period of stylistic experimentation out of which his Pop style would crystallize.[6] In a group of works made during 1960 and 1961, Warhol painted advertisements for household products like water heaters, storm windows, power drills, and vacuum cleaners: the basic gear of home improvement. We can see him working through the influence of Jasper Johns in restricting himself to a monochrome palette, focusing on the world of ordinary objects, and relying on subject matter that is necessarily flat. To Johns' repertoire of iconic signs like flags and targets, Warhol adds newspaper advertisements, which depict a variety of three-dimensional objects but are themselves as flat as a sheet of newsprint. If Johns at times seems to redeem his ordinary objects by rendering them in beautiful, painterly crusts of encaustic, Warhol's paintings are relentlessly plebeian in their execution. He applies paint with a noticeable absence of flourish.

At this moment Warhol is working within the terms laid down by Johns, yet we can also see him diverging from them, as is evident when we compare *Storm Door* (c. 1961), which actually depicts a window, with Johns's *Shade* of 1959 [Figures 3 and 4]. *Shade* consists of a store-bought window shade mounted on a roller near the top of the painting,

---

[5]Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "Andy Warhol's One-Dimensional Art: 1956-1966," in *Andy Warhol: A Retrospective*, ed. Kynaston McShine (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1989), 42. One way to skirt this problem is simply to elide the fifties from Warhol's career. This elision also helps to maintain a tidier generational narrative: otherwise, what is one do with the fact that a central fixture of sixties' art had been kicking around in New York for over a decade? Recent critics have become interested in the messiness and complication introduced by dealing with the fifties.

[6]Warhol's most emphatic and unabashed take-offs from Johns' work actually come later, in 1962, in *Yellow Close Cover Before Striking* and *Close Cover Before Striking (Pepsi-Cola)*. Here the flat surface of the matchbook cover serves as the flat surface of the painting. The strip of sandpaper that invites the viewer to draw a match along it seems to be a direct homage to Johns.

and extended to cover most of the surface of the canvas. The shade is covered with painterly marks in various shades of gray and white. In Leo Steinberg's reading, *Shade* suggests that the window through which we once glimpsed the world has now been draped, leaving us with an opaque painted surface.[7] The Renaissance conception of the picture plane as window has been scuttled for a meditation on the window itself, the mediating vertical plane of the representation. The surface of the picture plane is now what counts.

Warhol's *Storm Door* also suggests that the Albertian window has lost its transparency: the window is placed at an oblique angle to the picture plane, with contrasting patches of black and white indicating the bland reflectivity of the glass. The window is no longer transparent, but neither does it shimmer with the modernist promise of redemption through paint. Rather, it has undergone further transformation into an item on sale at the hardware store. If Johns suggests that we have lost access to the window, Warhol invites us to buy as many windows as we like. But this window is not unique, as Johns' *Shade* is. Instead it is simply one more commodity, available to anyone and no longer providing a privileged view of the world.

In *Storm Door*, Warhol goes back to the Renaissance understanding of representation and, like Johns, rejects it. The picture plane is no longer a window on the world. But he also rejects Johns' understanding of the picture plane as an opaque surface to be covered with exquisite painterly marks. Although he toys with making a more painterly scumbled surface in works like *Peach Halves* (1960) and *TV $199* (1960), these examples ultimately demonstrate how little affinity Warhol has for Johns' type of painterliness [Figures 5 and 6]. Imagine the succulent treatment the Del Monte peach would have received in Johns' hands, or the subtle melding of whites, creams, and grays Johns would have used in *TV $199*. Warhol's perfunctory handling of pigment is a departure from Johns's definition of the painterly. Eventually, however, Warhol finds his

[7]Leo Steinberg, "Jasper Johns: The First Seven Years of His Art" (1961), in *Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth Century Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 45-6.

own compelling model for the acitivity of painting. Warhol does in the end fetishize the painted surface as much as Johns does — he comes to love it as a woman's face, painted in brilliant colors.

Making Up Marilyn Monroe

Alongside Johnsian works like *Storm Door* and apparently in the same vein, Warhol paints another type of advertisement that haunts the back pages of newspapers and magazines [Figures 7 and 8]. These advertisements distinguish themselves from their glossier, more expensive cousins not only through their small size, shoddy design and poor placement, but by explicitly proclaiming the defect that their product will miraculously fix. Rather than presenting images of the better life that will be obtained through use of the product, these ads shout out the existing flaw in bold letters: SKINNY? MAKE HIM WANT YOU! DO YOU WANT POWER? WHERE IS YOUR RUPTURE? This is the territory of corns and wigs and cheap hair dyes, of dentures and cold sores and surgical corsets: the disagreeable domain of the body's pains and weaknesses. And Warhol, it seems to me, becomes attracted to these little advertisements because they promise miracles of self-improvement. The transformations that once were made possible by religious faith ("How to Pray, and Get Results," "With God, All Things Are Possible,") are here displaced onto the magical power of commodity, which can bestow even a ninety-pound weakling with a "He-Man Voice" and "Strong Arms and Broad Shoulders."

Warhol investigates this terrain of bodily weakness in works such as *Advertisement*, *Wigs*, and *Where Is Your Rupture?*, all from 1960 [Figures 9-11]. Like the advertisements they draw on, these works focus less on remediation of the puny, the bald, the big-nosed, and the frail, and more on the extent of the deviation from bodily norms. Although otherwise undistinguished, in this respect the 1960 painting *Dr. Scholl* represents something of a turning point [Figure 12]. This painting depicts a woman's manicured fingernail in the act of lifting up a medicated pad to reveal a corn on her foot.

The gesture of revelation is unusual in Warhol's oeuvre. Peeling back the bandaid, Warhol finds bodily grotesquerie; and seems to decide that from now on he will stick to the surface, the surface adorned, ornamented and improved by cosmetics. With this decision, another key aspect of Warhol's Pop style falls into place: representation begins to be understood as cosmetic transformation.

Of these early works, the *Before and After* paintings address representational concerns the most directly. Warhol presents his own reworking of a popular source, here, a newspaper advertisement, in terms of the beauty industry's triumphant before-and-after format. *Before and After III* of 1962 [Figure 13] emphasizes the ease of the transformation by minimizing changes from the left frame to the right: the bold black lines designating hair, brow, eyes, lips and nose are essentially preserved, with only the external outline of the nose serving to differentiate the beak-nose of 'before' from the perky upturned profile of 'after.' But if this image suggests a similarity between graphic creation of an image and surgical recreation of an acceptable nose, it also undercuts it. Warhol, in fact, traces the design directly from a newspaper advertisement: he does not perform 'surgery' on the image, but simply cleans up the rough edges. His changes are more like a makeover than like plastic surgery.

This 'makeover' model becomes increasingly relevant as Warhol turns to silkscreening. In the fabrication of his silkscreens, Warhol does not alter the basic composition of the source image. Rather, his typical instructions to the screen printer indicate where to crop the image and give instructions to heighten the contrast, thereby destroying the medium gray tones that give the image a more three-dimensional character. This highlights the fact that his subjects are photographic: he is painting not an image, but an image *of* an image. Once the design has been selected and cropped, and the contrast heightened, Warhol does not intervene at all in its composition. His artistry is limited to prettying up its surface with bright touches of paint. His favored transformations are the

addition of color and repetition of the image. In Warhol's Pop art, painting boils down to coloring in the repeated silkscreened images.

This understanding of painting as coloring reaches its height in Warhol's paintings of female celebrities, especially those of Marilyn Monroe. Although the Marilyn silkscreens are usually grouped together, they are in fact quite diverse and suggest a number of potential directions in which her image could be taken. In *Six Marilyns (Marilyn Six-Pack)* (1962) Warhol explicitly packages the star as a commodity; in *Marilyn Monroe's Lips* (1962) she is represented as so many fetishized fragments [Figures 14 and 15]. Although both works employ serial composition, the *Marilyn Six-Pack* links repetition with the mass production of the commodity, while *Marilyn Monroe's Lips* explores the related territory of repetition as psychic compulsion.

Both of these works are at odds with the connotations of singularity and rarity in *Gold Marilyn Monroe* of 1962 [Figure 16]. The use of gold in this painting has frequently been compared with Eastern European icon painting, with Marilyn floating against a celestial background to be worshipped as a latter-day Madonna or saint. The gold paint recalls Warhol's fifties' work in gold leaf, which Rainer Crone described as "an intentional device employed by Warhol to depersonalize the production of artworks....the use of applied gold and gold leaf insures that is is largely immaterial who performs the actual drawing, provided that those concerned are agreed on the choice of subject and composition."[8] While the use of gold leaf does connote a certain distance between artist and work, it is the impersonality of the medieval guild, not that of the modern machine. Gold leaf connotes the precious, the rarified, and the artisanal far more than the mass-produced. As he did with his golden celebrity shoes and with his golden boy drawings, Warhol makes *Gold Marilyn Monroe* unique and precious. This preciousness, however, resides in the expensive materials rather than in Warhol's authorship.

---

[8]Rainer Crone, "Form and Ideology: Warhol's Techniques from Blotted Line to Film," in *The Work of Andy Warhol*, ed. Garrels, 78-9.

Had he wanted to endorse and expand on these connotations, one would expect to find many more gold Marilyns in his oeuvre. But after this point, Warhol largely abandons the use of gold paint in connection with Monroe's image.[9] His painting does not go in the direction of making shrines; rather, he takes up another possibility suggested by Marilyn Monroe's face.

In 1964 Warhol made a group of *Marilyns* that are much larger than the 1962 series of her face. The 1964 *Marilyns* are 40 x 40 instead of 20 x 16, and are square rather than rectangular.[10] The images are also more closely cropped, so that Marilyn's face fills the visual field. In *Turquoise Marilyn*, her famous face gazes out toward the viewer, her eyes focused on some indeterminate point [Figure 17]. Drowsily seductive and luscious with paint, this face commands our attention even as it dazzles us. Unmodulated blocks of color catch the eye: the almost radioactive yellow of her hair abutting the pink skintone of the face, the thick waves of blue eyeshadow that seem to cause her lids to droop under their weight, the dense ruby paint that, like lipstick, exceeds the contour of her lips. The boldly artificial pigments of this painting call to mind the cosmetics Marilyn herself might apply to lips, cheekbones, eyelids, and of course, hair — since Marilyn was no more a natural blonde than Andy Warhol. All of the Marilyn images posit a striking symbolic equivalence between paint and facepaint, with Andy's blank canvas as something like Marilyn's face, waiting for the makeup artist to transform it into a thing of beauty.[11] Painterliness no longer resides in the gestural painted mark but in the adornment of the surface with color. (In this sense we can read the 1962 *Marilyns* as steps along the way, for in works like

---

[9]There are at least two gold tondi bearing Marilyn's image from 1962. Warhol does continue to use silver paint in a variety of contexts. Silver, however, is neither as rare nor as expensive as gold and Warhol seems to prize it primarily for its chilly reflectivity and only secondarily for its connotations of value (precious metal) and Hollywood film ('the silver screen').

[10]My thanks to Neil Printz for sharing this information with me.

[11]A number of other works point to Warhol's interest in cosmetics. For example, his drawings that depict arrays of cosmetic equipment shelved in medicine cabinets or jumbled in drawers, and his drawings of movie stars Hedy Lamarr and Joan Crawford that are inscribed with testimonials about Maybelline cosmetics.

Green Marilyn, Warhol is still smudging and blurring the black ink, experimenting with making the silkscreen itself the vehicle of painterly effects [Figure 18].)

The link between painting and cosmetics is more often made explicit by the glamor industry — which stands to gain in prestige from the comparison — than by painting, which stands to lose.[12] For example, publicity photographs of Marilyn Monroe as a chorus girl suggest a strong link between the activity of painting and making up a face [Figures 19 and 20]. Contemporary advertisements for cosmetics frequently omit the female face altogether, focusing instead on the painterly equipment of brushes, pigments, oils and powders [Figures 21 and 22]. Instead of presenting the consumer with a pretty face, these advertisements portray the application of cosmetics as a form of image-making, a creative endeavor with an open-ended outcome . In Figure 22 especially, the product is detached from any reference to its actual use and is instead used to make a loopy, spattered swirl of paint strongly reminiscent of Jackson Pollock's drip technique.

The similarity that Warhol proposes between primping and painting might simply be read as one more example of what Rosalind Krauss has described as his "typical way of furtively marrying the lowest cultural associations to the highest aesthetic ambitions"[13] Yet it is equally important to remark that the irresistible homology between paint and cosmetics proposed by *Turquoise Marilyn* does not originate with Warhol. Warhol's invocation of paint as cosmetics is not only a maneuver that puts the high and low spheres of twentieth century American culture into uncomfortable proximity. It also connects him to a discursive and painterly tradition that sees paint as feminine make-up. It is to this history of cosmetic beauties in art that we now turn.

COSMETIC COLOR

---

[12]One exception is the work of Rachel Lachowicz, who in *Color Chart Flat #1* (1993) redoes the multi-colored minimalist grid as a tray of eyeshadow in bright colors.

[13]Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1993), 270-275.

The contests between color and design are somewhat overtrodden turf in the history of painting. But what concerns us most here is not so much the Venetians against the Florentines, the *rubénistes* against the *poussinistes*, but the beliefs underlying the debate. Understanding those beliefs is the purpose of *The Eloquence of Color*, Jacqueline Lichtenstein's history of color/design discourse from its roots in Platonic metaphysics to seventeenth-century debates in the French Academy.[14] Lichtenstein follows conceptions of color from their inception in the stridently anti-cosmetic position of Plato through various forms of support (Aristotle and Quintilian) and opposition (Cicero and Dionysus of Halicarnassus), largely bypassing medieval aesthetics to arrive in seventeenth-century France. The last part of the book is devoted to a consideration of Charles Le Brun and Philippe de Champaigne and their colorist arch-rival Roger de Piles (assisted by Italian predecessor Leon Battista Alberti).[15]

As Lichtenstein follows the fortunes of color from ancient philosophy to the seventeenth century, she finds that painted color is repeatedly associated with cosmetics, and therefore with 'feminine' attempts to supplement nature by ornamenting the body. Such attempts are seen as dangerous, since they privilege the pleasures of illusion and deception over the rigors of truth. This position is initially defined in Plato's *Gorgias*, where Socrates accuses rhetoric of relying on flattery rather than truth to persuade an

---

[14]Jacqueline Lichtenstein, *The Eloquence of Color: Rhetoric and Painting in the French Classical Age*, trans. Emily McVarish (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). For a précis of the book's argument, see Lichtenstein's essay "Making Up Representation: The Risks of Femininity," trans. Katharine Streip, *Representations* 20 (Fall 1987): 77-87.

[15]A remarkably similar set of issues emerges in an Italian context, linking color with the 'correction' and therefore the corruption of nature, and further with the deceptive wiles of women. This gendered discourse on color is detailed by Patricia L. Reilly in "The Taming of the Blue: Writing Out Color in Italian Renaissance Theory," *Genders* 12 (Winter 1991): 77-99; reprinted in *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*, ed. Norma Broude and Mary Garrard (New York: HarperCollins, 1992): 86-99. Lichtenstein acknowledges the existence of this Italian discourse but treats it only insofar as it enters into the French debates on color. For another good analysis of the stakes involved in Vasari's prejudice against color, see David Rosand, "Titian and the Critical Tradition," in *Titian: His World and His Legacy*, ed. David Rosand (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982): 1-39. Rosand points out that Vasari's views were "formed on the double experience of certain Platonizing tendencies in Renaissance aesthetic thought and of the grand tradition of central Italian fresco decoration..." 5. In other words, Vasari's position was theoretically informed by Platonism but was also a practical attempt to understand the dominant Florentine art of fresco painting.

audience. He provides an analogy, treating the arts of cuisine and cosmetics as parasites on the genuine practices of medicine and gymnastics:

> This then I call a form of flattery, and I claim that this kind of thing is bad—I am now addressing you, Polus—because it aims at what is pleasant, ignoring the good, and I insist that it is not an art but a routine, because it can produce no principle in virtue of which it offers what it does, nor explain the nature thereof, and consequently is unable to point to the cause of each thing it offers. And I refuse the name of art to anything irrational....
>
> Cookery, then, as I say, is a form of flattery that corresponds to medicine, and in the same way gymnastics is personated by beautification, a mischievous, deceitful, mean, and ignoble activity, which cheats us by shapes and colors, by smoothing and draping, thereby causing people to take on an alien charm to the neglect of the natural beauty produced by exercise.[16]

Cuisine and cosmetics are powerful, but their power cannot be reduced to principles nor explained in words. They appeal directly to the senses and thereby escape the grip of rational control.

Although Plato does not specifically attack painting in the *Gorgias*, Lichtenstein argues that the terms in which he condemns cosmetics precisely apply to painting:

> Painting is the cosmetic art par excellence and by definition, in which artifice exercises its seduction in the greatest autonomy with regard to reality and nature. Pictorial activity does not merely modify, embellish, or make up an already present reality whose insufficiency could be revealed if its ornaments were removed, like a woman without her makeup. Behind the layers of paint used by the painter to represent forms in a picture nothing remains, just the stark whiteness of a canvas. No reality hides beneath the colors. If we are bent on finding a reality we should look elsewhere, beside or outside the image but not beneath it, for painting hides or covers nothing. It does not present us with an illusory appearance but with the illusion of an appearance whose very substance is cosmetic.[17]

Painting is a surface without a depth. It is nothing but sensuous appearance, and thus, in Plato's terms, stands indicted as irrational, deceptive, and debased.

It is in the Roman writings on oratory that the deception of appearances becomes indissolubly associated with the figure of woman:

> Most theorists of rhetoric judge that danger resides above all in a particular uncontrolled use of color that, rather than delicately adorn nature with a few discreet strokes to enhance its beauty, hides and

---

[16]*Gorgias*, 465a-b, in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, trans. W.D. Woodhead, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 246-7.

[17]Lichtenstein, 43.

> suffocates it beneath thick makeup. Centuries before the partisans of line violently denounced the risks to which the *beau fard* (makeup) of *coloris* exposes painting, the guardians of rhetoric's philosophical value condemn the excesses of overly colored styles and already see in their paint and rouge the danger of a prostitution of representation.[18]

Purity and truth are now pictured as 'masculine,' while excess, corruption and deception become 'feminine.' Cosmetics, and the application of color more generally, come to stand for a particularly 'feminine' desire to ornament nature, and to substitute seduction for the pursuit of honest truth.

This anti-cosmetic position is grounded in the fundamental Platonic opposition between essence and appearance. For Plato, truth never resides in the materiality of an object. That materiality must always be transcended to reach the essence of the thing, which is a pure concept, detached from any particular instantiation. In describing his preference for transcendence, Plato essentially delineates the opposing view, a philosophy of immanence. In this contrary view the truth of things is not an ethereal essence that begins to be contaminated the moment it is instantiated in material form. Instead the essential truth resides in the particularity of physical form . The visible world *is* our means to truth.

After considering these ancient texts, Lichtenstein fast-forwards us to seventeenth century France, where colorist theoreticians such as Roger de Piles respond by changing the terms of debate. They argue that painting is by nature allied to the multiple and shifting apppearances of the visible world. Simply by being what it is, painting finds itself relegated to the domain of the inessential and untruthful. Painting should therefore be hostile to the metaphysical system that furnishes grounds for its dismissal. Most theorists of painting, however, did not oppose the imposition of Platonic categories but instead attempted to fit painting within them. To justify painting in Platonic terms, conception is divorced from execution, the ideal from the material, drawing from color. In this way the intellectual, conceptual character of art-making is emphasized and separated from the messy

---

[18]Ibid., 106.

work of painting. In Lichtenstein's view, this emphasis on the noble, elevated qualities of design denies painting's fundamental imbrication with the material appearances of the world. For those thinkers who would insist on painting as a kind of appearance, color becomes 'the locus of an anti-Platonism *in* painting, which, in fact, expressed the anti-Platonism *of* painting.'[19]

In the position of Roger de Piles and his colorist followers, painting at last formulates a critique of the Platonic position:

> The quarrel largely exceeded the circumscribed limits of painting. The colorists threatened the mastery of discourse as much as the favor of drawing, the hegemony of a metaphysical conception of the image as well as the primacy of the idea in representation. They attacked the principles of morality and the pedagogical virtues of rules alike. Brash, they defended the purely material qualities of representation. Indecent, they advanced an apology for cosmetics, pleasure, and seduction. Libertine, they praised color for the incomparable effects that its simulacra produced.[20]

Color becomes the linchpin of Piles' defense of painting as pleasurable illusion. Rather than minimizing painting's reliance upon color, thereby justifying painting as a means to truth, Piles uses color to question this aim. The goal of painting becomes seduction: painting provides not visual truth, but pleasurable illusions. This is the position that Lichtenstein herself wishes to rehabilitate, in order to rescue the pleasures of the colored surfaces from centuries of "moral and aesthetic puritanism."[21]

That this aesthetic and moral position is worked out as a defense of the materiality of pigment is crucial. For, as we have seen, underlying the bias in favor of design is the sense that the material world is valuable only as it transports us to some other realm. The defense of color is at bottom a defense of immanence. In this view, the material substance

---

[19]Ibid., 3.

[20]Ibid., 3-4. For a synthetic summary of the major principles of Piles' view of art, see Thomas Puttfarken, *Roger de Piles' Theory of Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

[21]Ibid., 41. In "Writing/Drawing/Color," *Yale French Studies* 84 (1994), 43-62, Georges Roque provides an extremely similar analysis of the opposition between color and drawing, but arrives at the opposite conclusion. Namely, he argues that color *is* subject to discursive rules, that it is "susceptible to 'grammatical' analysis, to a break-down into elementary traits or strokes," 60. In this sense, Roque's project is closer to Charles Le Brun than to Roger de Piles. My own sympathies, and, I think, Warhol's, are more in line with Piles' and Lichtenstein's anti-Platonic position.

of a thing is not a vessel out of which its essence can be poured. Rather that essence inheres in the very shape and texture of the thing.

Lichtenstein's account ends in the seventeenth century, with the triumphant ascendance of Roger de Piles. As we will see, however, Platonism lives on in art criticism, becoming even more indissolubly linked with a derogation of femininity, until the anti-Platonic position is finally resuscitated by Charles Baudelaire. What follows is an abbreviated history of Warhol's eighteenth and nineteenth century predecessors, an initial attempt to outline the existence of a cosmetic tradition through a handful of important figures.

THE COSMETIC TRADITION UNDER SIEGE

The discussion of Roger de Piles forms the climax of Lichtenstein's account, as a fully elaborated argument in favor of color is at last in place. The artistic period corresponding to this theory is the rococo, which, unsurprisingly, is considered 'feminine' even today:

> Conceived as a degenerate (or lighthearted) version of the baroque, rococo painting has been compared negatively to both the baroque painting that preceded it and the neoclassical painting that followed it. And these comparisons are dominated by a bipolar contrast in which rococo paintings are perceived to have qualities traditionally associated with the feminine; they are callled personal, frivolous, diminutive, decorative, lighthearted. Although baroque and neoclassical paintings might be vastly different from one another, in comparison to rococo works they both are designated as public, meaningful, heroic, vigorous, powerful—masculine.[22]

In both its style and its subject matter, the rococo is stigmatized as feminine. The diffuse eroticism of these paintings' style has been described by Eunice Lipton:

> Surfaces and textures roll into and atop one another in a compressed and flattened space which I like to think neglects, rather than rejects,

---

[22]Mary D. Sheriff, *Fragonard: Art and Eroticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 28. Sheriff also notes the durability of these prejudices: "Although many sophisticated and intelligent readings of eighteenth-century art works are available, American students and budding scholars continue to learn about the insignificance of French painting during the reign of Louis XV. Many who become professional art historians never revise these early prejudices, which often lurk just below the surface even if an appreciation of the rococo is later acquired. Such attitudes are inculcated early by our art history survey books. Given that surveys typically simplify and distort all periods, it is the particular skew of the distortion that interests us here. In such texts the rococo is afforded a minimum of attention and is usually treated as the last gasp of the baroque, as a degeneration of previously virile forms," 26-7.

> perspective. Neither Cézanne's or cubism's self-conscious rupturing with perspective come to mind; rather, the flattened, muted background is a foil for the foreground's voluptuous subject. Where paint crackles and shines and surfaces go viscous, there the eye may stop for sheer pleasure.[23]

This appeal to the eye is couched in subject matter that itself depicts scenes of seduction and love. Often it is the sensual, pleasing surface of interwined naked bodies that invite the eye to take in seductive pleasures of the painted surface.

Women were also important patrons of rococo painting. Erica Rand has argued that "Boucher's art, like its most famous patron, Louis XV's mistress Madame de Pompadour, symbolizes the power of women during the so-called century of women and the infestation through women of politics with sex."[24] The seductions that rococo painting practiced on the eye, Rand suggests, came to seem too obvious an allusion to women's ability to achieve a measure of power through seduction. In a history written by the victors, rococo painting was (and often still is) presented as the effete and exhausted art of an aristocracy gone rotten through the excessive influence of women.

The rococo is intimately connected not only with the love of color and pleasures of painted seduction, but with release from the tyranny of classical learning:

> The new sense of art's freedom [from academic learning] is conveniently symbolized on the threshold of the new century by the election to the Académie at Paris in 1699 of Roger de Piles. At first de Piles had appeared to be simply an intelligent amateur who pleaded the cause of colour and championed Titian's art. Then he challenged the superiority of the Roman school; he attacked Poussin and was sub-acid about antiquity: 'Il n'est pas necessaire d'être toujours parmi les dieux ni dans la Grèce.' He raised the cry in favour of a new artist —new in French academic circles — Rubens. The hegemony of Italy, combined with the ancients, was rudely challenged by claims for a painter who was not even French.[25]

As Michael Levey has argued, the mythological subject matter of rococo painting involved not classical erudition but "frank enjoyment of the playfully erotic."[26] Indeed for Levey the

---

[23]Eunice Lipton, "Women, Pleasure and Painting (e.g., Boucher)," *Genders* 7 (Spring 1990), 71.

[24]Erica Rand, "Depoliticizing Women: Female Agency, the French Revolution, and the Art of Boucher and David," *Genders* 7 (Spring 1990): 47-68.

[25]Michael Levey, *Rococo to Revolution: Major Trends in Eighteenth-Century Painting* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1966), 17. For another version of the rococo and its significance, see William Park, *The Idea of Rococo* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1992).

[26]Ibid., 19.

great achievement of French rococo "was to release art from being the carrier of preconceptions; it need not contain a religious message, nor a moral one, and ultimately need not be serious at all."[27]

Nonetheless, seeds of a backlash could be detected early on:

> As early as 1713 Shaftesbury, the pupil of Locke, had condemned, in painting and the other arts 'this false Relish which is govern'd rather by what immediately strikes the sense, than by what consequently and by reflection pleases the Mind, and satisfies the Thought and Reason.' The visual puritan streak in Shaftesbury was not content with expressing condemnation in those terms but seems to anticipate the feminine bias of the rococo as he goes on in reproof: 'So that whilst we look on Paintings with the same eye, as we view commonly the rich stuffs and colour'd Silks worn by our Ladys, and admir'd in Dress, Equipage, or Furniture, we must of necessity be effeminate in our Taste, and utterly set wrong as to all Judgment and Knowledge in the kind.'[28]

And indeed when the rococo is vanquished by revolutionary painting, its demise will come in precisely such terms. 'What immediately strikes the sense' will be given up in favor of what 'by reflection pleases the Mind,' the sensuous appearances of feminine costume will no longer to be a model for painting, and color will again find itself on the short end of the stick. Accompanying this appeal to the mind is a renewed stress on classical learning. The renewed appreciation of things antique signals not only an attempt to reaffiliate the French nation with the heroic republics of the past, but a turning away from the playful relation to sources found in most rococo paintings.[29]

The transition from rococo to neoclassical painting represents a temporary triumph of Platonism. The embrace of design, the ideal, and the classical was to rejuvenate a society gone soft and effeminate. In both art and political ideology, gender was a central trope for the Revolution. Dorinda Outram describes how the Revolution presented itself as a masculine renovation of an aristocracy corrupted by the undue influence of women:

---

[27]Ibid., 35.

[28]Ibid., 121.

[29]Noting the importance of Winckelmann's writings in celebrating the past glories of Athens as opposed to the degeneracy of the present, Mary Sheriff cautions that his aesthetics are not solely responsible for the wave of interest in classical antiquity. "[Winckelmann's] writings appealed because his art theory harmonized with the biases of others who criticized the rococo and with the political ideology of a revolutionary generation," 5.

> ...the Revolution defined its difference from the old regime partly in terms of a difference in the impact of women on politics. In the rhetoric, the monarchy was *par excellence* a regime characterized by the corruption of power through the agency of women. Boudoir politics, the exchange of political gifts for sexual favors, were seen both as a cause of the weaknesses of the old regime, and as a justification for the Revolution itself....To the degree that power in the old regime was ascribed to women, the Revolution was committed to an anti-feminine rhetoric, which posed great problems for any women seeking public authority.[30]

Direct participation in the public sphere, now understood as exclusively masculine, was denied to women. Now women's place was in the home, where they were to support the cause by raising their sons to be citizens of the Republic.[31]

Not surprisingly, this gendered representation of the Revolution had resonance in the artistic realm as well. The art of Jacques-Louis David was presented as a virtuous, masculine and heroic alternative to rococo painting. Pictures like the *Oath of the Horatii*, with a sharply divided composition that separates the picture into two distinct zones—one female, weak, emotional, and private, one male, strong, resolute, and public—create compositional analogues for this gendered rhetoric.[32] As ideas of 'republican motherhood were elaborated, the number of representations depicting the family as site of maternal bliss also increased.[33]

One story told about the transition from rococo to neo-classical painting is a gendered story, featuring an aristocracy, engrossed in effete sensual pleasures, that was ousted in favor of a vigorous, manly republic, with women relocated to a subordinate, domestic position. In his account of this transition, Norman Bryson tells a second story, one that focuses instead on the battle between words and images for control of painting. In

---

[30]Dorinda Outram, *The Body and the French Revolution: Sex, Class, and Political Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 125. As Lynn Hunt has pointed out, this scapegoating of women as the source of aristocratic degeneracy is borne out by the very different treatments of Louis and Marie-Antoinette. Although both were ultimately executed in the same way, the virulence with which Marie-Antoinette was denounced utterly eclipsed the treatment of Louis. See *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), Chapter 4.

[31]Hunt, 122-3.

[32]Linda Nochlin discusses this painting in terms of gender ideology in "Women, Art, and Power," in *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988), 3-4.

[33]Carol Duncan, "Happy Mothers and Other New Ideas in Eighteenth-Century French Art," *Art Bulletin* 55 (December 1973): 570-83.

his brief discussion of the quarrel between the *rubénistes* and the *poussinistes*, Bryson draws attention not to the Platonic heritage of the color-design debate, but to its immediate Cartesian context. So, for example, he compares Descartes' dictum: "Reason tells us that the figure is in the objects, only a vague sentiment tells us that it is coloured" with Le Brun's similar formulation: "It must be considered that colour in painting cannot produce any hue or tint that does not derive from the actual material which supports the colour, for one would not know how to make green with a red pigment, nor blue with a yellow. For this reason it must be said that colour depends entirely on matter, and, as a result, is less noble than design, which comes directly from the spirit."[34] (Note again the Platonic theme that color is debased through its association with materiality, while design is elevated because of its conceptual character.) Bryson notes that the connection between Cartesian thought and Le Brun's views on painting is intimate, yet bizarre. For once a mind-body dualism is in place, painting would seem to fit rather comfortably on the side of the bodily and the material, yet Le Brun attempts to give it an intellectual and exalted role.

The attempt to reform French painting takes up this same quixotic position:

> One of the axioms of the reform is that in the grand style, the physical surface presented by the universe must be transcended: to copy that surface is servility, the province of the little masters, mere *métier*. Le Brun and Félibien took from Poussin the vision of a French painting that would discard the outward encumbrance of matter, and rise beyond it into a province exclusively *de l'esprit*. In perfect form, this painting would not be physical at all, but the communication of ideas from one consciousness to another across an image that is altogether transparent; the image as a channel of transmission with minimal redundancy or 'noise,' much like the Word as understood by the *Grammar* of Port Royal.[35]

Like Lichtenstein, Bryson is interested in painting that escapes such a discursive grip. He also champions Roger de Piles as a theoretical model for such painting, and rococo painters like Watteau and Boucher as its great practitioners. Thus for Bryson, what happens in painting associated with the Revolution is the return of the grip of words, of narrative, over pure painting. Paint once again becomes subordinate to what it can depict. The "whole

[34]Both quoted in Norman Bryson, *Word and Image: French Painting in the Ancien Régime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 60.

[35]Ibid.

trend within French rococo, of liberating figurality from the controlling grasp of the signified" is, with the Revolution, reversed. As it turns out, however, this story is not so distant from our initial story about gender, since the discourse of paint's materiality and the need to tame it with the sovereign rationality of the idea is itself a gendered phenomenon.

The Enlightenment hostility toward the artifice of women finds an extreme proponent in the young Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In his 1750 *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, this position becomes the basis for an attack on human learning as a whole. In the *Discourse*, all human knowledge is little more than a vain and degenerate striving to outdo nature. The arts and the sciences lead us away from the rude, but pure, morality to be found in nature, and corrupt us with their artificiality. To illustrate his position, Rousseau contrasts the government and citizenry of Sparta with that of Athens. Rousseau's ideal citizen is the Spartan: a man of action, who has never wasted time on learning but instead devoted himself to performing great deeds. He contrasts this ignorant, therefore manly and virtuous Spartan with the learned, therefore corrupt and effeminate, Athenian. Moreover, he claims that the difference between the two states is a result of their differing attitudes toward the arts and sciences. Sparta wisely closed its doors to the poets while Athens opened them wide. As a result

> Athens became the abode of civility and good taste, the country of Orators and Philosophers. The elegance of Buildings there corresponded to that of the language. Marble and canvas, animated by the hands of the most skillful Masters, were seen everywhere. From Athens came those astonishing works that will serve as models in all corrupt ages. The picture of Lacedaemon is less brilliant. 'There,' said other Peoples, 'men are born virtuous and the very air of the Country seems to instill virtue.' Of its inhabitants nothing is left to us except the memory of their heroic actions. Should such monuments be worth less to us than the curious statues Athens has left us?[36]

For Rousseau, then, there is a direct and inverse correlation between a state's military preparedness (here equated with virtue and heroic action) and its acceptance of the arts and sciences.

---

[36]Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Discourse on the Sciences and Arts" (1750), in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, Vol. 2, trans. Judith R. Bush et al., ed. Roger D. Masters and Christopher Kelly (Hanover: Dartmouth College and University Press of New England, 1992), 9.

Rousseau reiterates this claim later in regard to Rome:

> The Romans confessed that military virtue was extinguished among them, in proportion as they became connoisseurs in the arts of the painter, the engraver, and the goldsmith, and began to cultivate the fine arts. Indeed, as if this famous country was to be forever an example to other nations, the rise of the Medici and the revival of letters has once more destroyed, this time perhaps for ever, the martial reputation which Italy seemed a few centuries ago to have recovered.[37]

According to Rousseau, the art of a nation functions as a barometer of its virtue. If the arts are rude and unsophisticated, the nation is strong; if the arts flourish, then surface and style have become more important than substance, and the road to cultural ruin already is being traversed. The arts function as symbols of the gap between pleasing appearance and virtuous character, and the foolish and degenerate privileging of the former over the latter. In this way the defense of nature is associated with the hatred of all forms of artifice, be they painting and sculpture or courtly manners.

Ultimately, Rousseau's defense of nature leads him to formulate this position on interpersonal ethics:

> How sweet it would be to live among us if exterior appearance were always the image of the heart's disposition; if decency were virtue; if our maxims served as our rules; if true Philosophy were inseparable from the title of Philosopher! But so many qualities are too rarely combined, and virtue seldom walks in such great pomp. Richness of attire may announce a wealthy man, and elegance a man of taste; the healthy, robust man is known by other signs. It is in the rustic clothes of a Farmer and not beneath the gilt of a Courtier that strength and vigor of the body will be found. Ornamentation is no less foreign to virtue, which is the strength and vigor of the soul. The good man is an Athlete who likes to compete in the nude. He disdains those vile ornaments which would hamper the use of his strength, most of which were invented only to hide some deformity.
>
> Before Art had molded our manners and taught our passions to speak an affected language, our morals were rustic but natural, and differences of conduct announced at first glance those of character. Human nature, basically, was no better, but men found their security in the ease of seeing through each other, and that advantage, which we no longer appreciate, spared them many vices.[38]

This passage is significant for two reasons. It directly signals its affiliation with Platonic thought by citing the same contrast to be found in the Gorgias: the difference between gymnastics, which produce an honest and virile beauty, and the deceptive charms of the

---

[37]Ibid., 2: 16.
[38]Ibid., 2: 6.

cosmetically supplemented and effeminate body. The only way to attain a beautiful body is to train; but, with cosmetics, one can shortcut this process, and attain the appearance of a beautiful body without the effort of exercise.

The ethical implications of this shortcut , however, are what most concern Rousseau. When character is produced not by one's actions, but by the artifices of polite conduct, then the surface is not transparent, permitting no insight into a person's true motives. With the advent of manners, or codified rituals of behavior, the surface becomes opaque. This is the same problem lamented by Molière's misanthropic Alceste a century earlier:

> Ah, no! we should condemn with all our force
> Such false and artificial intercourse.
> Let men behave like men; let them display
> Their inmost hearts in everything they say;
> Let the heart speak, and let our sentiments
> Not mask themselves in silly compliments.[39]

Had Rousseau written this play, one suspects that Alceste would have cut a more straightforwardly heroic figure.

As in ancient Athens, Rousseau worries that the arts and sciences have left the citizens of France lacking in virtue, idle, and prizing style over substance: "The question is no longer whether a man is honest, but whether he is clever. We do not ask whether a book is useful, but whether it is well written. Rewards are lavished on wit and ingenuity, while virtue is left unhonoured. There are a thousand prizes for fine discourses, and none for good actions."[40] Ironically, Rousseau wrote this essay for a competition sponsored by the Academy of Dijon on the topic 'Whether the restoration of the Sciences and the Arts has had a purifying effect on morals,' and his essay won the prize.[41] The self-contradiction involved in Rousseau's learned polemic against learning was pointed out by many of those

---

[39]Jean Baptiste Poquelin de Molière, *The Misanthrope* (1666), trans. Richard Wilbur (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1954), 18-19.

[40]Rousseau, 2: 19.

[41]The competition was advertised in October 1749; the award was bestowed in July of 1750, and the essay was published that November.

who felt moved to rebut Rousseau's conclusions, but was best expressed by Stanislaus, the King of Poland:

> His way of thinking announces a virtuous heart. His manner of writing reveals a cultivated mind. But if he effectively unites science and virtue, and the one (as he attempts to prove) is incompatible with the other, how has his doctrine not corrupted his wisdom? Or how has his wisdom not convinced him to remain in ignorance? Has he given virtue preference over science? Why, then, display such vast and sought after erudition to us with so much affectation? Did he prefer science, on the contrary, to virtue? Why then preach the latter at the expense of the former to us with so much eloquence?[42]

Although this objection clearly reveals the logical contradiction at the heart of Rousseau's thesis, it was not until the nineteenth century that a more systematic opposition to Rousseau's ideas arose.

THE COSMETIC TRADITION REVIVED

Rousseau's *Emile* (1762) opens with the claim that "everything is good as it leaves the hands of the Author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man." Omitting this value judgment, however, the rest of Rousseau's initial paragraph could serve well to summarize the position of the nineteenth-century aesthetes. In fact, these lines of Rousseau's could as easily have been drawn from *À Rebours*, Joris-Karl Huysman's account of the aesthetic adventures of his anti-hero, Des Esseintes:

> He forces one soil to nourish the products of another, one tree to bear the fruit of another. He mixes and confuses the climates, the elements, the seasons. He mutilates his dog, his horse, his slave. He turns everything upside down; he disfigures everything; he loves deformity, monsters. He wants nothing as nature made it, not even man; for him, man must be trained like a school horse; man must be fashioned in keeping with his fancy like a tree in his garden.[43]

This kind of perversity, monstrousness and mutilation fascinated the nineteenth-century aesthetes and was seen as proof of man's difference from, and superiority to, the natural

---

[42]Stanislaus, King of Poland, "Reply to the Discourse which was awarded the prize of the Academy of Dijon," in *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*, 2: 28.

[43]Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile or On Education* (1762), trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1979), 37.

order. Rousseau and Baudelaire work from the same binary opposition between nature and culture, but with opposed instincts about their value.

The praise of color, and its attendant associations of seduction, deception, femininity and artifice was spectacularly revived in the middle of the nineteenth-century by Charles Baudelaire.[44] Baudelaire's 'The Painter of Modern Life,' written during the winter of 1859-60, inherits the nature and culture opposition from figures like Rousseau, but inverts it so that culture becomes the positive term.[45]

In the section of greatest import here, 'On Makeup,' Baudelaire begins by criticizing an ethics based upon an appeal to nature, since in his view, "most wrong ideas about beauty derive from the false notion the eighteenth century had about ethics":

> In those days, Nature was taken as a basis, source and prototype of all possible forms of good and beauty. The rejection of original sin is in no small measure responsible for the general blindness of those days. If, however, we are prepared merely to consult the facts that stare us in the face, the experience of all ages, and the *Gazette des Tribunaux* [i.e., the current record of criminal activity], we can see at once that nature teaches nothing or nearly nothing; in other words, it compels man to sleep, drink, eat and to protect himself as best he can against the inclemencies of the weather. It is nature too that drives man to kill his fellow-man, to eat him, to imprison and torture him....Crime, which the human animal took a fancy to in his mother's womb, is by origin natural. Virtue, on the other hand, is *artificial*, supernatural, since in every age and nation gods and prophets have been necessary to teach it to bestialized humanity, and since man by himself would have been powerless to discover it. Evil is done without effort, *naturally*, it is the working of fate; good is always the product of an art.[46]

---

[44]The anti-Platonist position was still alive, though not exactly vital, in the writing of Charles Blanc. "Le dessin est le sexe masculin de l'art; la couleur en est le sexe féminin....La couleur [en peinture] est essentielle, bien qu'elle occupe le second rang. L'union du dessin et de la couleur est nécessaire pour engendrer l'humanité; mais il faut que le dessin conserve sa prépondérance sur la couleur. S'il est autrement, la peinture court à sa ruine; elle sera perdue par la couleur comme l'humanité fut perdue par Ève." In *Grammaire des arts du dessin: architecture, sculpture, peinture* (Paris: Librairie Renouard, 1867): 21-22. These passages are quoted in Tamar Garb, "Berthe Morisot and the Feminizing of Impressionism," *Perspectives on Morisot*, ed. T.J. Edelstein (New York: Hudson Hills Press in association with the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, 1990), 61.

[45]For a much more thorough account of Baudelaire's thought on this topic, see F.W. Leakey, *Baudelaire and Nature* (Manchester: University of Manchester, 1969). Leakey discusses Baudelaire's early idealized and moralized view of nature, followed by his increasing repudiation of nature and the development of what Leakey terms 'aesthetic anti-naturalism.' He points out various inconsistencies in Baudelaire's thought; for example, his simultaneous denunciation and advocacy of 'studies from life,' culminating in a fully elaborated theory of art as artifice.

[46]Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," (1863), in *Selected Writings on Art and Literature*, trans. P.E. Charvet, (London: Penguin Books, 1972), 425. This inversion of nature and culture becomes extremely important for a number of subsequent artists and writers in England and France. So for example, Des Esseintes, the protagonist of Joris-Karl Huysman's *À Rebours* (1884), prefers artificial flowers to real

Where Rousseau believed that decadence was the product of socialization into a corrupt civilization, Baudelaire wants to claim that greed and crime are natural instincts that one needs to be civilized out of. For Baudelaire, good behavior is an artificial achievement, at a diametric remove from our nature. With quite deliberate perversity, Baudelaire equates culture and artifice with the good. This equation has important ramifications for his theory of beauty.

Baudelaire sees beauty not as the imitation of unadorned nature, but as the result of a highly artificial and ornamental set of additions to nature, best exemplified by the elaborate toilette of the Parisienne:

> Woman is well within her rights, we may even say she carries out a kind of duty, in devoting herself to the task of fostering a magic and supernatural aura about her appearance; she must create a sense of surprise, she must fascinate; idol that she is, she must adorn herself, to be adored. It follows, she must borrow, from all the arts, the means of rising above nature, in order the better to conquer the hearts and impress the minds of men. It matters very little that the ruse and the artifice be known of all, if their success is certain, and the effect always irresistible. These are the kinds of reflections that lead the philosopher-artist to justify readily all the means employed by women, over the centuries, to consolidate and, so to speak, divinize their fragile beauty.[47]

Just as with goodness, beauty cannot be achieved by following nature's lead. Rather, to achieve beauty, one must 'rise above nature'; in other words, beauty is an improvement upon nature rather than a quality given by it. In the task of making themselves beautiful, women have taken their cue from the arts and have developed many techniques; in this short chapter Baudelaire discusses just those relating to cosmetics.

For Baudelaire, the evidently artificial quality of beauty heightens its effect: "Who can fail to see that the use of rice powder, so fatuously anathematized by innocent

---

ones, and when he collects actual botanical specimens, takes care to obtain plants that appear to be artificial: "In former days, in Paris, his inborn taste for the artificial had led him to neglect the real flower for its copy, faithfully and almost miraculously executed in indiarubber and wire, calico and taffeta, paper and velvet....This admirable artistry had long enthralled him, but now he dreamt of collecting another kind of flora: tired of artificial flowers aping real ones, he wanted some natural flowers that would look like fakes." Trans. by Robert Baldick as *Against Nature* (London: Penguin Books, 1959), 97. Des Esseintes has a similar penchant for mixing genuine gems with false, for appreciating only those landscapes that appear "poudrée de farine d'amidon et enduite de blanc cold-cream," for decorating his bed-chamber as a bare monastic cell, but employing only the most expensive and luxurious materials to achieve this effect.

[47]Baudelaire, 427.

philosophers, has as its purpose and result to hide all the blemishes that nature has so outrageously scattered over the complexion, and to create an abstract unity of texture and colour in the skin, which unity, like the one produced by tights, immediately approximates the human being to a statue, in other words to a divine or superior being?"[48] The face of nature is pockmarked, imperfect, and irregular. But when the proper artifices are applied, the face can be corrected and brought into an ideal unity. This 'unity of texture and color' in a woman's face is likened to the idealized unity of the artist's creation. Irony is laid on thick here. Baudelaire clearly relishes the equation of ideal beauty with a woman's made-up face or stockinged legs — yet for all that, he means to point out their similarity.

This position has two major rhetorical effects. First, the artist's goal is not to imitate nature, but to remake it through making it up. But equally important for our purposes is the second suggestion — that the artist's activity in sculpting a figure is essentially equivalent to the woman's activity in putting on tights or make-up: in both cases, there is an attempt to surpass nature's limitation and present an ideal unity. This linking of artists and women is repeated in the closing paragraph of this section, where Baudelaire acknowledges that not all of his readers will be able to accept such a position: "I will readily allow people whose ponderous gravity prevents their looking for beauty in its very minutest manifestations to laugh at my reflections, and to condemn their childish solemnity; the austere judgements of such folk worry me not at all; I am content to appeal to the true artists, and to women who have received at birth a spark of that sacred fire they would feign use to light up their whole being."[49] Those readers under the pressure of received ideas may find it difficult to accept Baudelaire's anti-naturalist aesthetics, but he is certain that 'true artists' and 'women' will understand him. In Baudelaire, we again find painting linked with women who make themselves up: both activities are seen as artificial

---

[48]Ibid.

[49]Ibid., 428.

improvements to the body of nature, 'corrections' which flaunt their simultaneous artificiality and seductiveness.

MANET, OR, MODERNIST COSMETICS

Édouard Manet is a crucial figure in the development of this history, because his oeuvre marks the point at which this cosmetic tradition diverges into two distinct enterprises. Up to this point, the seductive surfaces of *belle peinture* have gone hand in hand with a certain subject matter. This kind of painting has tended to style itself after the fashionable, made-up women it depicts. As Carol Armstrong has argued of his work of the 1860s, Manet fashions his artistic style on the figure of his favorite model, Victorine Meurent. The internal diversity of Victorine's appearance, the way her face and body continually remake themselves within his paintings, is itself a figure for Manet's 'signature style,' the variability of his styles within and across the different pictures of her. In Armstrong's view, then, Manet's identity as a painter is generated through the example of feminine masquerade: "Manet did not lose himself, he *made himself up*, in all the senses of that phrase."[50]

Jean Clay also sees Manet's painterly style as a kind of cosmetic artifice:

> Not to paint women, but *the way* these women are painted. Not faces, but that which, on these faces, is painting: makeup. To paint, not the structure of the model (bones, muscle), but the surface areas where the object offers itself as light sedimentation, and to render these sprinklings of powder by the powder of the pigment. Manet, in this respect, would have chosen to identify the object that he paints and the procedure that makes it possible to paint it. He would flatten the referent on the canvas, favoring in his choice of objects the rich surfaces that are already those of painting.[51]

Clay sees Manet choosing women as subject matter not because they are women but because their cosmetic practices are models for his own. Paint is like face-paint; Manet's canvases are like faces touched with pigment.

---

[50]Carol Armstrong, "Manet/Manette: Encoloring the I/Eye," *Stanford Humanities Review* 2 (Spring 1992), 36.

[51]Jean Clay, "Ointments, Makeup, Pollen," *October* 27 (Winter 1984), 43.

Michael Fried, too, is taken with the idea that Manet's paintings are like faces. But he complains that Clay is reading Mallarmé as if he were Baudelaire. In Fried's view, Mallarmé develops the concept of 'flesh-pollen' in opposition to Baudelaire's cosmetic theory of paint, not in tandem with it. Fried claims that 'flesh-pollen' is anti-Baudelairean because it is a natural substance and implies not femininity but the hermaphrodite sexuality of flowers.[52] There is, however, no reason to characterize cosmetics as 'unnatural or artificial.' Cosmetics were initially made from natural substances, just as painter's pigments were. Moreover, Mallarmé's 'flesh-pollen' has a rather cosmetic ring to it, evoking not the unadorned face but the powdered one. This phrase seems to undermine the distinction between nature and artifice, and therefore to come rather close to Baudelaire's claim that woman is inseparable from her toilette. The confusion here is subtended by the generally vexing issue of realism in this period, which we might restate in the following language: is it possible to paint the naked truth, or only that package of nature and artifice that goes by the name of woman?[53]

---

[52]Michael Fried, *Manet's Modernism, or The Face of Painting in the 1860s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 410-12.

[53]Thus critics discussing Manet's depiction of the Seine in his two river pictures of 1874, *Argenteuil* and *Boating*, can stake out opposing positions. Paul Mantz writes that Manet's river dispatches for all time the notion that he is a realist: "We must to return to [*Argenteuil*] because it cancels out Manet, the instinctive painter, and substitutes Manet the scientific painter....So anxious to achieve harmony, by the use of complimentary colours, he introduced blue into the background against which the figures are set, and then, delighted with the result, he wanted to enhance the brown tones even more and so forced up the azure tones. He forgot all about Argenteuil and geography and turned the Seine into a deliciously blue Mediterranean Sea. The harmonious contrast of the two colours is interesting, but the intellectual accident is even more so. It proves conclusively that Manet is anything but a 'realist.' He seeks to relate tones rather than express the actual resemblance of things about him — when the 'truth' bothers him, it is suppressed." Paul Mantz, "The Works of Manet," *Le Temps* (January 16, 1884) in *Manet: A Retrospective*, ed. T.A. Gronberg (New York: Hugh Lauter Levin Associates, Inc., 1988), 198. Huysman, by contrast, tries to defend Manet as a true realist, rather than a conventional one: "His other canvas, *Boating*, is just as unusual. The bright blue water continues to exasperate a number of people. Water isn't that colour? I beg your pardon, it is, at certain times, just as it has green and gray hues, just as it contains lavender, and slate-grey and light-buff reflections at other times. One must make up one's own mind to look about. And there lies one of the great errors of contemporary landscape painters who, coming upon a river with a preconceived formula, do not establish between it, the sky reflected in it, the position of the banks which border it, the time and season as they are at the moment they are painting, the necessary accord which nature always establishes. Manet has never, thank heavens, known those prejudices stupidly maintained in the academies. He paints, by abbreviations, nature as it is and as he sees it. The woman, dressed in blue, seated in a boat cut off by the frame as in certain Japanese prints, is well placed, in broad daylight, and her figure energetically stands out against the oarsman dressed in white, against the vivid blue of the water. These are indeed pictures the like of which, alas, we shall rarely find this tedious Salon." J.K. Huysmans, "Salon Review of 1879," *L'Art Moderne* (1883) in Gronberg, 165.

If to this point the cosmetic and changeable appearances of female beauty have gone hand in hand with Manet's emphasis on the seductive surfaces of painting, these two strands begin to come apart in the 1870s. Occasionally, as in the 1877 *Nana*, we still find the figure of woman displayed as a kind of painted surface that both inspires and serves as a figure for the painter's enterprise [Figure 23]. As Armstrong has argued:

> For more than any other of Manet's paintings, *Nana* displayed the *fille* as the commodity she was—the woman for sale, dressed in her fancy undergarments, engaged in her own painterly artifices—putting on makeup—perfecting her function as object of delectation, surrounded by the *bibelots* of her boudoir, gazed upon by her buyer, as a piece of pure erotic spectacle, and glancing out, with an attitude of flirtatious come-on, at her other customers, us, that is, the viewers of the painting.[54]

In this respect, *Nana* continues the tradition I have been tracing, where the act of painting is configured in terms borrowed from feminine artifice and remains specifically linked to representing the figure of a woman. In Manet's case, he works especially hard to conflate these two kinds of painted objects — the painting and the woman it depicts — heightening their spectacular qualities by putting them together.

But much more central to Manet's oeuvre is the detachment of cosmetic painting from its referent in the feminine toilette. Paint will, from now on, refer us less and less to the cosmetic surface of a depicted female, and more and more to itself. If, as Baudelaire suggested, the painting of modern life takes its inspiration from the made-up woman, it is equally constitutive of the modern tradition that the woman is gradually done away with. (This is what makes *Nana* an atavistic moment in Manet's career, placing him closer to academic painting than to modernist innovation.)

Armstrong analyzes *Before the Mirror* (1875-6) as a moment in Manet's work when recognizable subject matter and modernist facture begin to separate from each other [Figure 24] . In *Before the Mirror*, feminine characteristics begin to be displaced onto paint itself: "For what *Before the Mirror* does is to celebrate a kind of feminized facture which stands in place of the gazed-at female body. It locates erotic interest in facture rather than

---

[54]Carol Armstrong, "Facturing Femininity: Manet's *Before the Mirror*," *October* 74 (Fall 1995), 84.

corporeality, and in so doing, it identifies the painter's process of production with the commodity of femininity: with the feminine process of producing femininity rather than with the 'male gaze' onto it...."[55] Corporeality is increasingly invested in the juicy substance of paint itself. The representation of women becomes less important, as their desirable features — cosmetic beauty, fleshy materiality, and spectacularity — gradually become properties of paint. Even as the figure of woman begins to disappear from Manet's work, paint retains lingering connotations of feminine image-making.

In *Before the Mirror* we can thus see cosmetic facture becoming detached from the represented body of a woman. Clement Greenberg frequently starts his narrative of modernist painting with Manet and the increasing self-referentiality of Manet's paint. In the modernist painting that Manet's art is said to herald, paint will refer us less frequently to the cosmetic surface of a depicted female, and more often to its own pleasures. The modernist surface is therefore essentially a cosmetic surface, a surface ornamented with dazzling displays of paintwork, with the figure of woman removed. Greenberg secures Manet as the 'father' of his modernist tradition by ignoring Manet's initial reliance on the figure of woman, and by portraying this kind of brushwork as masculine and bravura rather than feminine and cosmetic. Nonetheless, the relationship remains; and on some level, Greenberg was aware of this, because the cosmetic, colorist tradition is the one Greenberg explicitly selects as the heritage of his modernism.

In a piece called "The Venetian Line," Greenberg makes his preference for the colorist tradition explicit:

> it would seem that easel painting, once it had overcome the example of sculpture and the habits of book illustration, abandoning the panel for canvas and tempera for oil, strained as if towards an appointed destination for an ideal of painterliness that was to be realized most strictly—if not of necessity most greatly—in the 19th century. The flickering, lambent touch of Tintoretto and Rubens and Velàsquez, the late Rembrandt's heavily loaded brush, Watteau's trembling colors, even Vermeer's buffed and lustrous surfaces—and a good deal in Brueghel too—all are driven to their conclusion by what is greatest in 19th-

[55]Ibid., 98. Armstrong goes on to remark that "[*Before the Mirror*] is sympathetic to the self-fashioning of women—it is not too much to say that it identifies painting with cosmetic making, with the play of fashion, and with feminine self-commodification," 99.

> century painting. The entelechy of oil painting on canvas is Turner, Constable, Géricault, Delacroix, Corot, Courbet, Daumier, the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists. This is the Venetian line.[56]

Greenberg defines this 'Venetian line' in conventional terms, focusing on the relation these artists propose between drawing and color: "Oil fulfills itself on canvas when the painter draws with a full brush, with color and in masses, instead of tinting or filling in a prepared outline. Then the painter invents forms with his brush, not his pencil, and sees everything in terms of transition rather than sharp separation."[57] What Velázquez, Manet and Matisse have in common is that all three insist that "it is possible to *draw* color and draw *with* color, and that all painting can be brush drawing."[58] Here again we find Roger de Piles' insistence that color itself surmounts the opposition between drawing and color.

Impressionist painting increases the stress on the materiality of paint that comes out of the 'Venetian line.' But this emphasis can be taken in two contrary directions. It can, as in Symbolism, mean that paint is construed as the physical means through which an experience of transcendence is generated; or it can, as in Fauvism, mean an insistence upon paint itself as the source of value (a philosophy of immanence).[59] These two currents war

---

[56]Clement Greenberg, "The Venetian Line," in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, Vol. 3, *Affirmations and Refusals, 1950-1956*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 33. Greenberg echoes this point in "Color in Madrid and from Amsterdam": "If the Prado can be called the 'citadel of painterly tradition,' it can also be called, by no greater hyperbole, the 'cradle of modern painting.' Its late Goyas are in more than one way the first 'modern' pictures' and it was at the Prado, in 1865, that Manet got that first long look at some of these and at Velasquez and Ribera, which confirmed him in his new course," 3: 197.

[57]Ibid., 3: 33-4.

[58]Ibid., 3: 34. In his follow-up review of the same exhibitions at the Met, of works in Viennese collections, Greenberg provides this modernist description of Titian: "Titian's color has a substantiality of texture that makes it hard to conceive that it is the product of thin layers of paint spread on a sheet of canvas; one has the impression of configurations that well up out of infinite real space—as if the reverse as well as the obverse side of the canvas had been transformed by paint. Or as if the very threads of the fabric had been dissolved into pigment so that the picture consisted entirely of paint without a supporting surface. And yet—this is the contradiction essential to the art—the supporting surface that we know to be actually there is not denied in its flatness, and we feel this without feeling any the less the illusion that it is not there." "Two Reconsiderations," 3: 36.

[59]James Herbert's comments on Symbolism and Fauvism are helpful in this connection: "Given Derain's and Vlaminck's clear reliance on Van Gogh and Gauguin coupled with their refusal to signal transcendence in the fashion of their predecessors, the Symbolist script on Fauvism was practically written before critics put pen to paper. This was painting highly legible to Symbolist eyes; to them, the visual lexicon from which Derain and Vlaminck drew the terms of their painting was absolutely familiar. Yet if Fauvism spoke the Symbolist language, it did not live up to Symbolist goals: for virtually all of the Symbolist critics the movement thus came to exemplify failure, the inability to attain Platonic ideals." James D. Herbert, *Fauve Painting: The Making of Cultural Politics* (New Haven: Yale, 1992), 31.

with each other throughout modern painting, dividing artists into groups that see the surface as the source and guarantee of its own value and those that see the surface as the material substance that is transcended to produce an experience of grace. It further divides critics and interpreters into those that stress the mystical dimension of abstraction from those inclined to advocate its materialism. (This issue is in fact a major generator of factionalism in the interpretation of modern painting. How these opposing currents of immanence and transcendence play out within Greenberg's own thought is the subject of the next chapter.)

For now, let us simply note that, as in earlier anti-Platonist painting, the insistence on the material surface of the canvas tends to be coupled with an emphasis on color. Greenberg's great modernists are frequently great colorists: think of Henri Matisse or Willem de Kooning. Moreover, as if symptomatically, the figure of the fashionable woman frequently reappears in the work of these artists. Matisse delighted in the visible world and this is coupled in his work with an emphasis on pigment as the material substance through which that visible world is rendered. Matisse, it would seem, models his painting after anything he sees: the sinuous curves of a plant, woman, or piece of fabric seem equally productive for him. But if Matisse does not rely upon the figure of woman to generate his painterly efforts, women of all kinds are nonetheless found throughout his work. And in two relatively early works, the picture of a fashionable woman's head (the artist's wife) is the site for colorist experimentation.[60] Both *The Woman with the Hat* (1905) and *Portrait of Mme Matisse (The Green Line)* (1905) link colorist liberties to the representation of a female face [Figures 25 and 26].

---

[60]Fashionable women do appear throughout Matisse's oeuvre, (he seems to have had a particular fondness for stylish hats), as in *Portrait of Mme Matisse* (1913), *The Ostrich Feather Hat* (1918), and *The White Plumes* (1919). But Matisse was even more apt to portray feminine mutability as a matter of stagy, studio masquerade. A large number of works depict models dressed up in studio props, ranging from simple robes and drapes to 'exotic' costumes and accessories from Japan, Spain, Northern Africa and Eastern Europe. To name just a few: *Mme Matisse in a Japanese Robe* (c. 1901), *Nude with a White Scarf* (1909), *The Manila Shawl* (1911), *Zorah Standing* (1912), *Lorette in a Green Robe Against a Black Background* (1916), *Woman in a Turban* (1917), *Odalisque with Red Culottes* (1921), *Woman with a Veil* (1927), *Woman in a Purple Robe with Ranunculi* (1937), and *The Rumanian Blouse* (1940).

And once again we find that likening color to cosmetics carries with it the risk of critical dismissal. As André Salmon asserted: "[Matisse's] real gifts are gifts of skill, flexibility, prompt assimilation, of an exact science, but one quickly acquired—feminine gifts. The more facility he acquires, the more color has the upper hand over drawing, which, finally, he does not consider anymore."[61] Matisse, we are told, is a feminine painter, in part because he is a colorist. Salmon goes on to say: "Henri Matisse's taste has been very much praised. Though undeniable, it is second rate. It is a modiste's taste, whose love of color equals the love of *chiffon*."[62] Here Salmon again feminizes Matisse's color by comparing it to the world of fashion and fabrics. In this connection we might think of Warhol's professed desire to be Matisse: "[Charles] Lisanby once asked him what he really wanted out of life, and Andy replied, rather memorably, 'I want to be Matisse.'"[63] We might speculate that Warhol emulated Matisse for his 'modiste's taste.' Certainly the affection for the visible things of the world, and the desire to make them over in paint, is a major point of contact between these two artists.

Willem de Kooning, in both his painting and his written statements, advocates the same philosophy of immanence. Loving the sensuality of paint itself and the fleshy presences it can evoke, de Kooning always tries to focus us on the value of what we can see: "I admit I know little of Oriental art. But that is because I cannot find in it what I am looking for...To me the Oriental idea of beauty is that 'it isn't here.' It is in a state of not being here. It is absent. That is why it is so good. It is the same thing I don't like in Suprematism, Purism and non-objectivity."[64] Through the negative examples of 'Oriental

---

[61]André Salmon, "Les Fauves," *La jeune peinture française* (1912) in *Matisse: A Retrospective*, ed. Jack Flam (New York: Hugh Lauter Levin Associates, 1988), 129.

[62]*Ibid.*

[63]Comment attributed to Andy Warhol by Calvin Tomkins in "Raggedy Andy," in John Coplans, *Andy Warhol* (New York Graphic Society Ltd, n.d.), 10. Tomkins goes on to cite Lisanby's (strange) view of this comment: "Lisanby interpreted this to mean that he wanted to be as famous as Matisse, so that anything he did would instantly become marvelous. Fame was certainly very much on his mind."

[64]Willem de Kooning, "The Renaissance and Order," delivered as a lecture at Studio 35, New York, in 1950 and published in *trans/formation* I (1951): 85-7. Reprinted in "Selections from the Writings of Willem de Kooning," in Thomas B. Hess, *Willem de Kooning* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1968), 143.

art' and mystical abstraction, de Kooning states his attachment to the material world. Moroever he insists that such an attachment is central to the practice of painting: "[Earlier painters] did think about the possibility that the things—the horse, the chair, the man—were abstractions, but they let that go, because if they kept thinking about it, they would have been led to give up painting altogether, and would probably have ended up in the philosopher's tower."[65] To give up on the sense that things hold their meaning in their physical forms is, for de Kooning, to give up on painting.

This provides one way to understand the flexibility with which de Kooning moved between representation and abstraction. For him, these were not polarized alternatives, since paint itself was a material substance. With that visible, material pigment, he was free to evoke the look of other visible, material things, or not. In one drawing, de Kooning even explicitly took up the issue of color and drawing as a contest between feminine cosmetics and masculine design. Having drawn the figure of a woman, he asked his wife Elaine to put on lipstick and kiss the drawing in designated places [Figure 27].[66] The result is *Woman-Lipstick* (1952), a pencil drawing overlaid with lip-shaped splotches of red, as if to test out the traditional axiom that design and drawing were male to pigment's female character. De Kooning's paintings, however, work consistently to muddy such a distinction. As infrared reflectography has shown, a distinctive feature of De Kooning's work is the interpenetration of drawing and painting at each level of constructing the painting.[67] Moreover, as in the work of other colorists and painters of immanence, the

---

[65]De Kooning, "What Abstract Art Means to Me," delivered at a symposium held at The Museum of Modern Art, February 5, 1951 and then printed in *Museum of Modern Art Bulletin* 18 (Spring 1951): 4-8. In Hess, 144. De Kooning's formulation —that when painters forget immanence they turn into philosophers — reminds me of Arthur Danto's claim (discussed in the introduction) that with Warhol, art turns into philosophy. In my view, Warhol is a painter who does not transcend materiality to become philosophical; rather, like de Kooning, he remains stubbornly in the material world.

[66]Elaine de Kooning's explanation of the drawing's creation was printed in "Contemporary Drawubgs, Watercolors, and Collages," catalogue of an auction at Christie's, New York, November 8, 1989, note to catalogue 136.

[67]For illustrations and discussion of the radical imbrication of drawing and painting in his work, see Susan Lake and Judith Zilczer, "Painter and Draftsman," in Judith Zilczer, *Willem de Kooning from the Hirshhorn Museum Collection* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1993), 172-179.

woman of fashion — often wearing high heels and sporting a heavily lipsticked mouth — periodically reappears in de Kooning's work.[68]

The way that decorative artifice is taken up and transmuted in the modernist surface is one subject of the next chapter. For now I want to follow the academic tradition, where the dazzle of the paint surface is still explicitly linked with representing the charms of the beautiful woman. And I want to look at a particular episode in French painting, where in the transmission from (French) teacher to (American) student, superficiality and seduction became attributes of American painting as well.

ACADEMIC ARTIFICE

The interest in the spectacular and artificial surface of the fashionable woman was not limited to practitioners of a certain style. In the nineteenth century, both academic and vanguard painters looked to the Parisienne for subject matter and stylistic inspiration. Our task now is to follow these issues in painting that was perceived as 'less advanced' than Manet's, to show one strand of continuity between Manet's painterly artifice and Carolus Duran's.

Carolus Duran's *Portrait de Madame X (La dame au gant)* of 1869 is an over-lifesize portrait of his wife, Pauline Croizette [Figure 28]. She poses in a fairly neutral interior space, against a wall divided by a gold strip of wainscoting. The upper portion of the wall is a pearly gray, the lower part a darker greenish gray, against which her black dress is arranged. She fills the center of the painting, and the painter has employed a high degree of illusionistic finish to focus our attention on the details of her elaborate toilette— her coiffure, jewels and gloves. Particular attention is drawn to her gloves, as she is depicted in the act of removing her left glove, the right already having been discarded and lying on the floor. She is clearly dressed in order to be seen and admired by others, and

---

[68]For a helpful discussion of popular imagery in de Kooning's work, see Richard Shiff, "Water and Lipstick: De Kooning in Transition," in *Willem de Kooning: Paintings* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1994): 33-73.

she looks out at the viewer rather serenely, as if satisfied with the impression she is making upon us.

For some critics, this fashionable painting of a fashionable woman signified the superficiality of Carolus Duran's talent. Albert Boime has quipped: "Carolus Duran's motto was: 'Love glory more than money, art more than glory, nature more than art.' He made his career, however, by ignoring this formula.'"[69] But others perceived that Carolus Duran's ambition had changed rather dramatically over time. The extreme attention given to the details of this woman's toilette prompted Paul Mantz to remark: "Who would have imagined that this painter, who began so violently and who even sought reality à la Courbet, would eventually believe in the rustling of silk gowns, the mysterious poetry of a pearl-gray glove, the chimerical hats of a first-rate modiste?"[70] The use of the word 'believe' signals the import of this shift: an artist who had followed the religion of realism was now found kowtowing to the goddess of fashion. Mantz presents this shift as a conversion effected through the seduction of rustling silk.

Michael Fried, too, has argued that Carolus Duran's career is a divided one. His early canvases are done in what Fried describes as an 'absorptive' mode, meaning that the depicted figures are engrossed in the action occurring on the canvas and oblivious to the spectator, while his later large-scale portraits of fashionable women clearly orient themselves toward the spectator and solicit the gaze. He see the *Portrait of Madame X* as a prototype for Carolus Duran's later portraits:

> In that canvas, a depiction of the artist's wife, the painter Pauline Croizette, not only is absorption out of the question, the woman herself is plainly aware of being seen and what is more appears to enjoy the experience. And indeed Chesneau in 1873 linked another of Carolus Duran's portraits of society women with the *portrait d'apparat* of earlier centuries, a type of painting he characterized as seeking 'sumptuous exteriority' at the expense of 'charming and touching nuances of intimacy.' This was said approvingly: in Chesneau's eyes the artist

---

[69]Albert Boime, "Sargent in Paris and London: A Portrait of the Artist as Dorian Gray," in *John Singer Sargent*, ed. Patricia Hills (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1986), 82.

[70]Paul Mantz, 'Salon de 1869,' *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, (June 1, 1869), 503. Quoted in *The Origins of Impressionism*, ed. Gary Tinterow and Henri Loyrette (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1994), 344.

> had brought new life to a tradition that until his intervention had been defunct.[71]

Fried's broader project is to characterize the members of Manet's artistic generation (what he terms 'The Generation of 1863') in terms of their relation to an absorptive paradigm. The absorptive mode was coming to seem contrived and, paradoxically, even a bit theatrical. As a result, this generation was forced to develop a new set of strategies to neutralize the beholder's problematic position in front of the canvas. 'Facingness,' or direct acknowledgement of the beholder, is one such strategy, and becomes Manet's favored means for dealing with the problem of theatricality. The two extremes of denying and soliciting the beholder were present in other artists of this generation: Alphonse Legros, Henri Fantin-Latour, James MacNeill Whistler, Carolus Duran. In a set of characteristically brilliant and imaginative readings, Fried argues that Legros' *The Ex-Voto* (1860) and Whistler's *The Woman in White* (1862) condense these two alternatives, and thus present a double or 'divided structure,' part of which faces and acknowledges the beholder, and part of which turns inward. By contrast, Fried sees Carolus Duran as engaging both options, but never in the same work; rather these options are separated into early, absorptive works and later, facing works such as the *Portrait de Madame X.*

But I would argue that this picture does exhibit a divided structure: it evokes both interiority and exteriority, depth and surface. Moreover these are terms closely related to Fried's vocabulary of absorption and theatricality, as is clear in his analysis of Chardin's *The Card Castle* (c. 1737):

> [Chardin] appears to have done all he could to make that depth of absorption manifest to the beholder, most importantly by singling out in each picture at least one salient detail that functions as a sign of the figure's obliviousness to everything but the operation he or she is intent upon performing. Thus in the *Soap Bubble* our attention is caught by the tear in the young man's jacket; in the *Game of Knucklebones* by the upper corner of the young woman's apron that has come unpinned; and in the *Card Castle*, in the immediate foreground, by the negligently half-opened drawer containing a pair of playing cards. The last of these in particular is a highly sophisticated device. By virtue of fronting the beholder and what is more opening toward him, the drawer serves to enforce a distinction between the beholder's point of

[71]Michael Fried, *Manet's Modernism*, 243-5.

> view and perception of the scene as a whole and the quite different point of view and limited, exclusive focus of the youth balancing the cards. There is even a sense in which the contrast between the two cards—one facing the beholder, the other blankly turned away from him—may be seen as an epitome of the contrast between the surface of the painting, which of course faces the beholder, and the absorption of the youth in his delicate undertaking, a state of mind that is essentially inward, concentrated, closed.[72]

Each of these paintings of a single figure contains an element that signals a gap between the viewpoint of the beholder and the viewpoint of the depicted figure. In each painting there is something (ripped jacket, unpinned apron, opened drawer) that we can see, but that escapes the notice of the figure in the painting. Fried is particularly interested in the open drawer of the *Card Castle*, which he reads as a figure for the painting's structure. The two cards placed in the open drawer represent a contrast in the painting as a whole, between what is presented to our vision and what is held in reserve. The card facing us represents the surface that is accessible to our vision, which is explicitly signalled as more encompassing than the figure's. But the blank, unprinted side of the other card indicates that despite everything presented to our vision, there is an interiority to this figure which remains inaccessible, shut off from our view. The surface presented to our vision does not yield up knowledge of the boy's state of mind; his concentration closes him off from us. In this way the concept of absorption is linked with an interiority than *cannot* be represented.

Although he makes a strong case for the idea that the beholder's place in front of the painting became an important problem in French art at this historical juncture, Fried does not venture an explanation as to why this might have been so. The progressive assignment of subjectivity to ever deeper interior regions of the self in Western philosophy helps us to see why theatricality became a problem for painting at this historical juncture. Moreover, it sheds some light on Fried's preference for the 'deeper' thematics of absorption over the superficial charms of theatricality. The anxious dismissal of the theatrical object seems to

---

[72]Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 47-49.

be underpinned by a gendered division between (masculinized) subject and (feminized) object.

For now, however, we need simply ask how the dichotomy between fixation on surface and revelation of interiority play out in Carolus Duran's *Portrait de Madame X.* The sitter has removed her right glove to expose the hand underneath, and the glove itself has been placed in the lower left foreground, directly above the artist's signature. While the sitter is pictured in the act of removing her gloves, it seems unlikely that she would toss them on the floor.[73] Since there is no narrative justification for the location of the glove, we are invited to read its placement as significant. By placing the glove directly above his signature and rendering it in a sketchy, calligraphic style similar to the signature, Carolus-Duran seems to identify his artistry with this item of his sitter's toilette. Moreover the signature and date are painted in red, a high note of color in this symphony of gray and black. This same color is used for the blossom fastened to the sitter's dress. The signature in this way is further allied to the painter's power to ornament that surface with decorative touches of color.

As if to underscore this contrast between revelation and decoration, Carolus Duran has painted a decorative pattern above the gold molding on the right, corresponding to sitter's hand which remains shrouded in 'the mysterious poetry of a pearl-gray glove.' In contrast, the wall on the left, corresponding to her bare hand, is left unornamented. The left wall is in shadow, but the shadow is not so heavy as to obscure the decoration entirely. If this difference were meant to be 'realistic,' we would still expect to see a faint pattern on the left wall. Instead it seems we are to compare the right wall, evenly lit and presenting a decorated face to the public, with the left wall, which is stripped of ornament and veiled in shadow. Thus even within this painting, which Fried assigns to Carolus Duran's late period of radical facingness, there is a division between the face presented to the public and the suggestion of a shadowy interiority, hidden from view.

---

[73]Critical disagreement over whether the sitter is returning from or departing for a day of visiting is recorded in Fried, *Manet's Modernism*, n. 85, 570-1.

But although the painting seems to offer us a choice between woman adorned and woman revealed, it has in fact already decided in favor of the charms of ornamented and supplemented nature. The picture seems to follow Baudelaire rather more closely than it follows Fried:

> All the things that adorn woman, all the things that go to enhance her beauty, are part of herself; and the artists who have made a special study of this enigmatic being are just as enchanted by the whole *mundus muliebris* as by woman herself....When he describes the pleasure caused by the sight of a beautiful woman, what poet would dare to distinguish between her and her apparel? Show me the man who, in the street, at the theatre, or in the Bois, has not enjoyed, in a wholly detached way, the sight of a beautifully composed attire, and has not carried away with him an image inseparable from the beauty of the woman wearing it, thus making of the two, the woman and the dress, an indivisible whole. This seems to me the moment to come back to certain questions relating to fashion and adornment, which I only briefly touched on at the beginning of this study, and to vindicate the art of dress against the inept slanders heaped upon it by certain highly equivocal nature-lovers.[74]

The essence of woman, claims Baudelaire, is inseparable from her surface. It is pointless to distinguish a woman's adornment from herself, since it is their unity that produces the aesthetic effect. As in his praise of makeup, Baudelaire argues that a distinction between a woman's essence and her toilette, that is, between nature and artifice, is theoretically unsound.

Carolus Duran seems to share the sentiment: the gesture of unmasking that this figure performs by removing the glove does not suggest a realm of truth hidden under the artifices of her toilette. Her bare hand, with its manicured nails and delicate gesture, is 'inseparable,' as Baudelaire would have it, from her fashionable appearance as a whole. And if the left wall, spatially aligned with that bare hand, does seem to suggest an interiority, a shadowy realm of 'naked truth,' it hardly suggests that this realm is more compelling to our attention than the right wall, with its gleaming chair-rail and decorative pattern. Although he meant it negatively, ultimately we are led to agree with Jules-Antoine Castagnary that this painting is "an entirely exterior portrait, a surface likeness as it were, a

---

[74]Baudelaire, 423-4.

study of a woman's attire or rather of an elegant pose."[75] Castagnary equates the exteriority of the portrait with the fashionable garb and pose of the sitter: Carolus Duran has not painted the 'woman herself' but these carefully constructed surfaces. Castagnary complains that the painter has not attempted to penetrate these artificial surfaces in order to reveal the character beneath them, but has rather contented himself with reproducing those surfaces as painting's own substance. Like the fashionable woman it depicts, this painting is an artificial arrangment of pigment and line, whose beauty lies on its surface. And certainly, Castagnary is right: this painting invites a kind of viewing that scans the surface, taking in what there is to see, rather than peering inward to discover its deep truths.

SUPERFICIALITY, AMERICAN STYLE

To judge from the evidence of another *Madame X*, John Singer Sargent learned these lessons well from his teacher. Sargent's innovation was to transform this artificial adorned surface, which in the nineteenth century was the essence of Baudelaire's Parisienne, into an American trait as well. Although the love of surface will hardly disappear from France, it does become increasingly identified with American culture, especially as the homegrown glamor industry gains a worldwide presence. Thus in the late twentieth century we are treated to the ironic spectacle of Frenchmen traveling to the United States in search of superficiality, as Jean Baudrillard does in *L'Amérique*.[76]

---

[75]Castagnary, "Salon de 1869," *Salons*, Vol. I, (Paris, 1892), 364. Quoted in *The Origins of Impressionism*, 343-4.

[76]Baudrillard considers the smile of Ronald Reagan as a metonym for the essential superficiality of Americans. "Smile and others will smile back. Smile to show how transparent, how candid you are.... *Give* your emptiness and indifference to others, light up your face with the zero degree of joy and pleasure, smile, smile, smile...Americans may have no identity, but they do have wonderful teeth.

And it works. With this smile Reagan obtains a much wider consensus than any that coud be achieved by a Kennedy with mere reason or political intelligence. The recourse to a pure form of compliment, be it animal or infantile, is much more successful and the whole American population comes together in this toothpaste effect. No idea — not even the nation's moral values in their entirety — could ever have produced such a result. Reagan's credibility is exactly equal to his transparency and the nullity of his smile." Jean Baudrillard, *America* (1986), trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1988), 34. A parallel history of feminine superficiality as definitive of emerging American identity could be traced through American literature from the mid-nineteenth century: key texts include William Dean Howell's *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885), Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900), and Edith Wharton's *House of Mirth* (1905).

Judging from the outraged tone of the contemporary criticism, Sargent's *Madame X*, exhibited in the Salon of 1884, was a shocking picture [Figure 29]. Given its many similarities with Carolus Duran's *Madame X*, exhibited fifteen years earlier, this shock is somewhat surprising. Both pictures are full-length portraits of fashionable women, carefully posed in nondescript interiors that set off their glamorous looks. Yet Carolus Duran's *Madame X* was praised as a masterpiece,[77] while Sargent's effort was reviled as outrageous and ugly.

Trevor Fairbrother has proposed that the 'shock' of the picture rested primarily in the painter's decision to show the jeweled right strap of the gown provocatively lowered across the sitter's upper arm. He cites as evidence the fact that Sargent subsequently painted out the lowered strap and replaced it on the figure's shoulder.[78] While this certainly suggests that Sargent saw the strap as the most controversial element of the picture, it does not necessarily mean that the public of the Salon agreed with him. Instead, it seems fairly clear that in this instance Sargent misunderstood his public's reaction, imagining that what horrified them was the brazen display of available female flesh, accented by the wayward strap of the gown. (He seems to have forgotten that he was showing the picture in Paris.) The outrage, rather, stemmed from a double affront: first, the flaunting of the made-up woman as the sign of painting's own artifice, which seems to be freshly problematic for each artist who tries it, and second, the appropriation of that cosmetic artificiality as a signature of American style.

---

[77]Zacharie Astruc called *La dame au gant* a "chef-d'oeuvre" in his "Salon de 1869," *Le Dix Décembre*, (June 20, 1869), 10, cited in *The Origins of Impressionism*, 343-4. Viel-Castel said that it was "une de ces toiles rares qui marquent dans un époque comme une oeuvre charactéristique et *démeurent* dans l'avenir comme le saint François de Zurbaran, le Christ de Ribéra, le portrait au gant du Titien." "Salon de 1869," *Le Pays* (May 13, 1869) cited in Fried, *Manet's Modernism*, 243.

[78]Fairbrother advanced this interpretation in "The Shock of John Singer Sargent's 'Madame Gautreau,'" *Arts Magazine* 55 (January 1981), 90-97. Albert Boime has argued that it was the pose that produced the shock: "The fact that Gautreau turns her head away from the viewer—in violation of the standard Salon portrait type for fashionable women—reinforces the arrogance of her body language. The startling innovation of the pose had to have been arranged between them." Boime in *John Singer Sargent*, 91. This claim also seems inaccurate. In an earlier article Fairbrother reproduced Charles Giron's *La Parisienne*, which was exhibited in Paris just a year before Sargent's painting, to show that depiction of woman in profile, standing against a table and wearing fashionable black, was not in itself outrageous. Trevor J. Fairbrother, "John Singer Sargent's 'Gift' and His Early Critics," *Arts Magazine* 61 (February 1987), 61.

The story of this painting's creation is shot through from start to finish with an identification between the painter and the sitter. Both Madame Gautreau (née Virginie Avegno) and Sargent were Americans who flourished in the cosmopolitan society of Paris during the 1870s. It was Sargent who initially sought out Madame Gautreau and proposed making 'an homage to her beauty.'[79] The cosmetic enhancements of her appearance seem to have been a major source of her attraction as a sitter, judging from the description of Gautreau that Sargent sent to his friend Vernon Lee: "Do you object to people who are made up to the extent of being a uniform lavender or blotting-paper colour all over? If so you would not care for my sitter; but she has the most beautiful lines and if the lavender ...colour be pretty in itself I should be more than pleased."[80] Gautreau's graceful silhouette and her artificially pigmented skin — two of the striking attributes of the finished painting — are singled out by Sargent, suggesting that her scrupulous attention to her self-presentation made her an appropriate subject for Sargent's own pursuit of beauty through paint. His painting emulates the beautiful line and color of the woman, which are the result of her own careful image-making through cosmetics and poise.

And indeed, in the finished work, Sargent has painted not so much the woman, but the woman who has prepared to display herself. An echo of Baudelaire is audible: "All the things that adorn woman, all the things that go to enhance her beauty, are part of herself; and the artists who have made a special study of this enigmatic being are just as enchanted by the whole *mundus muliebris* as by woman herself."[81] Certainly Sargent seems enchanted by her powdered face and bustline, set off by her dramatic black decolletage; fashion and cosmetics are the substance of this painting. As if to make the artificiality of her pale color explicit, her ears are left unpowdered, and provide a bright rose tint against the auburn of her hair. The emphatic, dark line of her eyebrows and her ruddy lips point to

---

[79]Cited in Evan Charteris, *John Sargent* (New York, 1927), 59.
[80]Ibid.
[81]Baudelaire, 423.

the use of cosmetics, and to the paint that is used to render their effects.[82] Her pose, too, is highly artificial: her uncomfortably twisted right arm signals the effort required to present the body to advantage.

To add insult to injury, this flamboyantly artificial femininity was configured, now, as American. Olympia, still an unsettling figure in her own right, is made over as an American in Paris.[83] The critical outrage stemmed less from the audacity of the painting itself, and more from the attempt to appropriate that audacity as the mark of American femininity and American painting. As Albert Boime has noted, the crash of the Union Génerale in 1882 set off a xenophobic reaction, to Americans in particular. There was a general feeling that too much social ground had been ceded to the enterprising Americans, that they were starting to dominate not only economic, but French cultural life as well. Thus Boime concludes: "Sargent's bold and daring experiment and the arrogant demeanor of Gautreau proved too much for the French public by 1884."[84]

Although Sargent never again so boldly declared his love of artifice, he was dogged throughout his career by suspicions of superficiality. Thus, of *Mrs. Edward Darley Boit*, (1887) critic Harry Quilter wrote that the portrait is "...diabolically clever from an artist's point of view...fashionable and facile in execution...But when one has admired the ability what remains? A flashily painted, shallow conception of a woman with a grin on her face, in which every delicacy of detail is slurred over."[85] Sargent's mastery of the female portrait, the seeming effortlessness with which he made his canvases as charming and

---

[82]Fairbrother, "Sargent's Gift,": "Rather than rendering the look she sought with her make-up, Sargent's Manet-like faith to observed effect seemed to invite the viewer to inspect her brazen use of hair dye, paints, and powders," 60.

[83]Sargent's painting is in dialogue with Manet's on several levels: Sargent directly borrows Manet's palette, using stark black to set off white skin tones and auburn hair; he even includes the pink of Olympia's flower displaced onto Madame X's rosy ears. Olympia famously returns the viewer's gaze with a flawless self-possession; Sargent suggests the same powerful self-possession even though his depicted Gautreau does not the spectator's glance. Rather, his depicted Gautreau presents herself as an object with such spectacular insolence that she becomes unavailable in the very act of offering herself up to the viewer's vision.

[84]Boime in *John Singer Sargent*, 91-93.

[85]Harry Quilter, "The Royal Academy," *Universal Review* 1 (May 1888), 72-3, cited in Fairbrother, "Sargent's Gift," 61.

appealing as the beauties they depict, left him open to the charge that his art was as empty-headed as it was lovely. Or, more precisely, that his art was empty-headed *because* it was lovely. This seems to be the drift of Lewis Mumford's judgment: "The most adroit appearance of workmanship, the most dashing eye for effect, cannot conceal the essential emptiness of Sargent's mind, or the contemptuous and cynical superficiality of a certain part of his execution."[86] The alliance that Sargent forges between feminine and painterly artifice leaves room for doubt about the value of his efforts, especially when seen against the backdrop of heroic, masculinized avant-garde art. (Even if, as we have seen, much of that 'masculine' art grew out of this same interest in cosmetic artifice and periodically makes that interest explicit.)

The way painting was developing in a society obsessed with material success led many critics to worry that in Sargent, American art was getting exactly what it deserved: "for a superficial civilization, superficial art: social conditions had bred an art whose ignoble purpose was to beautify the skin of a materialistic world."[87] The criticism given Sargent is a prime example of this discourse:

> There was something about Sargent's very skill that raised suspicions; his work seemed too effortless to be sincere. To Christian Brinton he was a 'conjurer performing a trick,' a 'magician of the palette,' a 'Paganini of portraiture.' Of course his subject matter counted against him. Perhaps if he had specialized in elemental seascapes he would have struck the critics as a more genuine painter. But as someone paid to glamorize and memorialize the well-to-do bodies of the cosmopolitan elites and upper classes, he had difficulty shaking off a reputation as a prodigiously talented faker.[88]

In an American context, being able to justify one's art as a kind of work was extremely important[89]. Sargent's very skill could be held against him in this respect: it meant that he didn't 'work' at his art. Clearly it did not help his case that his painting was modeled on

---

[86]Lewis Mumford, *The Brown Decades, A Study of the Arts in America, 1865-1895* (1931), reprint (New York: Dover, 1955), 190.

[87]Sarah Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 60.

[88]Ibid., 63. The reference is to Christian Brinton, "Sargent and His Art," *Munsey's Magazine* 36 (December 1906): 265-284.

[89]For an excellent discussion of this issue, see sections two and three of Leo Steinberg, "Other Criteria," in *Other Criteria*, 57-63.

the fashionable appearance of society women; despite the intensive labor involved, the female toilette has never exactly been acknowledged as 'work.' These same suspicions dogged Warhol's reputation as well: if painting is like putting on makeup, why is he paid so well to do it?

WARHOL'S COSMETIC CHANGES

When critics have attempted to consider Warhol as an American, they have tended to pursue Warhol's lead: "I'm influenced by other painters, everyone is in art: all the American artists have influenced me; two of my favorites are Andrew Wyeth and John Sloan; oh, I love them, I think they're great."[90] A number of critics have taken Warhol at his word here. For example, Tracy Atkinson links the Pop project to nineteenth-century 'low-life' genre paintings, with their humble subject matter, as well as to the trompe l'oeil painters' interest in the detritus of everyday life. The 'democratic' impulse and humorous intent of much pop imagery can be found in these precursors, while the frequently urban subject matter of pop art is traced to the 'Ash Can' School in New York at the turn of the century. These are the same references singled out by Rainer Crone and David Bourdon.[91]

Another one of Warhol's comments from the same interview is more helpful in pointing us toward predecessors for his style: "All my films are artificial but then everything is sort of artificial, I don't know where the artificial stops and the real starts. The artificial fascinates me, the bright and shiny."[92] Although Warhol is talking about his film-making practice here, the comment applies equally well to his painting. His typical oscillation between contradictory positions is in evidence here. Warhol concedes that his

---

[90]"Nothing to Lose: Interview with Andy Warhol by Gretchen Berg," *Cahiers du Cinema in English* 10 (May 1967), 39.

[91]Tracy Atkinson, "Pop Art and the American Tradition," in *Pop Art: The Critical Dialogue*, ed. Carol Anne Mahsun (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989): 157-65. These are the same connections articulated by Rainer Crone and David Bourdon. Crone devotes a short chapter to the influence of turn-of-the-century realist painting in *Andy Warhol: A Picture Show by the Artist* (New York: Rizzoli, 1987), while Bourdon cites the importance of late nineteenth-century trompe l'oeil painters William Harnett, John Haberle, and J.D. Chalfant in *Warhol* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1989), 108.

[92]"Nothing to Lose," 42.

work is about artifice, but then notes the difficulty of distinguishing between the real and the artificial, and finally states his preference for the artificial. The real, the ordinary, and the plebeian are what Warhol leaves behind in a painting like *Dr. Scholl.* The corns and warts of human existence are discarded for a love of the artificially glamorized surface. Ultimately it is his concern with the realm of appearances that makes Warhol a kind of French-accented American: Sargent is a far more significant predecessor for Warhol than is Sloan.

The artistic filiation between Sargent and Warhol has often been noted, since both served as portraitists to the rich and famous:

> One of Andy Warhol's roles today is that of fashionable portraitist—serving the nouveaux riches and celebrities—and the inevitable analogy with John Singer Sargent has cropped up for over a decade. In 1975 David Bourdon wrote of both artists' intentions to flatter and to satisfy their clients, and four years later Robert Rosenblum demonstrated how '...Warhol has revived the visual crackle, glitter, and chic of older traditions of society portraiture..." However, given Sargent's faded reputation from the 1930s to the '70s, the comparison has at times been used as a slap to Warhol.[93]

But connecting Warhol and Sargent through their society portraiture is slightly misleading, as it is not portraiture *per se* that links them. Both use paint as a way to make up a surface; their colored brushstrokes both depict and stand in for the cosmetic appeal of the professional beauty. But the cosmetic charms of nineteenth-century society have, in the twentieth century, become commercially available through the mass entertainment of Hollywood film. The works directly related to Sargent are therefore not Warhol's society portraits of the 1970s, but the celebrity silkscreens of the 1960s.[94] As a high-profile symbol of feminine artifice, Marilyn Monroe is the successor to Madame Gautreau. Marilyn, however, belongs not to *le monde* but to a mass public. This kind of highly artificial glamor is now a mass-produced commodity. Cosmetic glamor is no longer the exclusive prerogative of wealthy women; it 'belongs' to anyone with the price of a fashion

---

[93]Trevor J. Fairbrother, "Warhol Meets Sargent at the Whitney," *Arts Magazine* 61 (February 1987), 64.

[94]In this sense Warhol's society portraits of the seventies are an anachronism. Although the stylistic formula of the celebrity silkscreens is easily adaptable to these sitters, it was not generated in relation to their image.

magazine or movie ticket. As a result, the class dimension of Warhol's work is quite different from that of his predecessors in the cosmetic tradition.

With this history of the cosmetic tradition in mind, we are now in a better position to understand the charges of 'superficiality' leveled against Warhol's work. The literature on Warhol is riddled with references to the work's cosmetic character. For the most part, this aspect of Warhol's style has been treated as proof of his lack of artistic culture, his myopic immersion in the postwar society of the spectacle. But as we have seen, there is an historical lineage for these works of Warhol's, a set of predecessors who also took feminine image-making as the model for their own. Just as the embrace of glamorous femininity as an analogue for the painted surface was held against many of these precursors, it has been held against Warhol. Our final task in this chapter is to understand how Warhol's cosmetic surfaces relate to the longstanding contest between color and design. This, in turn, will enable us to see that Warhol's work has by and large been apprehended through Platonic terminology biased in favor of design.

Returning to Warhol's *Turquoise Marilyn* [Figure 17], we can see that this painting in no way disrupts the assignment of color to the trivial, feminine world of appearances. Marilyn, as Warhol paints her, is a privileged sign of cosmetic beauty, of the seduction that bypasses truth. Her visual appeal rests strictly on her colorful decorativeness; the masculine values of line, design, and concept, are nowhere to be found. Warhol does nothing to oppose this trope, with its easy conflation of the feminine with the decorative and insubstantial. Rather, he embraces it as the positive sign of his own painting practice. What is paint here if not makeup? Or, to put it the other way around, what is makeup if not a kind of paint? The cosmetic quality of Warhol's silkscreen practice is made even more overt in a later work, the *Mao* (1973) in the Art Institute of Chicago [Figure 30]. Here Warhol again conflates the application of paint with the application of makeup. On the face, the paint he uses functions to evoke makeup while on the jacket it evokes painterly strokes and swirls of pigment.

Warhol's *Marilyns*, like the paintings of colorists before him, oppose the discourse that would deprivilege color as the mere supplement to essential design. In terms of the construction of these paintings, color was applied before the silkscreened design was laid down. Warhol began by blocking in the flat, thick areas of paint you see in this image: the turquoise background, yellow hair, blue eyeshadow, green eyes, red lips, pink earrings and skintone. Only afterwards was the black ink forced through the silkscreen to reproduce the photographic image of Marilyn.[95] And indeed, the longer one looks at the image, the more the patches of flat color take on a clumsy, stubborn substance utterly unlike the wispy and dematerializing silkscreened image. Marilyn's face is evoked *as* something that is fading away; the silkscreen ink evokes the tangibility of the face only to deny it. The disintegrating effect of the silkscreened image is particularly striking given the powerfully sensuous, fleshy quality that Monroe's image usually possess on film and in photographs. This sensuous quality is here given over to paint instead.

Design is in this way twice demoted from its superior rank. First, the palpability of the colored patches stands in marked contrast to the shaky, fudgy registration of the silkscreen ink, which gives the design an ephemeral quality. Second, design, by virtue of being photographically generated, stems not from the pure genius of the artist but from the sphere of mass cultural representation. Color and design become equally superficial in Warhol's work: not only are both explicitly located on the surface of the canvas, but both carry a metaphorical charge of seductive, superficial femininity. (This kind of poke at the prestige of design will be discussed further below, in relation to the *Do It Yourself* paintings.) The design is ubiquitous, mass-produced, and derivative; the application of color is the 'artistic' moment of the work. But this 'artistry' itself is configured as the work of the makeup artist, a matter of competence rather than inspiration.[96]

---

[95]For a step-by-step account of Warhol's silkscreening procedure see Patrick Smith, *Andy Warhol's Art and Films* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1981), 187-89.

[96]Recently this has changed somewhat with the media celebration of Kevyn Aucoin and Bobbie Brown as makeup *artistes*.

Warhol's particular use of photographic technology will be addressed in more detail in Chapter 3. In this context, I simply want to point out that this understanding of color as supplement belongs not only to painting but to photography as well. Black and white is photography's privileged mode; in its austere contrasts, the 'reality effect' is believed to inhere. Black and white is privileged within the discursive history of photography as well.

Our common sense linking of black and white photography to documentary authenticity can be recognized in the gradual introduction of color photography into *The New York Times*. Its commitment to a gritty black and white aesthetic, the aesthetic of the 'hard fact' and 'journalistic objectivity' meant that the *Times* resisted pressure from advertisers to print in color for quite a while. That bridge having at last been crossed, color photography has spread like an algae bloom from the sections most obviously commercial in intent (real estate, book review, travel), threatening to choke the front page until it too yields a thousand flowers like the front page of *USA Today*. The continued resonances of color photography as opposed to those of black and white can be measured by comparing those two front pages and the estimation we have of their seriousness and reliability. (On the one hand, color photography is seen as more artificial than black and white; coexisting with this belief is the contradictory conviction that it is more lifelike.)

Roland Barthes contrasts color with black and white photography in this way:

> Perhaps it is because I am delighted (or depressed) to know that the thing of the past, by its immediate radiations (its luminances), has really touched the surface which in its turn my gaze will touch, that I am not very fond of Color. An anonymous daguerreotype of 1843 shows a man and a woman in a medallion subsequently tinted by the miniaturists on the staff of the photographic studio: I always feel (unimportant what actually occurs) that in the same way, color is a coating applied later on to the original truth of the black-and-white photograph. For me, color is an artifice, a cosmetic (like the kind used to paint corpses). What matters to me is not the photograph's 'life' (a purely ideological notion) but the certainty that the photographed body touches me with its own rays and not with a superadded light.[97]

Barthes justifies his preference for black and white by noting that light is the index in photography: it is the light emitted by an object that is recorded on the film in black and

---

[97]Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (1980), trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 81.

white. If our human optical apparatus sees the world in color, the photographic apparatus does not. Color is something extra, a later addition — not necessarily on the level of photographic technology, as Barthes points out, but historically and ideologically. Barthes also links color with cosmetics, seeing color as an artificial and potentially deceptive layer, something intervening between himself and the "original truth of the black-and-white photograph." Barthes' reference to hand-tinting reminds us that the earliest 'color photographs' were indeed produced by literally adding paint to the surface of the black and white print. Such hand-tinting was often, though not always, used for photographic portraits.

Although Warhol's *Marilyns* powerfully evoke this notion of color's supplementarity, they end by giving neither color nor design priority: in Warhol's hands, both elements of painting become superficial. Take, for example, the *Marilyn Diptych* (1962) in the collection of the Tate Gallery [Figure 32]. Two grids of Marilyn images are placed side by side: the left in lurid color, the right in black and white. Thomas Crow said of this painting:

> The left side is a monument; color and life are restored, but as a secondary and invariant mask added to something far more fugitive. In contrast to the quasi-official regularity and uniformity of the left panel, the right concedes the absence of its subject, displaying openly the elusive and uninformative trace underneath. The right panel nevertheless manages subtle shadings of meaning within its limited technical scope. It contains a reference to the material of film that goes beyond Warhol's use of repeating frames. At its simplest level, the monochromatic panel reminds us that the best and most enduring film memories one has of Monroe—*The Seven-Year Itch, Some Like It Hot, The Misfits*—are in black and white. The color we add to her memory is supplementary. In a more general sense, she is most real and best remembered in the flickering passage of film exposures, no one of which is ever wholly present to perception. The heavy inking in one vertical register of the *Marilyn Diptych* underscores this characteristic. The passage from life to death reverses itself; she is most present where her image is least permanent.[98]

Crow begins by reading color as the sign of 'life,' a notion that Barthes disparaged as 'purely ideological.' Like Barthes, Crow quickly shifts gears and claims that black and

---

[98]Thomas Crow, "Saturday Disasters: Trace and Reference in Early Warhol," in *Reconstructing Modernism: Art in New York, Paris, and Montreal 1945-1964*, ed. Serge Guilbaut (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1990), 316.

white represents the truth of Monroe's image, where 'truth' refers to the fact that her major films are in black and white. The repeated images of Monroe are seen as alluding to reels of film, where Monroe's presence is most powerfully evoked while remaining ungraspable. The solidity and tangibility of the color panel is thus deprivileged in favor of the 'flickering passage' of the black and white panel, where the 'truth' of Marilyn's image, however elusive, can be seen.

This is a curious reading, since Marilyn's visage is uniformly and cheerfully available in the more or less identical images on the left hand panel. By contrast, on the right panel her image is effaced through a silkscreen technique that uses first too much and then too little ink. This emphasis on the process of the silkscreening, the way in which the production process is readable from the results, seems to suggest that the design is the relatively ephemeral and accidental element of the work, while the colored panel retains a degree of permanence and priority. This is further supported by the placement of the colored panel on the left, so that we look at it first and perceive it to have been made first. This arrangement is repeated in *Marilyn x 100* (1962), *Troy Diptych* (1962), and *Elvis I and II* (1963), all three of which place the colored panel on the left-hand side, according it priority in Western systems of reading and scanning [Figures 33-35].[99]

Given that Marilyn was a film star, it is worth mentioning that the discourse about color extends into the realm of film-making as well. One need only think of *The Wizard of Oz* to see that color becomes, rather spectacularly, linked with a world of fantasy, dream, and deception, and opposed to the stolid reality of black-and-white life. But in Hollywood films at least, this equation shifts subtly, for there it becomes clear that the colorful world of fantasy is privileged, and that the black-and white realism of Kansas functions strictly as a foil to highlight the desirability of technicolor Oz.[100] As in the realm of photography,

---

[99]To my knowledge the only work that does *not* place the colored panel on the left is *Marilyn Monroe's Lips* [Figure 15], where the lips are silkscreened onto a white panel on the left and a pink panel on the right.

[100]In this respect I agree with Salman Rushdie, who reads the film as an extended exploration of exile, of the pleasures of leaving home and going among strangers, which hypocritically reverses itself in

color film can connote both the 'lifelike' and the 'artificial.' Black and white, in contrast, can variously signify the 'historical,' the 'old-fashioned,' the 'gritty truth,' or the 'objective.'

The *Marilyns* are not the only works in Warhol's oeuvre that challenge the traditional valuations of color and design. In 1962 Warhol made a series of paintings on the theme of "Do It Yourself." These simulate the look of unfinished panels from a paint-by-numbers kit: the particular scene (flowers, still life, marine landscape) is divided into patches marked with numbered codes that indicate which color should be used to fill it in. *Do It Yourself (Landscape)* is an exceptionally hackneyed scene: the clichéd red barns and autumn foliage of the New England countryside are coupled with a fantastically prosaic mailbox at the bend in the road [Figure 31]. Yet if the designs Warhol uses are culled from the plebeian imaginary of the paint-by-numbers kit, they refer to fine art as well, representing genres familiar from late nineteenth-century French art: landscape, seascape, flower painting, still life. The design is of the type that is mass-produced and sold in kits, so it is clearly not the source of artistic value, yet the application of paint is equally flat-footed. Just as design has become mass-produced, painting itself treated as a routine procedure, divorced from ideologies of the artist's touch. As the *Do It Yourself* paintings make clear, putting color on canvas can be done by anyone and is no special province of genius.

The *Do It Yourself* paintings do suggest that art making has become routinized. Both color and design are canned effects, with as little creative spontaneity as a hobbyist's seascape. But this series should not solely be read as an ironic statement about how little is left of painting. For one thing, the suggestion that Warhol's fine art was a 'hobby' — made in the *Life* article with which this chapter opened — should resonate here. For another, Warhol's practice of silkscreening does ultimately consist of adding unmodulated

---

the final minutes to insist that 'there's no place like home.' *The Wizard of Oz* (London: BFI Publishing, 1992).

patches of color to a predetermined outline. In retrospect, we might say that the paint-by-numbers kit might have served as an adequate model for his painting.

It is precisely this willingness to reproduce the mass cultural design that causes so many critics to feel that Warhol's is irredeemably complicit with capitalism. Summarizing the literature on whether or not Warhol could be construed as an oppositional artist, David James wrote:

> the difficulty of recovering either an unequivocal critique or an unequivocal endorsement of capitalist culture has forced those commentators concerned with the political implications of his work to distinguish between a 'good' Warhol and a 'bad' Warhol. There are as many fine tunings of this distinction as there are critics, but generally the good Warhol is the painter and printmaker operating between 1961 and 1968. In the work of this period, some painterly or compositional strategy is proposed as the signal of the works' difference from the newspaper, advertising, or publicity photographs from which their imagery typically derives. Rather than simply continuing the circulation of mass-media icons, the works are projected as operating a self-conscious denaturing of these icons that makes them, on some level, critical of late capitalism.[101]

In other words, the possibility of a critical relation to capitalism is equated with a style that 'self-consciously denatures' the depicted subject matter. Without some kind of 'painterly or compositional strategy' to signal the works' lack of compliance with what they depict, Warhol must be endorsing his subject matter. As I have been arguing, Warhol's style is hardly a neutral, non-interfering element in his presentation of subject matter. Nonetheless, 'self-conscious denaturing' hardly seems like an appropriate phrase to describe that style. If we define denaturing as a process of melting down, as when heat is applied to a protein, causing it to lose its structure at the molecular level, then we would have to say that this is precisely what Warhol does *not* do to his subject matter. He presents his subject matter as is, only gussied up with bright spots of color. He does not remake his subject matter, he makes it over.

This is where we need an analysis that is both feminist and art historically astute. For Warhol's obsessive interest in the cosmetic surface of movie stars certainly can seem to

---

[101]David E. James, "The Unsecret Life: A Warhol Advertisement," *October* 56 (Spring 1991), 26-7.

participate in the capitalist project of reifying everything that moves, and even more odiously, to single out women as special targets for that process of reification. But with the colorist tradition in mind, and specifically that subset I have been tracing as the cosmetic tradition, we gain a more nuanced perspective. For in this tradition, to champion paint was to locate value in the bodily, the material, and the feminine. To read *Turquoise Marilyn* as a straightforward anti-feminist work — the depiction of a woman as a sex object — is to erase these anti-Platonist commitments of Warhol's cosmetic style. In Chapter 4 I will argue further for a feminist reading of Warhol that considers his style and subject matter together. For now, I take up a second, related element of Warhol's style, reading his use of repetition as another kind of decorative artifice. From Warhol as makeup artist I turn to Warhol as decorator.

Chapter Two

MODERNIST WALLPAPER
Warhol Meets Greenberg

The criticism of Clement Greenberg and the painting of Andy Warhol are both marked by an extraordinary degree of focus on the pictorial surface. Warhol began his career as a fine artist in New York during the apogee of Clement Greenberg's influence on the New York art world. As many critics at the time recognized, Warhol's style suggests that he was aware both of this critic and of his prescriptions for 'important' painting. Restoring these connections helps us to understand Warhol's artistic ambitions more clearly. Conversely, Warhol's unique spin on Greenberg's critical formulations brings out certain tensions — between the middlebrow and the highbrow, the immanent and the transcendent, the feminine and the masculine — that are latent in Greenberg's conception of modernism.

Greenberg's conception of surface and its role changed dramatically over the decades during which he wrote. After reconstructing these changes, I discuss Warhol's *Cow Wallpaper*, first fabricated in 1966. The *Cow Wallpaper* foregrounds the importance of the decorative within Warhol's oeuvre as a whole. Moreover, its outlandish exaggeration makes it possible to confront some of the subtler contradictions inherent in Greenberg's conception of the surface, and to understand why Greenberg was not able to accept Warhol's surfaces as relatives of his modernist ones.

Let me alert the reader that I will be using the word modernism in this chapter as Greenberg and his disciple Michael Fried used it, designating solely that particular tradition within a range of modernist practices that they wished to sanction and promote. Benjamin Buchloh has noted that this tendentious history is partly to blame for the critical incomprehension surrounding Warhol's project, since it suppressed precisely those historical currents (Dada and the work of Marcel Duchamp) that best help us to locate

Warhol historically.[1] Certainly Buchloh is right about the partiality of Greenberg's conception of modernism, but there is much to be gained by situating Warhol *within* that limited history. Warhol's position, or lack thereof, within Greenbergian modernism will help us to see what kinds of factors constrained the writing of that history in the first place. Conversely, seeing Warhol against the backdrop provided by Greenberg's narrative will throw the idiosyncrasies of his project into relief.

GREENBERG ON THE SURFACE

Warhol is not the first Greenbergian artist who was never recognized as such. In fact there are a number of intriguing disjunctions between Greenberg's theoretical formulations and his advocacy of certain artists. Greenberg supported Jackson Pollock, who in many ways did not fit his theoretical strictures, but he had little interest in Frank Stella, who seemed to be directly cast from Greenberg's modernist mold.[2] These discrepancies testify to the flexibility and strength of Greenberg's critical practice, which for nearly two decades was relatively unimpeded by his strict theoretical program for modernist art. By linking Greenberg with Warhol, therefore, I do not mean to suggest that Greenberg didn't know his own mind as a critic. He did, and that mind is far subtler and stranger than we usually credit. This is one of the dangers of working with Greenberg's writing: the exaggerated features of a caricature seem to be more memorable than the precise topography of a human face. Thus we persist in remembering Greenberg as more of a dogmatist than he actually is. In this section I search for a more nuanced view of Greenberg's conception of the

---

[1]Benjamin Buchloh, "Andy Warhol's One-Dimensional Art: 1956-1966," in *Andy Warhol: A Retrospective*, ed. Kynaston McShine (New York: MoMA, 1989), 56.

[2]T.J. Clark devotes a few pages of his essay on Pollock to noting that Greenberg's praise of Pollock is phrased in terms which usually have a pejorative sense for him, for example, the "Gothic." "Jackson Pollock's Abstraction," in *Reconstructing Modernism: Art in New York, Paris, and Montreal 1945-1964*, ed. Serge Guilbaut (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1990), 185-6. Thierry de Duve wrestles with Greenberg's dismissal of Stella, arguing in "The Monochrome and the Blank Canvas," [in the same volume, 244-310] that it was actually Stella's painting that helped to confirm and promote Greenberg's account of American painting over Harold Rosenberg's rival view.

modernist surface, continuing the task of distinguishing early and late moments in his career.

In Greenberg's earliest published writings on painting, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" (1939) and "Towards a Newer Laocoon" (1940), we find that modernist art is distinguished from earlier, illusionistic painting by its insistence on its own flatness:

> The history of avant-garde painting is that of a progressive surrender to the resistance of its medium; which resistance consists chiefly in the flat picture plane's denial of efforts to 'hole through' it for realistic perspectival space. In making this surrender, painting not only got rid of imitation—and with it, 'literature'—but also of realistic imitation's corollary confusion between painting and sculpture.[3]

Greenberg defines the primary characteristic of the medium of painting as its flat surface. Thus the central mission of avant-garde painting is the attempt to come to terms with that flat surface. The other features of avant-garde painting—the turn away from mimesis, the rejection of the 'literary,' the repudiation of three-dimensional effects, and the notion of resistance—are secondary, resulting from this basic understanding of a painting as a plane.

This emphasis on the material flatness of the picture plane is best understood in the context of Greenberg's passionate defense of immanence against transcendence. As we saw in the previous chapter, Greenberg at times affiliates his modernism with the 'Venetian line' of colorist painting, and shares the tendency of that line to celebrate the material delights of pigment itself. In "Towards a Newer Laocoon" he gestures toward his preference for the world of appearances, writing "it is true of Western painting that in so far as it has been the creation of a rationalist and scientifically-minded city culture, it has always had a bias towards a realism that tries to achieve allusions by overpowering the medium, and is more interested in exploiting the practical meanings of objects than in savoring their appearance."[4] A certain variety of Western realism treated paint not as an end in itself, but as a means of suggesting the illusion of other objects. Underlying this

---

[3]Clement Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoon" (1940), in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, 4 vols., ed. John O'Brian, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Vols. 1 and 2, 1986; Vols. 3 and 4, 1993), Vol. 1: *Perceptions and Judgments, 1939-1944*, 34.

[4]Ibid., 1: 27.

artistic decision, Greenberg suggests, is a more general approach to the material world, which sees it as a set of objects possessing properties that be converted into something else (energy or money, for example). Greenberg favors instead approaching those same objects with the intent of appreciating what they are in themselves, and savoring their particularity. In terms of painting, this would presumably translate into a respect for the particularities of pigment—not for what pigment can transform into, but for what it is.

Later in the same essay, Greenberg directly expresses his preference for painting that remains, obdurately, made of paint:

> By the second third of the 19th century painting had degenerated from the pictorial to the picturesque. Everything depends on the anecdote or the message. The painted picture occurs in blank, indeterminate space; it just happens to be on a square of canvas and inside a frame. It might just as well have been breathed on air or formed out of plasma. It tries to be something you imagine rather than see—or else a bas-relief or a statue. Everything contributes to the denial of the medium, as if the artist were ashamed to admit that he had actually painted his picture instead of dreaming it forth.[5]

Here we find Greenberg heaping scorn on those paintings that do not foreground their actual "square of canvas inside a frame." His worst insults are reserved for paintings that have been "dreamed forth," as if a painting could be conceived without being crafted, "breathed on air" rather than painted in pigment on canvas. For Greenberg, conception and execution are indivisible. He dislikes the notion of an idea that functions independently from paint; for him, the idea inheres in the materiality of the painted surface and is inseparable from it.

In 1948 he made this predilection even more explicit:

> Must one argue this over again?... Pigment and its abstract combinations on canvas are as important as delineated forms; matter — colors and the surfaces on which they are placed — is as important as ideas. Human activity embodies its own ends and no longer makes them transcendental by postponing them to afterlife or old age. All experience is sanctified, all we can know is the best we can know.[6]

---

[5]Ibid., 1: 28. We might even translate the opposition between immanence and transcendence into Marxist terms: in the first view, the object is an exchange-value (its value abstracted from its material form); in the second, it is a use-value (its value remaining stubbornly inherent in the precise qualities it possesses).

[6]Greenberg, "Irrelevance versus Irresponsibility" (1948), Vol. 2: *Arrogant Purpose, 1945-1949*, 232-3.

When Greenberg insists that "matter — colors and the surfaces on which they are placed — is as important as ideas," he places himself firmly within anti-Platonist aesthetics. The painted object is not a means to another destination, but is an end in itself. Greenberg goes on to connect this view of painting with a view of human existence: our modern goal is not to transcend the physical universe in order to reach a spiritual realm beyond it, but to dwell within our earthly world. Greenberg concludes this paragraph by writing: "These may be errors, just as the myths of religion are errors, but they are capable of producing an art just as profound and 'human' as that which incorporated the myths of religion." Greenberg acknowledges that this modernist, materialist myth *is* a myth; nonetheless it is just as capable of generating good art as the myth of transcendence was in its day.[7]

Accompanying this emphasis on the materiality of the picture plane is a high degree of specificity about the materials involved. If we consult Greenberg's story about the origins of modernism, we find that wallpaper plays a 'pivotal role' in its development. In "The Pasted-Paper Revolution" (1958), Greenberg writes:

> The collage played a pivotal role in the evolution of Cubism, and Cubism had, of course, a pivotal role in the evolution of modern painting and sculpture. As far as I know, Braque has never explained quite clearly what induced him, in 1912, to glue a piece of imitation wood-grain paper to the surface of a drawing. Nevertheless, his motive, and Picasso's in following him (assuming that Picasso did follow him in this), seems quite apparent by now—so apparent that one wonders why those who write on collage continue to find its origin in nothing more than the Cubists' need for renewed contact with 'reality.'[8]

Let's take Greenberg at his word. Cubism is critical to the development of modernist painting, Cubist collage is critical to the development of Cubism, and the introduction of wallpaper is critical to the development of Cubist collage. Thus a crucial turning point for modernism proper (the version of modernism that goes under the proper name of Greenberg) occurs when wallpaper is introduced on to the surface of ambitious art. Even

---

[7]Even much later, after Greenberg had abandoned his myth of immanence in favor of a new species of transcendence, Greenberg still found himself objecting to minimalism on the grounds that "minimal art remains too much a feat of ideation, and not enough anything else. Its idea remains an idea, something deduced instead of felt and discovered.....Aesthetic surprise hangs on forever—it is still there in Raphael as it is in Pollock—and ideas alone cannot achieve it." "Recentness of Sculpture," Vol. 4: *Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957-1969*, 254.

[8]Greenberg, "The Pasted Paper Revolution" (1958), 4: 61.

as he emphasizes the centrality of wallpaper to the modernist project, Greenberg cannot quite bring himself to call it wallpaper. Instead he chooses the bulkier phrase 'imitation wood-grain paper' which is simultaneously more precise (as it describes the particular look of this paper) and more obscure (as it manages to leave 'wallpaper' itself unmentioned).

This myth of origins seems at first to be a preposterous one: especially when one thinks of Greenberg's general sense of the exaltedness of high art, it is hard to imagine that wallpaper could be at the heart of it. Looking at the history of modernist painting, however, one can agree with Greenberg that wallpaper has been an extraordinarily useful means of flattening the picture plane. In Vincent Van Gogh's *Portrait of the Postman Joseph Roulin* (1889), for example, the curling waves of Roulin's beard are rhymed with the tendrils of the floral wallpaper against which he is placed [Figure 36]. This doubling of the decorative motif moves figure and ground closer together, reducing the amount of pictorial space and drawing attention to the canvas itself as a decorative surface. In Matisse's *Harmony in Red* (1908), wallpaper is used similarly as the agent by which pictorial space is flattened [Figure 37]. Spiraling vines and baskets of flowers collapse foreground and background into one another, leaving a minimum of pictorial depth and pointing to the flatness of the canvas as well as its decorative intent.

Greenberg describes cubism as a battle in which the picture plane kept flattening out, as if against the will of its creators, thus motivating their attempts to reintroduce a shallow space behind it. Although cubism still mobilized traditional means of suggesting depth (especially shading, which indicated volume and therefore at least enough pictorial space to contain the volume), the concomitant scattering of forms into small planes kept undermining this depth and creating the look of an all-over surface arrangement of forms. Given this problem, Braque and Picasso experimented with various means of designating the literal surface of the canvas, in the hope that with this surface pinned down, they could wedge a modicum of pictorial space behind it. To this end, Greenberg argues, Braque painted a *trompe l'oeil* nail on the surface of *Still Life with Violin and Palette* (1910). In

1911 he began to stencil letters and numbers on the surface of his paintings as a means of "specifying the very real flatness of the picture plane so that everything else shown on it would be pushed into illusioned space by force of contrast. The surface was now explicitly instead of implicitly indicated as a tangible but transparent plane."[9] The mixing of sand into paint to highlight the picture plane as sensuously distinct was followed by the inclusion of strips of wood-grained wallpaper.

With this innovation, the project of analytic cubism really gets underway. This phase of cubism is characterized by fundamentally ambiguous relations between the various planes depicted, which continually reorganize themselves in relation to the actual surface. In Greenberg's view, the Cubist enterprise aimed:

> to restore and exalt decoration by building it, by endowing self-confessedly flat configurations with a pictorial content, an autonomy like that hitherto obtained through illusion alone. Elements essentially decorative in themselves were used not to adorn but to identify, locate, construct; and in being so used, to create works of art in which decorativeness was transcended or transfigured in a monumental unity.[10]

Elements like wallpaper, 'elements essentially decorative in themselves,' were deployed as structural building blocks. In this way, the traditional opposition between the design of the composition and the decoration of the surface was undermined. Greenberg makes this the central project of Picasso and Braque's cubism. Juan Gris is introduced as a point of contrast: in Gris's work, the decorative is an overlay, a screen through which objects are envisioned. By contrast, in the work of Picasso and Braque, the decorative has become structural and is thereby 'transcended.'

Greenberg's approach in "The Pasted-Paper Revolution" might be described as a strategic use of the middlebrow. Wallpaper is permitted because it is crucial in producing the pictorial flatness that is the hallmark of modernism. It is permitted because it is a means of showing that representation and decorative abstraction are not mutually exclusive.[11]

---

[9]Ibid., 4: 62.

[10]Ibid., 4: 66.

[11]In fact, in his revision of "The Pasted-Paper Revolution," discussed at length below, Greenberg will strengthen this argument by noting that what cubism came up against was an historically unique

Thus, through the use of wallpaper, cubism "conclusively liquidated the illusion of the third dimension."[12] The permission to include wallpaper for these reasons, however, was not meant as an unqualified endorsement of wallpaper itself—the use of wallpaper was to be strategic and partial. Greenberg's view of wallpaper as an element that is useful for its essential flatness rather than its particular patterns can be supported by Picasso's use of the same pattern of wallpaper in a series of collages made in the fall of 1912: *Guitar and Sheet of Music* (D 506), *Guitar, Sheet-Music and Glass* (D 513), *Violin and Sheet Music* (D 519), and *Glass and Bottle of Suze* (D 523). Ultimately, however, Picasso dispenses with wallpaper as an actual collage material, preferring instead to paint its simulacrum onto two canvases from early 1913, the *Violin, Bottle and Glass* (D 569) and *Musical Instruments* (D 577).[13] Picasso's willingness to forgo the use of actual wallpaper in the later works can be construed as evidence for Greenberg's contention that wallpaper is present to teach the lesson of flatness. Once that lesson has been learned and translated into paint, actual wallpaper should slink back quietly to the middlebrow world from which it came.

But there is a problem here. Put briefly, it matters that wallpaper and not some other material that is used — in no other material are the flat and the decorative so closely tied together. But wrapped up with this aesthetic gift is a disturbing element: the definite class associations of wallpaper. Greenberg tries to separate the flat and decorative aspects of wallpaper from its middlebrow nature. He does so, as T.J. Clark has explained, by claiming that his stress on flatness is a simple ontological fact, a value derived from the

---

choice, not between representation and abstraction, but between representation and illusion: "If they opted for illusion, it could only be illusion per se—an illusion of depth, and of relief, so general and abstracted as to exclude the representation of individual objects. If, on the other hand, they opted for representation, it had to be representation per se—representation as image pure and simple, without connotations (at least, without more than schematic ones) of the three-dimensional space in which the objects represented originally existed. It was the collage that made the terms of this dilemma clear: the representational could be restored and preserved only on the flat and literal surface now that illusion and representation had become, for the first time, mutually exclusive alternatives. In the end, Picasso and Braque plumped for the representational, and it would seem they did so deliberately." "Collage," in *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 77-8.

[12]Greenberg, "Reply to George L.K. Morris" (1945), 2: 245.

[13]Numbers in parentheses refer to the catalogue numbers in Pierre Daix, *Picasso, The Cubist Years, 1907-1916: A Catalogue Raisonne of the Paintings and Related Works* (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1979).

medium itself. To oppose this view, Clark takes Greenberg's privileged medium-specific term for painting, flatness, and points to a range of meanings flatness had in the social world. He argues that flatness could not have remained an interesting physical fact for painters if it had not resonated with meanings in the broader culture:

> It could stand, that flatness, as an analogue of the 'popular' — something therefore conceived as plain, workmanlike, and emphatic. Or it could signify 'modernity,' with flatness meant to conjure up the mere two dimensions of posters, labels, fashion prints, and photographs. Equally, unbrokennness of surface could be seen — by Cézanne, for example — as standing for the truth of seeing, the actual form of our knowledge of things.
> ...Flatness was therefore in play—as an irreducible, technical 'fact' of painting—with all of these totalizations, all of these attempts to make it a metaphor. Of course in a sense it resisted the metaphors, and the painters we most admire insisted also on it as an awkward, empirical quiddity; but the 'also' is the key word here: there was no fact without the metaphor, no medium without its being the vehicle of a complex act of meaning.[14]

Here Clark lists a number of associations for flatness, from the popular to the modern to the retinal image. Early in his career, Greenberg is able to have his wallpaper and deny it too; to admit its flatness without admitting its class resonances. But this disingenuousness will have its price, because as it becomes evident that these class associations will not go away, Greenberg will be forced to jettison wallpaper altogether.

WARHOL'S WALLPAPER

Warhol's *Cow Wallpaper*, first fabricated in 1966, can help us to understand how this contradiction magnified to the point where it had to be done away with [Figure 38]. The aggressive palette of fluorescent lemon and magenta, the overbearing banality of the cow image, the fact that this actually *is* wallpaper: all of these contribute to our sense that Warhol is not so much making art here as he is making a scene. Along with the *Silver Pillows* of the same year and the *Flowers* of 1965, the *Cow Wallpaper* is usually treated as

---

[14]T.J. Clark, "Clement Greenberg's Theory of Art," in *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate*, ed. Francis Frascina (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1985), 57-8. Originally published in *Critical Inquiry* 9:1 (September 1982): 139-56.

a marginal work, signalling the end of Warhol's serious artistic production. For example, Rainer Crone wrote that

> [The Flowers] are unique in Warhol's production by virtue of their meaningless image content—a dubious honor shared only by the Cow Wallpaper and Silver Clouds in all of Warhol's oeuvre. They are and will remain strictly decorative, 'upper class wallpaper,' to use Henry Geldzahler's words. Anyone who detects dehumanizing tendencies in these images is misinterpreting them. Their banal, abstract form is a gauge against which to measure Warhol's other work. Color is used strictly decoratively in these pictures, and the flowers are there to carry it — it is their sole function.[15]

Crone opposes the decorative to the meaningful, and suggests that these three works are useful only as a standard by which Warhol's seriousness in his other paintings can be measured.

None of Warhol's ventures in the pseudo-pastoral were terribly convincing. His *Flowers*, *Silver Clouds*, and *Cow Wallpaper* are all attempts to do 'natural' subjects as reproduced in cultural imagery. While one would expect that nature represented as a highly artificial, cultural construction would make for compelling subject matter, these works fall flat. Despite its lack of success, however, the *Cow Wallpaper* can help us to understand a central element of Warhol's project. The decorative aesthetic it foregrounds not only links Warhol's early and late Pop art, but also forms an important bridge between Warhol's work and the kind of early modernist painting that Greenberg championed. (Hilton Kramer concisely described Greenberg's views on art as "a taste for the decorative elevated to an historical principle and virtually identified as the inner logic around which all modern painting developed."[16]) Although both Warhol and Greenberg were preoccupied with the decorative, this point of connection between them has not been explored.

---

[15]*Andy Warhol* (New York: Praeger, 1970), 30. Geldzahler was quoted in David Bourdon, "Andy Warhol," *The Village Voice* (December 3, 1964). In order to build his interpretation of Warhol as a gritty realist, Thomas Crow excludes the same three works as signs of Warhol's impending decrepitude. "Saturday Disasters: Trace and Reference in Early Warhol," in Guilbaut, 324.

[16]Hilton Kramer, "A Critic on the Side of History: Notes on Clement Greenberg," *Arts Magazine* 37 (October 1962), 62. Although an insistence on the decorative is a hallmark of Greenberg's modernism, it is hardly foreign to other versions of modernism, for example, Roger Fry's. On the way in which the pejorative term 'decorative' became high modernist praise over time, see Steven Z. Levine, "Décor/Decorative/Decoration in Claude Monet's Art," *Arts Magazine* 51 (February 1977), 136-9.

In an essay that details the exhibition history of Warhol's works, Charles Stuckey has argued that "decorative redundancy [was] essential to Warhol's vision."[17] He cites the way the *Flowers* (1965) filled gallery walls with floral patterns reminiscent of wallpaper, and notes that Warhol's *Elvis* paintings, created for his September 1963 show at the Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles arrived printed on a large roll of canvas: "Warhol left it to Blum to cut the roll into conventional-format paintings to be mounted on various sizes of stretchers. His instructions were remarkably limited: 'The only thing I really want is that they should be hung edge to edge, densely — around the gallery. So long as you can manage that, do the best you can.'"[18] Warhol 's instructions direct Blum to simulate the look of wallpaper, and Blum's installation does convey something of this effect [Figure 39].

As Stuckey points out, a fascination with wallpaper is not new to modernist painting: "Of course, ever since Édouard Vuillard's pioneering efforts to make decorative paintings in which the background takes a dominant role, wallpaper had begun to play a prominent part in the paintings and collages of such artists as Matisse, Picasso and Braque."[19] Stuckey contextualizes Warhol's wallpaper in relation to modernist predecessors like Matisse and Picasso, reminding us that the use of wallpaper is an important feature of canonical modernist painting. At the same time, Stuckey objects to the cow image as 'totally unsuitable for a wallpaper design.'

> the realistic photo-based image of a cow's head, printed in artificial colors (pink on a yellow background), is totally unsuitable for a wallpaper design. Its left side does not interlock graphically with its right side as repeat patterns must. Instead, Warhol's Cow Wallpaper is like a printed film strip of a close-up shot for one of his motionless movies.[20]

Although the *Cow Wallpaper* actually is printed on rolls of paper, it does not produce a particularly wallpaper-like effect. As Stuckey notes, the left and righthand sides of the

---

[17]Charles Stuckey, "Warhol in Context," in *The Work of Andy Warhol* ed. Gary Garrels, (Seattle: Bay Press, 1989), 4. Stuckey also dealt with the decorative aspect of Warhol's work in "Andy Warhol's Painted Faces," *Art in America* 68 (May 1980): 102-111.

[18]Ibid., 11.

[19]Ibid., 20.

[20]Ibid.

image do not connect with each other so that the pattern repeats seamlessly; instead the images remain disjunctive. This effect is heightened by the installation of the wallpaper in alternating strips so that the images do not run in parallel rows. The exaggerated size of the cow-head image, which repeats only two and a half times from floor to ceiling, contributes to the dissimilarity between the *Cow Wallpaper* and its more familiar domestic cousins.

But if the *Cow Wallpaper* is unlike a typical wallpaper design, it does bring to mind Warhol's earlier silkscreened works. Stuckey sees the *Cow Wallpaper* as similar to a strip of film, but the *Cow Wallpaper* bears an even stronger resemblance to the strips of repeated images that cover the surfaces of his paintings, such as *Marilyn x 100* (1962) and *Lavender Disaster* (1963) [Figures 33 and 40]. The large dimensions of these works (the *Marilyn x 100* is the size of a large wall, nearly seven feet high and over eighteen feet long), their horizontal orientation, their parallel rows of repeated images, and their availability in a variety of colors all suggest that Warhol saw these paintings as decorative wallcoverings.[21] The disjunctive images of the *Cow Wallpaper*, although uncharacteristic of wallpaper design, do allow us to see the basic similarity between this wallpaper and Warhol's earlier silkscreened paintings.

The *Flowers*, made for Warhol's 1965 show at the Galerie Ileana Sonnabend in Paris, were immediately received as decorative paintings in the manner of Matisse and Monet. As David Bourdon pointed out, Warhol's "Day-Glo Flowers sometimes appear to float right off the canvas, as if disembodied from the background — 'like cut-out gouaches by Matisse set adrift on Monet's lily pond.'"[22] Similarly, Thomas Hess quipped: "It is as

---

[21]As Neil Printz has remarked of the Disaster pictures' palette, "the colors Warhol chose are idiosyncratic, they are the kind of decorator hues that might be found on printed sample chips in ordinary paint stores, reflecting the do-it-yourself ethos of the working middle class." "Painting Death in America," *Andy Warhol: Death and Disasters* (Houston: The Menil Foundation, Inc., 1988), 14.

[22]David Bourdon, *Warhol* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1989), 191; the citation is from his own 1964 review of the show, "Andy Warhol," *The Village Voice* (December 3, 1964), 11.

if Warhol got hung up on the cliché that attacks 'modern art' for being like 'wallpaper,' and decided that wallpaper is a pretty good idea too."[23]

Wallpaper, of course, points not just toward the modernist ambition to create decorations, but toward the industry of interior design. This connotation of the *Flowers* is particularly visible in installation photographs of the exhibition [Figure 41].[24] The installation is structured as a movement from large, independent canvases such as the one on the left, to smaller canvases arranged in a grid format in the center, to even smaller canvases placed closely together on the right. This display announces the photographic nature of Warhol's *Flowers* — they can be enlarged or reduced as desired. It also advertises Warhol's aesthetic pliability, his obvious willingness to make the image at any size and in any format the buyer might wish. Most important for our purposes, it shows that Warhol understands these different formats as three different means of decorating the wall. Although the large, freestanding canvas to the left of the photograph suggests art as opposed to decoration, Warhol presents it as one more decorative format, a configuration that will suit the needs of a particular kind of client. Thus the paradigmatic modernist grid in the center can move in two directions with equal ease — it can be enlarged into large singular works like that on the left, or reduced into a continuous decorative screen (approaching wallpaper) like that on the right.

This suggests that we might learn to read Warhol's repetition in terms of the decorative. Repetition is a central element of Warhol's work and has been a frequent subject of critical analysis.[25] In my view the most convincing account of Warhol's

---

[23]T[homas] B. H[ess], "Andy Warhol," *Art News* 63 (January 1965), 11. Hess also suggested whose interior the Flowers might decorate: "these are works for the mantlepiece of a T.V.-commercial hero—say, the Jolly Green Giant."

[24]David Antin made this connection explicit, writing that the *Flowers* "resemble those photomurals that interior decorators used to put on office walls, particularly the large 4-foot canvas." "Warhol: The Silver Tenement," *Art News* 65 (Summer 1966), 58.

[25]For Thomas Crow, Warhol's repetition of images documents the constant recurrence of certain images (especially violent and/or sexual ones) in the media. (Crow's understanding of the photograph as document will be treated at length in the next chapter.) For Hal Foster, this is an overly 'realist' view of Warhol's oeuvre. For Foster, Warhol's repetition does not refer us to actual events in the world, rather, "repetition serves to *screen* the real understood as traumatic," 42. Warhol's repetition is thus a defense against the real that paradoxically functions by pointing toward the real again and again. By linking

repetition is Benjamin Buchloh's. He views repetition as the distinguishing feature of the commodity, for not only is the commodity mass-produced, it is displayed serially. Many twentieth-century artists borrowed the principle of repetition from commodity displays.[26] Hence for Buchloh, Warhol's repetition is a formal strategy that links him to an artistic tradition ,which in its turn is intelligible in terms of capitalist social relations.

There is a way, however, of seeing Warhol's repetition as indebted to the commodity *and* to the decorative. There is a particular commodity which is mass-produced for home decoration and is itself characterized by repeated images: wallpaper. Warhol's relation both to the decorative and to the commodity will come into much tighter focus if we look specifically at wallpaper as the commodity it mimics. In other words, I want to argue that Warhol's oeuvre is not only decorative in intent, but that wallpaper is one important model for that decorative project (which in no way removes us from the realm of capitalist social relations Buchloh wants to foreground).

We might read the *Cow Wallpaper*, then, as Warhol's attempt to proclaim unequivocally his interest in a decorative flatness that was, for a time, a hallmark of Greenbergian modernism. (Although we must remember that Greenberg claimed that this decorative aspect was to be transcended in a 'monumental unity.') Virtually without extension into the room — almost totally flat — and proudly decorative to its core, the *Cow Wallpaper* claims a connection with Greenberg's modernist tradition. We might argue, therefore, that it belongs in this tradition and the problem is that the later Greenberg could no longer afford to see the link.

Warhol's repetition to the Lacanian terminology of the real, the imaginary and the symbolic, Foster is able to produce an interesting reading of that repetition in psychic terms. I am more interested, here, in understanding repetition in visual terms. It would be possible to do this while remaining in a Lacanian framework by locating artistic conventions at the intersection between the imaginary and the symbolic. In order to do this, however, one would first have to rewrite Lacan's trifold division. As it stands, Lacan's relegation of images to the primitive, dyadic, and acultural zone of the Imaginary renders him not particularly sophisticated as a theorist of images. "Death in America," *October* 75 (Spring 1996): 37-60. Also included as Chapter 5 of *The Return of the Real*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996).

[26]Buchloh, 42-3.

But the *Cow Wallpaper* aggresses equally against the earlier Greenberg, for although it deploys wallpaper as a means of generating a decorative flatness, it is hardly a strategic use of wallpaper. In fact, in this work Warhol deliberately foregrounds all those connotations that were potentially problematic in the use of wallpaper to begin with. The primary problem is that wallpaper strongly connotes the middle-class world of home decoration. By attaching wallpaper onto the surface of modernist art, there was always the risk that painting would be identified as just another species of interior decoration. Three additional problems are attendant on this one. First, decorative pattern, instead of being seen as foreground, as art, can be turned into background for some other kind of figuration. In other words, the autonomy of the art object is threatened if it is configured as wallpaper. Second, if the autonomy of the art object is threatened, so is the autonomy of the artist. By making wallpaper, the artist becomes a designer, making interior decoration for the domestic sphere. This entails not only a subordination to someone else's project that is incompatible with the heroic myths of the lonely creator, but it also feminizes the artist through the association with the domestic rather than the public sphere. Third, the autonomy of modernist painting from all other levels of cultural production is compromised. Warhol does nothing to minimize these problems; rather, he tends to embrace and even exploit the aspects of wallpaper that most trouble the peace of Greenbergian painting.

THE DIFFICULTIES WITH WALLPAPER

For all its distinguished pedigree within modern art, wallpaper never lost its association with the middle-class world of interior decoration. Originally created for aristocratic patrons, the earliest wallpapers were temporary decorations, elaborate backdrops fashioned out of painted paper.[27] As printing technologies began to develop, however, wallpaper

---

[27]Nancy McClelland cites the example of "fifty large scrolls of painted paper ordered by Louis XI from Jean Bourdichon in 1481," in *Historic Wall-Papers: From Their Inception to the Introduction of Machinery* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1924), 19.

suffered a rapid drop in status, becoming a substitute for more expensive materials. Imitating tapestries, velvet and silk textiles, leather hangings, murals and frescoes, wallpaper was an affordable simulacrum, a poor relation of these luxurious stuffs.[28] As Lesley Hoskins has observed:

> Ever since wallpaper first became widely available its status has been questioned: is it background or foreground, art or decoration, vulgar or respectable, a substitute or the real thing? As long as hand-production and expense confined its use, the nature of the product was less of a problem....But as mechanization increased availability it also increased anxieties about taste.[29]

Hoskins thus suggests that the class connotations of wallpaper emerged slowly, only crystallizing once the wallpaper industry had become fully automated.

Initially critics hoped that wallpaper would educate the public and improve the general taste in home decoration. Seeking to understand Picasso's use of wallpaper in his collages, Christine Poggi cites French critic Charles Blanc to this effect. Blanc wrote in 1867 that wallpaper was a democratic agent that would make the pleasures of good taste available to a broad public: "It was natural moreover that the advent of democracy coincided with the almost universal desire to augment the well-being of the most numerous class and to invent for it, if not the equivalent of luxury, at least that which could give it the mirage of luxury."[30] Wallpaper here is still a simulacrum, but it can at least give the veneer of civilization to the masses. As Poggi points out, however, this paean to the uplifting powers of wallpaper was written before wallpaper actually reached a mass market: it was not until the 1880s that production technologies really put wallpaper into the hands of a broad public.

Once wallpaper became universally available, these kinds of hopes were no longer pinned on it. Joanna Banham's study of wallpaper in England during the nineteenth century correlates the increased availability of the material with the rise of a new, distrustful

---

[28]Brenda Greysmith, *Wallpaper* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1976), 15-16.

[29]Lesley Hoskins, ed., *The Papered Wall: History, Pattern, Technique* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1994), 6.

[30]Charles Blanc, "Du papier peint." In *Grammaire des arts décoratifs* (1867), 58. Quoted in Christine Poggi, *In Defiance of Painting* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 135.

attitude toward it. As the middle class in England grew larger, there was a greater demand for home furnishings and decorations. This demand was met by the rapid development of wallpaper printing technology, which further reduced the cost of wallpaper. This expansion of the wallpaper market, rather than being treated as a means of bringing good design to the average home, was instead seen as producing an immediate decline in standards of taste. This decline was met with great anxiety on the part of cultural commentators, who issued a flurry of prescriptions intended to halt this downward progress. Banham concentrates on three notables of the design reform movement: A.W.N. Pugin (1812-52), Owen Jones (1809-74), and William Morris (1834-96). Their prescriptions for wallpaper design often sound a surprisingly Greenbergian note: "In place of three-dimensional effects which produced a disturbing and dishonest illusion of depth, Pugin advocated flat treatments and conventionalized motifs that would enhance, not contradict, the two-dimensional nature of the wall."[31] A particular kind of 'truth' is being advocated here, an insistence that wallpaper announce itself as such.

These critics reserved some of their harshest comments for *trompe l'oeil* papers that imitated the look of marble, wood, or paint. In part this needs to be seen in terms of national rivalry between England and France. French firms, ascendent in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, had specialized in the production of trompe l'oeil papers, and had promoted a taste for naturalistic three-dimensional effects throughout Europe. One fact fueling the English emphasis on flatness and truth to the wall was therefore a rejection of things French and a desire to create an indigenous aesthetic; but this is only part of the story. We might read these prescriptions as a set of modern sumptuary laws, designed to prevent the middle class from asserting a status that did not by rights belong to it. Perhaps these critics feared their own powers of discernment would fail them: how would they

---

[31]Joanna Banham, "The English Response: Mechanization and Design Reform," in *The Papered Wall*, ed. Hoskins, 142. Catherine Lynn also discusses Pugin, Jones and Morris, with an emphasis on how their work was melded together and popularized by Charles Locke Eastlake in his *Hints on Household Taste*, published in the United States in 1872. See her *Wallpaper in America from the Seventeenth Century to World War I* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1980), Chapter 16.

distinguish an upper-class home panelled in wood from its middle-class simulacrum? Read this way, wallpaper is yet another place where the instability of class signification in the mid-nineteenth century can be glimpsed.

Although reformers like Pugin, Jones and Morris had a stranglehold on what could be said about principles of interior design, most consumers continued to prefer naturalistic designs.[32] This was partly due to the expense of reform wallpapers:

> Morris's reputation towers over the second half of the 19th century and, understandably, many historians have over-estimated the impact of his wallpapers, particularly upon the popular end of the market. For, despite his avowed intention to produce 'an art made by the people, for the people,' the patterns of his firm were printed by Jeffrey & Co., almost all of them by hand, and retailed at prices that the working classes could not possibly afford (between 3s. and 16s. a roll).[33]

Despite utopian ambitions to improve the taste of the masses through more appropriate wallpaper designs (as Blanc had advocated in 1867), Morris was unable to manufacture those designs at prices available to a mass public. Design reform in England thus reached a relatively limited public.

If wallpaper initially was sensitive to changing class-based styles, it later settled down as a comfortable and stable signifier of the middle class and the aspirations of that class to domestic comfort. It became an emblem of middle-class taste in interior decoration, and thus it retained a certain proximity to upper-class taste in interior decoration, namely, painting. Warhol exploits this proximity, as we have already seen, in his installation of the *Flowers*, which suggests that individual paintings exist in a continuum with wallpaper, as two different options for home decoration. I want to turn now to his *Portrait of Holly Solomon* (1966) which provides another example of Warhol's anti-strategic, anti-Greenbergian use of wallpaper [Figure 42].

Commissioned to paint Holly Solomon's portrait, Warhol proposed six portraits of the art dealer to be hung against a ground of wallpaper featuring her image. Once again we find Warhol completely comfortable with creating decorative ensemble for his client. What

---

[32]Banham, 145.
[33]Ibid.

is of prime interest here is Solomon's rejection of the wallpaper. The anecdote explains away this refusal by noting the expense of the total commission (and Warhol's 'outrageous' price of $6000 for the wallpaper). But Solomon actually bought nine portraits, rather than the original six Warhol had proposed, suggesting that money was not the issue here. Instead, we might conjecture that Solomon didn't want to cover her walls with wallpaper—she was in the business of collecting art. Warhol saw an essential similarity between the two: painting and wallpaper were both ways of decorating the walls of the home. But the client saw a significant difference. Her painted portraits would belong to the world of the upper crust, but wallpaper? Wallpapering her home would make her just like anybody else.

Significantly, the Whitney Museum of American Art also resisted Warhol's initial proposal for his retrospective: that it consist of nothing but walls covered in the *Cow Wallpaper*.[34] Whereas in Holly Solomon's case we see an individual resisting the class connotations of the wallpapered living room, in the Whitney's case we can approach it as an institutional resistance to turning the space of the museum into a bourgeois living room. The museum as the structure most committed to defending the autonomy of art, its difference from interior decoration, was being asked to commit itself to art as nothing other than wallpaper. Its refusal is not surprising, given the museum's stake in preserving art as an inviolate realm of autonomy. Ironically, however, the plan the Whitney ultimately approved made the similarity between Warhol's wallpaper and Warhol's silkscreens even more evident [Figure 43]. Warhol's art did not stand out against the background of his wallpaper; rather the paintings became even busier and more decorative than if they had been hung on a white wall.

This brings us to the next problem, which is that once painting is seen as just another species of decor, its autonomy is threatened. It runs the very concrete risk of being

---

[34]When Warhol's work was shown at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm, he papered the facade of the museum with the Cow Wallpaper, thereby turning the museum inside out and treating the public, exterior face of the building like a domestic space. The gendered resonances of this kind of reversal are dealt with below.

turned into background — so much window-dressing — for bourgeois existence. Wallpaper expects to blend into the background, but modernist art does not. When such art gets used as background, as for example in Cecil Beaton's photographs for *Vogue* employing Jackson Pollock's 1950 paintings as background, it is assumed to be the worst kind of cooptation. As T.J. Clark writes: "The photographs are nightmarish. They speak to the *hold* of capitalist culture, the way it outflanks any work against the figurative and makes it an aspect of its own figuration—a sign of that figuration's richness, the room it has made for more of the edges and underneath of everyday life."[35] For Clark, the resistance of Pollock's drip paintings to the common culture resided more or less in their resistance to figuration. Thus, placing figures in front of these works speaks to the terrifying flexibility with which capitalism coopts even that which actively works against it. The result is to turn this kind of painting into one more commodity among many offered for sale that year.

But the similarity of Pollock's work to wallpaper was not first observed by Cecil Beaton's camera in the pages of *Vogue*; it was bandied about in criticism of his work from the start. Greenberg writes:

> As before, [Jackson Pollock's] new work offers a puzzle to all those not sincerely in touch with contemporary painting. I already hear: 'wallpaper patterns,' 'the picture does not finish inside the canvas,' raw, uncultivated emotion,' and so on, and so on. Since Mondrian no one has driven the easel picture quite so far away from itself; but this is not altogether Pollock's own doing. In this day and age the art of painting increasingly rejects the easel and yearns for the wall.[36]

To the philistine's charge of 'wallpaper patterns,' Greenberg attempts to respond with a 'yearning for the wall,' the ambition to decorate on a grand scale that was a hallmark of his modernist aesthetic (itself, as we have seen, initially related to wallpaper).

Harold Rosenberg, seeming to foresee appropriations like Beaton's, attempted to stave them off with a conception of painting as an existential act—as a process of self-

---

[35]T. J. Clark, "Jackson Pollock's Abstraction," in *Reconstructing Modernism*, ed. Guilbaut, 222.

[36]Greenberg, "Review of Exhibitions of Worden Day, Carol Holty, and Jackson Pollock" (1948), 2: 201.

assertion rather than as a product. Rosenberg's conception of 'action painting' was developed in order to provide a basis for distinguishing the painter who strives to 'remake' himself on canvas from one who is content to become 'a commodity with a trademark.' It was the artist's assertion of himself that prevented the painting from becoming merely 'apocalyptic wallpaper.' Or, to put it a different way, Rosenberg foregrounded the figure of the artist in order to prevent the painting from turning into background for some other figure.

But the fact that Pollock's paintings (genuine action painting, for Rosenberg) are presented as just such an 'apocalyptic wallpaper' in Beaton's photographs suggests the limits of the concept of 'action painting' to prevent this kind of appropriation [Figure 44]. In this photograph, Pollock's *Autumn Rhythm* appears as a decorative backdrop for a fashion spread, in a manner that suggests both the specific use of Pollock's work as wallpaper as well as a more general sense that avant-garde innovation has now become fully assimilated to the demand for novelty in commodity production. The photograph suggests the possibility of discussing this year's painting in much the same terms as this year's silhouette. Indeed, the precise rhyming between the flaring arc of the dress and Pollock's swinging black lines, between the pink accent of the bow and the pinkish-brown blotches of pigment, suggests that the strategy of the photograph is to assimilate both to the realm of tasteful design.

As Clark notes, making abstract paintings lays one open to having one's painting turned into wallpaper: "I'd say that the risk of the 'decorative' was one that Pollock ran and knew he was running. It's one of the basic risks of abstraction, isn't it? An art that does without the figure lays itself open to being used as a ground on which—or maybe against which—*another* figuration can take place." Like Beaton's photographs, Louise Lawler's *Pollock with Tureen* [Figure 45] testifies to the relative ease with which Pollocks are turned into wallpaper. Lawler photographs a credenza bearing a large tureen and two smaller pieces of china, above which can be seen the bottom edge of a Pollock painting.

The contrast between 'fine art' like the Pollock on the wall and 'decorative art' like the porcelain tureen is undermined by the equal attention both are given in the photograph and, it is implied, in the decoration of the room. In fact, more importance is given to the tureen, which is centered in the photograph and appears in its bulbous entirety, while only the lower fraction of the painting is visible. The rotund feminine form of the tureen is juxtaposed with Pollock's abstract expressionist heroics, yet both are now part of the decor of this room, collectors' items on display. Lawler's photograph seem to poke fun at this kind of taste and at Pollock for being assimilable to it.

Unlike Pollock, Warhol does not so much run the risk that his work will be turned into wallpaper as assume that it will. Thus he makes all of his art as wallpaper, both accepting and indicating the ultimate destination of his work. He quite deliberately makes interior design for the wealthy, designing his art as background for privileged lives. Strangely, however, the track record of Warhol's wallpaper is no worse than Pollock's. If anything, the *Cow Wallpaper* remains thoroughly unlovable in its aggressive vulgarity. Asked if pop art will replace abstract expressionism, Robert Indiana replied:

> In the eternal What-Is-New-in-American-Painting shows, yes; in the latest acquisitions of avant-garde collectors, yes; in the American Home, no. Once the hurdle of its non-objectivity is overcome, [Abstract Expressionism] is prone to be as decorative as French Impressionism. There is a harshness and matter-of-factness to Pop that doesn't exactly make it the interior decorator's Indispensable Right Hand.[37]

At least in relation to the *Cow Wallpaper,* Indiana's comment is astute: the one thing no-one wants, it would seem, is art that declares itself as wallpaper. But even if we see Warhol's art, like Pollock's, as decorative, associated with fashion and femininity, does this indict it?

In her discussion of the *Vogue* photographs of Pollock's work, Laura Cottingham takes issues with Clark's sense that these represent a crisis:

---

[37]Robert Indiana, interview with G.R. Swenson, "What is Pop Art? Answers from 8 Painters, Part I" *Art News* 62 (November 1963) in *American Artists on Art, From 1940 to 1980*, ed. Ellen H. Johnson (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1982), 82.

> He accepts, a priori it seems, that Pollock has been 'trivialized' by the *Vogue* photographs—without bothering to consider what allows him so easily to define what it is that for him constitutes 'the trivial.' Clark takes for granted that *Vogue*, the magazine and the context within which Beaton's photographs first appeared, is trivial. And he assumes, by extension, that blonde women in strapless gowns are, likewise, the very Sign of the trivial.[38]

The image of the woman in front of Pollock's painting is a crisis because it aligns high modernist subjective expression with a mass cultural object. Ostensibly, this Marxist critique applies regardless of the fact that the mass cultural sphere is gendered feminine. Yet, as Cottingham astutely points out, there are many magazine photographs of Pollock standing in front of his own work. Although they are similar to the Beaton photographs in that they present a figure (Pollock) against the ground of his painting, these photographs do not provoke fears that abstraction will be coopted by figuration, high art by low commerce. If not the gendered understanding of mass culture as feminine, then "what is it that determines why *Life* magazine and a male body are synonymous with art but *Vogue* magazine and a female body put art in a 'crisis' that calls forth 'the bad dream of modernism'?[39]

Cottingham suggests a counter-reading: "This [crisis of modernism] is not at all what I see when I look at that by-now infamous series of *Vogue* photographs: I don't see the Pollock rendered decorative by the woman, I see the woman, already proscribed as decorative by her position within male supremacy, further *reinscribed* as decorative, as object, by the painting."[40] This critique grows even more trenchant when we note that one of the Beaton photographs was selected as the cover image for the book in which Clark's essay on Pollock appears [Figure 46]. In a world where people judge books based on their covers, *Reconstructing Modernism* represents itself through this eye-catching photograph. Even as an essay within protests against the cooptation of Pollock's work by the capitalist

---

[38]Laura Cottingham, "The Masculine Imperative: High Modern, Postmodern," in *New Feminist Criticism: Art, Identity, Action*, ed. Joanna Frueh, Cassandra L. Langer, and Arlene Raven (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), 134.

[39]Ibid., 135.

[40]Ibid.

system, the book ensures its successful circulation in that same economy by prominently displaying the image of a glamorous woman. Both painters and fashion models, Marxist academics and *Vogue* photographers, Pollocks and Warhols work within the confines of capitalist culture. While splitting this culture in half, and associating the spheres of fashion and consumerism with femininity may produce some comfort, it hardly gives us an accurate sense of our culture.

This brings us to the third point, which is that once the autonomy of the work is threatened, so is the autonomy of its maker. A crucial difference between Pollock and Warhol is that Warhol was a successful commercial artist. In this respect, the photograph of Warhol's windows for Bonwit's in the spring of 1961 makes an interesting pendant to the Beaton photograph [Figure 47]. It is Warhol himself who has placed women in pretty dresses in front of his paintings. He seems perfectly willing to present his works as background against which the latest female fashions are displayed; he is comfortable, in this particular instance, with placing the mannequins and determining the overall look of the display. Warhol presents his work already coopted, already shaped to serve capitalism's needs. Pollock holds himself aloof from the commercialization of his work; it is Beaton who releases the shutter. Warhol, by contrast, is both like Pollock (a maker of paintings) and like Beaton (the agent through which the paintings are appropriated). If Pollock is a vanguard artist, Warhol is a decorator. Yet again, by overtly presenting himself as a decorator, a humble servant biddable by anyone with the price of a picture, Warhol makes people more uncomfortable than Pollock ever did. By so actively demonstrating a truth — that pictures were wallpaper for the rich, that artists were no more than their high-priced decorators — Warhol gave himself more room to maneuver than Pollock had.

He bought this maneuvering room, however, at the price of feminization. Kenneth Silver has provided this account of Warhol's reaction to Rosenberg's 'apocalyptic wallpaper':

> So, when it came time five years later for Andy Warhol's retrospective at the Whitney Museum, in 1971, what more economical gesture, what

> more succinct way of expressing his allegiances—in terms of gender identification, sexual orientation, and class origins—than his decision, before hanging his paintings, to paper the immense fourth floor of Marcel Breuer's brutalizing, modernist building. With the panache of a big-time decorator or a strong-willed housewife, Warhol transformed the public space he was given into a jumbo-sized simulacrum of the domestic interior. By way of making the Whitney's vast rooms look cozy, he dressed up the galleries designed for the display of avant-garde 'production' in the trappings of kitsch 'consumption.'[41]

Silver argues that Warhol, a male artist, was 'feminized' by presenting himself as a consumer (a passionate shopper and collector) more than a creator. On top of this, Warhol consistently aligned himself with the domestic rather than the great outdoors, and with the lower levels of culture instead of the elite. These elements of his persona came together in his decision to wallpaper the Whitney Museum for his retrospective. The *Cow Wallpaper* not only configured the museum as a feminine domestic space, but explicitly positioned the artist as the decorator who put the ensemble together.

REWRITING THE MODERNIST SURFACE

That wallpaper was capable of launching this kind of triple assault on the autonomy of the object, the artist, and high culture may help to explain why Greenberg ultimately did away with it. For the publication of *Art and Culture* (1961), Greenberg's own selection of his critical writings, he rewrote many of his earlier essays to make them more continuous with and expressive of his later concerns. In his preface, Greenberg briefly explains the motive for this revision: "This book is not intended as a completely faithful record of my activity as a critic. Not only has much been altered, but much more has been left out than put in. I would not deny being one of those critics who educate themselves in public, but I see no reason why all the haste and waste involved in my self-education should be preserved in a book."[42]

---

[41]Kenneth E. Silver, "Modes of Disclosure: The Construction of Gay Identity and the Rise of Pop Art," in *Hand-Painted Pop: American Art in Transition, 1955-62*, ed. Russell Ferguson (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1992), 202.

[42]Clement Greenberg, *Art and Culture*, vii.

Even at the time, reviewers of the book lamented this decision to treat his youthful positions as unimportant stages in his critical evolution, to be discarded in favor of his mature formulations. Jack Kroll, writing in *Art News*, noted that the book "does not do its author full justice,"[43] and wished for a more comprehensive collection, along the lines of James Agee's writings on film. Hilton Kramer's review of the book made the same complaint

> In bringing together his first collection of essays, Mr. Greenberg has not given us, as many people expected he would, a chronicle of the forties and fifties in the manner of Edmund Wilson....*Art and Culture* contains thirty-seven essays, many of them generously revised, and is less a history of its author's opinions than a catalogue of his present views. One must respect Mr. Greenberg's decision to cast this work in the present tense, as it were, but it does nothing to alter the fact that the history of art in New York during the last two decades will not be complete until a full chronicle of his essays and reviews has been collected.[44]

These reviews make clear that even at the time it came out, *Art and Culture* was felt to be an excessively partial view of his criticism. As the references to the collected writings of Agee and Wilson make clear, there were existing models for such anthologies, and they were expected to be more inclusive and encyclopedic. Kramer in particular stresses that Greenberg cannot justify the discarding of earlier positions as surmounted stages in the evolution of his thought: Greenberg's early positions have value in and of themselves as historical documents. Given the critics' expectations that Greenberg would provide a representative survey of his thought, the decision to remove the evidence of his earlier positions and to 'cast this work in the present tense' takes on added significance.

When Greenberg revised "The Pasted-Paper Revolution" (1958) for publication in *Art and Culture*, he retitled it "Collage." Thus he purged both the incendiary and multivalent 'revolution' *and* the specific material that forged that revolution, ('pasted paper' was now discarded in favor of the arty 'collage.') These dramatic changes to the original

---

[43]Jack Kroll, "Some Greenberg Circles," *Art News* 61 (March 1962), 35.
[44]Kramer, 60-1.

title suggest that heavy pressures were brought to bear sometime between 1958, when this article was first written, and 1961, when it was reprinted in *Art and Culture*.

As we might expect, certain key changes are also made to the body of the essay. First, Greenberg subdues his earlier proposition that modernist flatness hinges on wallpaper. The overt reason for this change is that Greenberg is tactfully trying to muddy the issue of whether Picasso or Braque invented cubism. But as we read further, we note that Greenberg also tones down both the emphasis on the literal flatness of cubism, introducing the terminology of 'depicted' versus 'literal' flatness to describe the cubist project. He also muffles the particular significance of decoration in the cubist aesthetic. In "The Pasted-Paper Revolution," cubism's monumentality came precisely from its productive cross-wiring of the structural with the decorative, in its ability to picture these as a unity rather than as an opposition. In the closing paragraph of "Collage," the decorative appears only once as the source of cubism's unity, now sacrificed for a contrast between monumentality and size. In other words, those particular qualities (the flat, the decorative) that the strategic use of wallpaper promoted are de-emphasized along with wallpaper itself. So by the time of *Art and Culture*, wallpaper had become too grave a danger to be acknowledged, even in the limited and strategic manner Greenberg had initially proposed.

As a result, the resolutely flat and resistant surface of the picture plane, 'surrender' to which had formed the very heart of the modernist project, begins to mutate into something else. In the later Greenberg, the surface of a modernist painting does not dwell upon the physical fact of its own materiality:

> The flatness towards which Modernist painting orients itself can never be an absolute flatness. The heightened sensitivity of the picture plane may no longer permit sculptural illusion, or *trompe l'oeil*, but it does and must permit optical illusion. The first mark made on a canvas destroys its literal and utter flatness, and the result of the marks made on it by an artist like Mondrian is still a kind of illusion that suggests a kind of third dimension. Only now it is a strictly pictorial, strictly optical third dimension. The Old Masters created an illusion of space in depth that one could imagine oneself walking into, but the analogous

> illusion created by the Modernist painter can only be seen into; can be traveled through, literally or figuratively, only with the eye."[45]

Although the surface still receives a great deal of attention here, it now transcends the fact of its flatness in order to produce a 'third dimension,' albeit a 'strictly pictorial, strictly optical one.' Crucially, this 'optical third dimension' is understood to exist at the expense of the 'literal and utter flatness' of the picture plane, which Greenberg now describes as 'destroyed' by 'the first mark made on a canvas.' The 'destruction' of the material support that Greenberg effects through his later criticism is ironic, even poignant, in light of his early, impassioned defense of painted canvas that refuses to turn into illusions of any kind, instead remaining deliciously itself.

With intense concentration, Greenberg now blinds himself to the picture 'as a physical object': "Modernist painting, with its more explicit decorativeness, does call attention to the physical properties of the medium, but only in order to have these transcend themselves. Like any other kind of picture, a modernist one succeeds when its identity as a picture, and as pictorial experience, shuts out the awareness of it as a physical object."[46] After years of enjoying the kinds of pictures that revel in their materiality, Greenberg now shuts his eyes to their physical constitution out of pigment and canvas. This leaves him with what is less a paradox than a simple incoherence, as in this description of Olitski's painting: "Together with color, [the grainy surface] contrives an illusion of depth that somehow extrudes all suggestions of depth back to the picture's surface; it is as if that surface, in all its literalness, were enlarged to contain a world of color and light differentiations impossible to flatness but which yet manage not to violate flatness."[47]

This turn away from literal flatness finds its fullest expression in the work of his student and follower Michael Fried. It is in Fried's famous manifesto, "Art and Objecthood" (1967), that the distinction between the literal surface of a canvas, and a transcendent pictorial space which springs off from that surface, is completely articulated.

---

[45]Greenberg, "Modernist Painting" (1960), 4: 90.
[46]Greenberg, "Picasso at Seventy-Five" (1957), 4: 33.
[47]Greenberg, "Introduction to Jules Olitski at the Venice Biennale" (1966), 4: 230.

It seems possible that this shift might not have become so dramatically apparent if it hadn't been for Minimalism. But when Minimalism strides into town, its duel with modernism is fought as a conflict between a literal and a transcendent surface. "Art and Objecthood" is therefore a key text for gauging what is at stake in the elaboration of a transcendent flatness over and against a literal flatness. Focusing on Fried's essay without considering Donald Judd's "Specific Objects," the corresponding Minimalist manifesto, might seem unfair. But I am not concerned with doing justice to the debate so much as understanding why the transcendent surface is made to bear the weight of the entire modernist project at this time.

The kind of painting that Fried champions in "Art and Objecthood" is always aware of its status as an object, but it is driven to overcome its material limitations by creating an optical, pictorial space that draws the eye in. Paradoxically, the only means of creating this space are in fact the physical indicators of objecthood (flat surface, shape, pigment). Fried does concede that the modernist tradition could be read differently, but this is the only artistic project he is willing to endorse with the name of modernism. The counter-history proposed by minimalism is in his view a misreading of the tradition, one with disastrous consequences for the future of art:

> Roughly, the more nearly assimilable to objects certain advanced painting had come to seem, the more the entire history of painting since Manet could be understood — delusively, I believe — as consisting in the progressive (though ultimately inadequate) revelation of its essential objecthood, and the more urgent became the need for modernist painting to make explicit its conventional — specifically, its pictorial — essence by defeating or suspending its own objecthood through the medium of shape.[48]

Although Fried gives both minimalism and sixties modernism the same family tree, he regards minimalism as a monstrous offshoot, a branch so diseased that it threatens the integrity of the entire organism of art.

What modernism offers us, through this paradoxical creation of an optical space out of the most limited of physical conditions, is a burst of pure artistic sensibility "that one experiences as a kind of instantaneousness: as though if only one were infinitely more

---

[48]Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Artforum* 5 (June 1967), 20.

acute, a single infinitely brief instant would be long enough to see everything, to experience the work in all its depth and fullness, to be forever convinced by it."[49] Minimalism, by contrast, deprives us of this kind of transcendent experience, anchoring us firmly in everyday space and time. By remaining obdurately physical—an object in the room with us rather than a magic carpet that carries the eye into an immaterial space—the minimalist object tethers us to our bodies and to the physical world we inhabit. Fried develops a pair of terms to describe these two different experiences of art. His positive term is 'presentness,' in which we are detached from our bodies, floating in an immaterial realm. The negative term is 'presence,' which refers to an actual relationship between the art object and the viewer, a relationship that remains embodied within the familiar coordinates of space and time rather than leaping beyond them into a timeless aesthetic realm.

Defenders of minimalism typically describe this 'presence,' or physical relationship between two bodies, as the phenomenological character of the work. By emphasizing this relationship between the body of the art object and the body of the viewer, minimalist work makes difficult the experience of transcendence that Fried valorizes. For this reason Fried detests 'presence,' and the 'anthropomorphism' of the art objects that strive to produce it. This likening of the minimalist art object to the human body is a strong metaphorical undercurrent of the essay: by the closing page, there are few bones left uncrushed in Fried's attack on the anthropomorphic body of minimalist art. Fried describes the minimalists' take on David Smith and Anthony Caro as "a characterization whose teeth, imaginary to begin with, have just been pulled"[50] and writes that "it was the need to break the fingers of this [theatrical] grip that made objecthood an issue for modernist painting."[51]

The violence of these metaphors suggests how high the stakes are for Fried: modernist art is the last remaining sphere in which we can transcend our everyday lives. We are left to choose between modernism and the same old hum-drum world of material

---

[49]Ibid., 22.
[50]Ibid., 19.
[51]Ibid., 20.

constraint, in art as well as in life. However much 'surface' initially seemed to indicate the importance of the specific material parameters of painting, in Fried's summation it ultimately flies free of those bonds to serve instead as the generator of a moment of pure transcendence. Seen in this light, neither Fried's references to evangelical religion nor his ecstatic tone should surprise us. This withdrawal from the physical surface places us quite firmly within a quasi-religious refuge. Art has become the last sanctuary of spiritual values in a capitalist world. In other words, we find ourselves in the middle of what Marxist critics would identify as the bourgeois ideology of art: the belief that art is detached from the stresses of the social world, that it represents genuine freedom from social constraint.[52] The position consolidated in "Art and Objecthood" is in this respect diametrically opposed to the one advanced in "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," where Greenberg mentioned this myth only to dismiss it: "No culture can develop without a social basis, without a source of stable income. And in the case of the avant-garde, this was provided by an elite among the ruling class of that society from which it assumed itself to be cut off, but to which it has always remained attached by an umbilical cord of gold."[53]

In this regard it is instructive to contrast the famous closing lines of both essays, which possess a similar epigrammatic force. "Today we no longer look toward socialism for a new culture—as inevitably as one will appear, once we do have socialism. Today we look to socialism *simply* for the preservation of whatever living culture we have right now," writes Greenberg.[54] Art for the early Greenberg exists in an intimate connection with the social world, whereas art for Fried represents a temporary escape from the material forces that determine our lives: "We are all literalists most or all of our lives. Presentness is grace."[55] These opposing beliefs lead Greenberg to call for socialism in order to preserve art, while Fried wants to maintain art as a refuge from capitalist society.

---

[52]Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1974), trans. Michael Shaw, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

[53]Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" (1939), 1: 10.

[54]Ibid.,1: 22.

[55]Fried, 23.

FORFEITING MATERIALISM

How can we account for this about-face, this shift from seeing art in terms of engagement with the material world to seeing it as a dream of freedom from material restraint? We cannot precisely coordinate Greenberg's loss of faith in revolutionary possibility with his shift from a literal to a transcendent surface for modernist painting. But I do see these two phenomena as linked, the signifier 'materialism' serving to switch us back and forth between the social and aesthetic levels.[56] There is a rough coincidence between Greenberg's early and explicit historical materialism and his early foregrounding of the material support as the foundation of painting's investigations into its nature. And as Greenberg's Marxism grows more embattled and more diffuse, he becomes willing to give up the literal surface as fundamental and to treat it instead as a launching pad for a 'purely optical' illusionism.

Before turning to my own reading of this transformation, I want to acknowledge the strengths and limits of one other attempt to read Pop art in the terms of Greenbergian modernism. In a short critique of Fried's "Art and Objecthood," Rosalind Krauss uses Fried's terminology to describe the painterly strategies of Pop art. She reviews Fried's demands for a optically illusionistic surface that transports the viewer out of bodily space and time, and concludes that Warhol's painting comes very close to satisfying them:

> The last place that 'Art and Objecthood' would look for these effects is in the world of pop art, and yet in Warhol's screen paintings (just to take one example), with their grainy overlays of Day-Glo color separations carefully slid off register, we encounter a treatment of pictorial surface that constantly ingests or eradicates the objects it supposedly proffers, forcing them to hover in an unlocatable nonspace....The effulgence of Warhol's surfaces, their floating fields of acrid, smarting color, or the glassy passages of matter stretched beyond comprehensible shape in James Rosenquist's pictorial compartments or the open, weightless suspensions of Lichtenstein's Ben-Day dots—these

---

[56]Yve-Alain Bois also attempt to understand Greenberg's reversal on the question of surface—his dramatic exchange of a material surface for a 'purely optical' one—and to correlate this transformation with Greenberg's loss of Marxist faith. "Les amendements de Greenberg," *Les cahiers du musée national d'art moderne* 45/46 (Automne/Hiver 1993), 52-60.

> constitute in their own way a parallel opticality [to the one advocated by Fried].[57]

Krauss tucks modernist painting in with Pop art: in her account, these strange bedfellows share not only a common aesthetic, but a (reactionary) political stance as well.

Krauss deduces these politics by observing that the viewing experience that Fried valorizes is the same viewing experience courted by advertising imagery. In both cases, the beholder is disembodied and feels magically dependent upon and completed by the object in view. Rather than resisting the ideological blandishments of our everyday world, Fried's brand of modernism seeks the same kind of relation to objects that we find in the sphere of advertising. By refusing to let the viewer float free of the body, it is Minimalist art that opposes the regime that modernist painting implicitly supports.

Krauss's argument is a tour de force of redescription, but her primary goal in the essay from which this passage is taken is to establish guilt (for modernism) by association (with Pop). She therefore elides the differences between Pop art and advertising imagery, assuming that Pop is straightforwardly complicit with consumer ideology. Modernist painting can then be indicted on the same charge, based on its similar address to the viewer. My emphasis is somewhat different, as for me it is the meaning of the Pop surface that is in question. Even if, as Krauss argues, their version of modernism is covertly complicit with consumerism, the later Greenberg and Fried are disdainful of the literal flatness of Warhol's Pop art, along with the leveling of the high-low hierarchy it enacts. This rejection cannot help us a great deal in and of itself, however, since we are trying to account for why literal flatness had to be disdained to begin with.

Given that this shift is gradually effected over a period of two decades, and only definitively articulated in the work of Michael Fried, we cannot isolate a single moment of rupture in Greenberg's vision.[58] But we can work backwards, and trace a series of

---

[57]Rosalind Krauss, "Theories of Art after Minimalism and Pop," in *Discussions in Contemporary Culture, Number 1*, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1987), 61.

[58]Carter Ratcliff proposes that in "Shape as Form: Frank Stella's New Paintings" (1966), Fried outgrows his role as Greenberg's disciple and tries to produce a competing account of modernism. According to Ratcliff, his means of both invoking and going beyond his predecessor is the conception of an

reversals and returns in Greenberg's thought. Already in "Towards a Newer Laocoon" we can see that Greenberg is beginning to feel that his commitment to art and his commitment to socialism are ever so slightly incompatible:

> Purists make extravagant claims for art, because usually they value it much more than any one else does. For the same reason they are much more solicitous about it. A great deal of purism is the translation of an extreme solicitude, an anxiousness as to the fate of art, a concern for its identity. We must respect this. When the purist insists upon excluding 'literature' and subject matter from plastic art, now and in the future, the most we can charge him with off-hand is an unhistorical attitude. It is quite easy to show that abstract art like every other cultural phenomenon reflects the social and other circumstances of the age in which its creators live, and that there is nothing inside art itself, disconnected from history, which compels it to go in one direction or another. But it is not so easy to reject the purist's assertion that the best of contemporary plastic art is abstract.[59]

Greenberg's sympathy with the purist is palpable here; we can already feel how seriously he shares the purist's "anxiousness as to the fate of art." Moreover he makes the lack of historical understanding a simple matter of "attitude," as if reassuring the purist that a lack of historical consciousness is the merest rather than the most devastating of Marxist objections; this lack is after all "quite easy" for the historian to correct, that "quite" serving to deprecate further the project of historicizing abstract art. This is not exactly what we expect from a Marxist critic; it sounds, even at this early date, suspiciously like an apology for aesthetic purism.

Yet the task of historicizing abstract art is exactly the one Greenberg assigns himself in the essay "Abstract Art" (1944), which he opens in this way: "The full significance of the revolution in Western painting during the last sixty years will not become apparent for some time. But that part of its meaning which concerns the concrete medium itself is already plain. It is only necessary to put it in historical perspective."[60] Here the historical perspective is not optional but necessary in order to comprehend "the revolution in Western painting." And Greenberg does indeed provide a stunning, if swift, reading of Western

---

'exclusively visual mode of illusionism.' In other words, Fried's transcendent flatness is partly borrowed from and partly antithetical to Greenbergian flatness. "Art Criticism: Other Minds, Other Eyes: Part VI (1961-73)," *Art International*, 51.

[59]Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoon" (1940), 1: 23.

[60]Greenberg, "Abstract Art," (1944), 1: 199.

painting from the Renaissance to the twentieth century in social and historical terms. In this essay Greenberg is comfortable with connecting cultural projects such as philosophy and art to a fairly specific set of material conditions. His 'extreme solicitude' and 'concern' had lessened enough for the moment to permit an historical account.

Another moment of hesitation came in 1944, in Greenberg's description of the complicated trajectory of Eugène Delacroix's career:

> He painted what in an illustrative sense is still the most revolutionary of all pictures, *Liberty Guiding the People*—in which he, preeminently painter of the exotic and the historical, introduced a top hat for the first time; yet he was chronically bored by politics, sold his pictures to the state with peculiar success, and was richly honored by the Second Empire. (There is a plausible supposition that Delacroix was an illegitimate son of Talleyrand.) And nevertheless he was a man of 1848 for whom, as for Baudelaire, the anti-climaxes of 1848-52 liquidated a certain emotional investment in current history. (Sad to relate, for a Socialist like myself, the conviction both Delacroix and Baudelaire acquired from then on, that art was the only field of meaningful achievement left, redounded to the great benefit of their practice.)[61]

As Greenberg charts the vicissitudes of Delacroix's political views, he inserts two intriguing parentheticals. The first reads like a masculine version of the 'umbilical cord of gold.' The imputed paternal link between Talleyrand and Delacroix is used as a figure for the fundamental connection between the activities of this avant-garde artist and the social and economic basis of his work in the bourgeois regime. This is a central theme of "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," Greenberg's demonstration of the links between forms of culture (avant-garde and kitsch) and forms of economic organization (industrial capitalism). But it is not until the second parenthesis that we begin to suspect that Delacroix's life is being told as a history of Greenberg's own changing critical stance: now we learn the 'sad' lesson taught by Delacroix's oeuvre — art improves when divorced from politics. This remark is difficult to read. Is Greenberg still speaking from the position he says he is ("a Socialist like myself"); or is he, like Delacroix and Baudelaire (not bad company, after all), experiencing a conversion to the belief that "art was the ony field of meaningful achievement left"? Is some part of him, not fully described by either label, lamenting in

---

[61]Greenberg, "Review of an Exhibition of Eugène Delacroix" (1944), 1: 242.

advance his loss of socialist faith during the "anti-climaxes" of his equivalent to 1848, the second World War and immediate post-war years? Is some part of him justifying his conversion on grounds that he will write better once he has left the political arena behind?

I leave these questions open, simply noting that in both of these passages, we see the marks of a struggle between two voices, the "Socialist" and the "purist." This rapid oscillation between two voices is a striking feature of the earlier criticism. The struggle staged here between social and aesthetic commitments will, over the years, be exchanged for struggles internal to his aesthetic system. Greenberg comes to understand art itself not in terms of its social function but as a phenomenon that is necessarily (in this historical moment) isolated from the social world:

> So I come at last to what I offer as an embracing and perdurable definition of Modernism: that it consists in the continuing endeavor to stem the decline of aesthetic standards threatened by the relative democratization of culture under industrialism; that the overriding and innermost logic of Modernism is to maintain the levels of the past in the face of an opposition that hadn't been present in the past....It also belongs to my definition of Modernism that the continuing effort to maintain standards and levels has brought about the widening recognition that art, that aesthetic experience no longer needs to be justified in other terms than its own, that art is an end in itself and that the aesthetic is an autonomous value. It could now be acknowledged that art doesn't have to teach, doesn't have to celebrate or glorify anybody or anything, doesn't have to advance causes; that it has become free to distance itself from religion, politics, and even morality. All it has to do is be good as art.[62]

As cultural standards decline, modernism's sole task becomes staving off the complete collapse of quality. With this huge task confronting it, modernism is exempted from teaching or advancing causes: 'all it has to do is be good as art,' which is hard enough given the cultural climate. As modernism grows ever more threatened, less is expected of it. So the later Greenberg comes to formulate modernism more and more in terms of its autonomy and purity, the language of which is largely absent from his earlier writings.

The status of purity in these later texts is itself contested, however. Greenberg felt he had been misunderstood on this point and added an explanatory postscript to "Modernist Painting" in 1978 when the essay was reprinted in an aesthetics anthology. In the

---

[62] Greenberg, "Modern and Post-Modern," *Arts Magazine* 54 (February 1980), 66.

postscript, Greenberg protested against the stereotype of himself as the champion of purity, escalating the scare quotes around 'pure' in his essay into full-blown italics in his rejoinder. Purity was not to be taken uncritically: it was, in Greenberg's words, a 'useful illusion,' and should be construed as no more and no less than that. Greenberg further offers us an explanation of how we might have become so confused as to his meaning—we are, 'shockingly,' reading ourselves into Greenberg, writing our story as his (much as he did with Delacroix). I hear, in Greenberg's rejoinder, a genuine frustration at being misconstrued; at the same time, I read "Modernist Painting" and see purity not as a 'useful illusion,' scare-quoted and under suspicion, but as a prescriptive ideal, a standard by which art is judged successful or not. This incomprehension on both sides is a feature of the critical exchange surrounding Greenberg's "Complaints of an Art Critic," published in *Artforum* in October 1967. The piece provoked a flurry of hostile letters, and a series of dismayed (or disingenuous?) rejoinders from Greenberg.

Too often the dramatic change in Greenberg's thought has been regarded as an entirely personal surrender, a simple failure of Marxist backbone. Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock's essay is a useful corrective, as the authors explain how Greenberg's aesthetic purism could have grown out of a Marxist context:

> On to a Trotskyist claim for a special freedom for art, and for art as a form of cognition of the world and as a necessary precondition for the building of a new consciousness, Greenberg mapped one of the strategies of the historic avant-garde, 'art for art's sake,' the steeping of painting in its own cause. In this transaction the momentary specificity of Trotsky's revolutionary perspective and Marxist vocabulary — some might say Trotsky's millenarianism — was erased. Opposition to prescribed subjects or functions for art — anti-Stalinism — was matched by a claim for the relative autonomy of artistic practices.[63]

This formulation has the value of seeing Greenberg's movement toward purism not as a decisive break but as a phenomenon that developed out of his Marxist background. It is also helpful in that it uses a vocabulary internal to Marxism to chart this development. As a

---

[63]Fred Orton and Griselda Pollock, "*Avant-Gardes* and Partisans Reviewed," *Art History* 4 (September 1981), 325.

blanket statement, however, it is inaccurate. Greenberg's understanding of the cultural situation, for one thing, is not limited to an anti-Stalinist polemic. While his views are undoubtedly related to Trotsky's, his analysis of the cultural situation grows organically out of his observations of American culture. Moreover his preferred mode of discussion is diachronic (he is fond of tracing Western culture from the Paleolithic to the present), while Orton and Pollock seem to suggest that his thought is principally generated out of oppositions between the Soviet Union and the United States.

Orton and Pollock also imply that responsibility for this 'erasure' rests solely with Greenberg as an individual. But in a strong sense, this change is an historical artifact of the Cold War. Greenberg was a member of a whole generation of Marxist critics who disavowed their early political beliefs during the 1950s and began to take up increasingly right-wing positions. Alan M. Wald's *The New York Intellectuals* details the activities of this generation before and after the war, providing a compelling picture of the pressures that induced one after another committed Marxist intellectual to give up his beliefs.[64] Intellectually, these figures began their work as anti-Stalinist Marxists. After World War II, however, this position became increasingly difficult to maintain: "In the Cold War atmosphere the careful distinctions that the New York intellectuals had once made between criticizing Communism from the left and criticizing Communism from the right tended in some cases to dissolve into epithets that equated the Soviet Union with Nazi Germany: 'Red Fascism,' Communazis,' and the ambiguous term 'totalitarianism.'"[65] As Germany and the Soviet Union became increasingly assimilated to one another in public discourse, even a strong anti-Stalinist position became too difficult to maintain. Instead, Wald describes how one after another of these figures capitulated to a general anti-communism: "Becoming firmly convinced that the Soviet Union would behave as had Nazi Germany led

---

[64]Alan M. Wald, *The New York Intellectuals: The Rise and Decline of the Anti-Stalinist Left from the 1930s to the 1980s*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987).

[65]Ibid., 268. Wald proposes that Hannah Arendt's 1951 *The Origins of Totalitarianism* was a crucial text in shifting emphasis away from orthodox Marxist analysis and toward 'totalitarianism' as a category of understanding. He writes that her book unintentionally contributed to the confusion between the Soviet Union and Germany, and the attendant rejection of Marxist beliefs, 269.

to support of U.S. imperialism (recast as 'Western democracy' and 'the free world') as the only practical deterrent to Stalinism."[66]

It is crucial to understand Greenberg's transition from Marxism to aesthetic purism in relation to the general rightward drift of his milieu. (Seen in the context of his contemporaries, his complete flight from the social hardly seems the worst alternative.) But while it is true that an entire generation of Trotskyite anti-Stalinists metamorphosed into liberal anti-communists, it seems to me that we can specify Greenberg's particular motivations more closely. We have already seen that wallpaper as a source of decorative flatness was lost in the transition from "The Pasted-Paper Revolution" to "Collage"; now our goal is to diagnose the motivation for this aesthetic shift by looking at "The Plight of Our Culture," a book review of T.S. Eliot's *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (1949). Originally published in *Commentary* in the summer of 1953, it was drastically condensed and revised for publication in *Art and Culture* in 1961. The essay's original title was "The Plight of Our Culture," but when it was reprinted in *Art and Culture*, it received the more totalizing and stark title, "The Plight of Culture." The differences between the two versions help us to pinpoint what happened to Greenberg's thought during the intervening years.

THE DISAPPEARING MIDDLEBROW

Greenberg's earliest model of culture, indicated in the title of "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," (1939) is structured around two terms, the opposing poles of high and low. In the 1953 "The Plight of Our Culture" we find that he has connected these poles to create a continuum. The new term 'middlebrow' allows Greenberg to create a more complex analysis of American culture than he was capable of in 1939.[67] The term also provides a

---

[66]Ibid., 270.

[67]The term is new to Greenberg as a category of analysis; it had already appeared in Dwight MacDonald's "A Theory of Mass Culture" (1953). Joan Shelley Rubin credits MacDonald with coining the term in "Between Culture and Consumption: The Mediations of the Middlebrow," in *The Power of Culture: Critical Essays in American History*, ed. Richard Wightman Fox and T.J. Jackson Lears (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 163.

new focal point for his anxieties as to the fate of high culture: "There is a vast distance between high culture and lowbrow—vaster, perhaps, than anything similar in the past—but it is covered without apparent break by the infinite shadings and gradings of middlebrow culture, which is defined roughly by the fact that, though its audience shrinks from the trials of highbrow culture, it nonetheless refuses to let its culture be simply a matter of entertainment and diversion on the lowbrow order."[68] While a gulf still separates high culture from low, they appear to be closer together because the middlebrow fills the distance between them. This massive expansion of middlebrow culture means that it now poses a greater threat to high culture than kitsch: "It would seem therefore that it is middlebrow, not lowbrow, culture that does most nowadays to cut the social ground from under high culture. The middlebrow aspect is taken more and more for culture as such, for representative culture, even by educated people who still regard culture as a matter of personal parts instead of as a means merely of asserting status."[69]

In 1953 Greenberg could imagine that the severity of this cultural crisis could "bring altogether new factors to bear, the effects of which would be ill-described in terms of 'rise' and 'fall.'"[70] He concludes the 1953 version of the essay:

> An utter pessimism can be just as banal and sterile as an utter optimism, just as remote from reality in all that manifoldness and contradictoriness without which it would be less than real. Reality is what we are concerned with in discussing the plight of our times, not in order to praise it, but for the sake of truth, the lack of which will do genuine culture more harm than any number of jukeboxes.[71]

Greenberg's strategy here is a double, and contradictory, one. On the one hand, he wants to attack the middlebrow, as here represented by Eliot's book. Greenberg opened with a devastating recital of Eliot's reliance on journalistic clichés, providing numerous examples of the kind of intellectual threat that the mindless middlebrow poses to high culture. This

---

[68]Greenberg, "The Plight of our Culture" (1953), Vol. 3: *Affirmations and Refusals, 1950-1956*, 133.

[69]Ibid., 3: 140.

[70]Ibid., 3: 142.

[71]Ibid., 3: 152.

kind of middlebrow cant imperils high culture more 'than any number of jukeboxes,' in other words, low culture.

Greenberg still wants to preserve the possibility that the expanding middlebrow could lead to positive change. So for example, in response to Eliot's assertion that culture is in decline, Greenberg rejoined:

> Culture has lost much on its higher levels, but may there not have been some compensation on those where the multitude find their 'characteristic activities and interests?'
>
> Such questions are not easy to answer least of all with 'confidence.' The problem is far more complicated than Eliot actually does acknowledge, however much he seems to do so. And in its complication may lie reasons for hope as well as despair.[72]

Here Greenberg disputes the ease of Eliot's assertion that culture is in decline, and furthermore questions his reduction of culture to high culture. The social upheavals produced by technological change have been detrimental to high culture, Greenberg agrees, but he disagrees that this is the only yardstick by which to measure the 'plight of culture.' In the drastic changes in class structure—specifically, the expanding middle—Greenberg finds 'hope as well as despair.'

During the ensuing years, it would seem, Greenberg lost the ability to see any positive potential in the middle level of culture, which was simultaneously growing and for that reason declining in sophistication and seriousness. Thus in the 1961 version, we find Greenberg answering Eliot's charge of cultural decline rather differently:

> Eliot's assertion is not only exaggerated; it is also unnecessary. Had he confined himself to saying that standards were in decline on the highest levels of disinterested culture one would not have to take leave of common sense in order to assent, as I myself would do (though no better able than he to set up a 'permanent standard' of comparison). And granted that there has been a certain improvement on the middle levels of culture, I am sure that we would all agree that no amount of improvement there can compensate for deterioration on its uppermost levels.[73]

Here Greenberg has moved away from the sense of possibility generated by the burgeoning 'middle levels of culture.' He does so decisively: where before he ridiculed Eliot's

---

[72]Ibid., 3: 128.

[73]"The Plight of Culture" (1961), *Art and Culture*, 25.

'certainty' about his judgment, he now professes to believe that we 'would all agree' that the status of high culture is the only important measure of what is happening in our culture.

In fact, the middlebrow has almost entirely vanished from the 1961 version of the essay. The lengthy and brilliant analysis of American culture in terms of low, middle and highbrow levels is gone, as is the assertion that high culture has more to fear from middlebrow culture than from any other source. And instead of decrying the middlebrow character of Eliot's book in his conclusion, Greenberg writes instead that "nothing in these ideas suggests anything that could be sensibly hoped for in the present or near future. But at least it helps if we do not have to despair of the ultimate consequences for culture of industrialism. And it also helps if we do not have to stop thinking at the point where Spengler and Toynbee and Eliot do."[74] The 'sterile pessimism' Greenberg complained of in his 1953 essay seems to have overtaken him here. He seems unable to entertain any positive role for the growing realm of middlebrow culture. In fact, he does not even acknowledge its existence, to the extent that he no longer attacks Eliot's book for its middlebrow idiocy, simply lamenting his limited vision of culture.

Greenberg has, by 1961, forfeited the complex dynamic of his three-term, or continuum model of culture by tucking the middlebrow out of sight and focusing with intensity upon the high cultural term. This restricted viewpoint is characteristic of his late career as a critic. For example, in his discussion of "Modern and Post-Modern," (1980), Greenberg now maintains that the greatest threat to culture comes from within the public for 'advanced art': "It used to be the easily identifiable philistines who did the threatening. Now the threats to aesthetic standards, to quality, come from closer to home, from within as it were, from friends of advanced art."[75] The class-specificity of the 'middlebrow' is

---

[74]Ibid., 33.

[75]"Modern and Post-Modern" (1980), 66. Here Greenberg insists that the high ought to trickle down to improve the low: "When the highest levels of quality are no longer upheld in practice or taste or appreciation, then the lower levels sink lower. That's the way it's always been, and I don't see that way changing now," 66. In other places he claims that the low surges up to corrupt the high: "The truly new horror of our times is not, perhaps, totalitarianism as such, but the vulgarity it is able to instill in places of power—the official vulgarity, the certified vulgarity:

From low to high doth dissolution climb,

discarded in favor of the 'philistine,' who apparently could belong to any class. But Greenberg even asserts that 'philistines' are no longer the problem—high art is now threatened most by its 'friends.' Moreover the 'lowest level' of culture mentioned in this essay is that of 'minor painting.' For the most part this shift from considering culture as a whole to considering only high culture has been read rather unsympathetically. The later Greenberg has been treated as an uncompromising elitist who betrayed his Marxist roots.

It seems to me, however, that the later Greenberg's myopic focus on elite culture could not be the result of any casual shedding of a Marxist skin. Judging from the evidence of "The Plight of Our Culture" and its revision, he seems to have felt the threat of middlebrow intensely. Indeed, the rigidity and dogmatism of his later writings on abstract art are best explained not by a cavalier rejection of Marxist views, but by an intensification of them, combined with a paralysing hopelessness about the possibilities of political change. Greenberg is often pictured as a thinker who tossed away his beliefs in order to wander blissfully through the Elysian fields of abstract painting. But the constricted tone and range of his later criticism suggest instead a critic who, under house arrest, confines himself to admiring the four walls that surround him.

One social crisis that provoked this critical ossification was the increasing encroachment of the middlebrow on the high cultural domain. If in 1953 he could see this crisis as potentially liberatory, by 1961 he was no longer able to regard it with such optimism. The circumstances were bleak enough that Greenberg not only surrendered his ability to analyze culture as a whole, but he also incapacitated his aesthetic theory by shifting its emphasis from material flatness to a flat three-dimensionality. Flatness remained a central term, but only as the banal support for an immaterial and abstract experience of 'presentness.' Greenberg, it seems to me, would not have relinquished so much unless under extreme duress.

And sink from high to low...." "Irrelevance versus Irresponsibility" (1948), 2: 235.

The publication of *Art and Culture* coincides closely with the advent of Warhol's career as a pop artist. And it is into this very breach between the literal and the transcendent, as imperfectly mirrored by the division between the middle and the high, that his pop art charges. At the same time that Warhol reasserts the material surface of the canvas, he reconfigures the cultural field once again as a continuum between low, middle and high forms. At least part of the critical difficulty in dealing with Warhol's decorative and cosmetic style is related to the distinctly feminine connotations of these tropes for image-making. When such stylistic surfaces are aligned with icons of mass culture, the feminized Others of elite culture, Warhol's fate as an exemplar of superficiality is virtually sealed.[76]

But if we make use of the feminist, anti-Platonic framework I have been developing here, we are able to read that superficiality somewhat differently. Take, for example, *'65 Liz* [Figure 48]. This painting consists of two large silver panels. On the left is a monochrome, modernist canvas; on the right is an identically painted canvas with the image of Elizabeth Taylor silkscreened on it. By placing these two panels next to each other, Warhol suggests that there is a relationship between the two. However distant modernist painting may seem from the world of Elizabeth Taylor, both cultural domains share a love of artifice, and a delight in the appearances of the visible world. From the world of high art to the world of celebrity glamor, we must learn to appreciate what is given on the surface.

---

[76]The best discussion of the gendered aspect of high/low cultural division is still Andreas Huyssen, "Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other," in *After The Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986): 44-64.

Chapter Three

STAYING ON THE SURFACE
A Formalist Approach

Although hardly an exhaustive account of Warhol's formal strategies, the preceding chapters have treated two important aspects of Warhol's paintings — his use of color and his use of repetition — in historical context. Here the focus shifts to the implications of Warhol's investment in the surface for the act of interpretation. A cluster of methodological issues can now be addressed, namely, the debate over the relevance of authorial intention, the rivalry between formalist and iconographical schools of interpretation, and the question of whether popular culture deserves the attention given to more elite forms. Looking at these familiar issues through the lens of our surface/depth paradigm will enable us to see the extent to which these disparate questions are generated out of a shared distrust of the surface.

Since Warhol's art has proved notoriously resistant to interpretation, dealing with the way his critics have employed the language of surface and depth allows us to explain Warhol's achievement in new ways and to sketch out a fresh approach to these general interpretive problems. Thomas Crow's "Saturday Disasters: Trace and Reference in Early Warhol," will receive extended scrutiny here because it is the most significant recent attempt to interpret Warhol's paintings. In order to produce his account of Warhol's art as meaningful, Crow finds it necessary to posit a series of depths behind Warhol's surfaces. Thus he attributes a referential depth to the photograph, and a humanistic depth to both Marilyn Monroe and Andy Warhol. The first half of this chapter traces these related positions through Crow's essay. This is not done to fault Crow for his bias against the surface, for as we have seen, it is possible to see the entire field of Warhol studies as structured by this metaphor. Rather, this close analysis is necessary because Crow's essay has become something of a touchstone for Warhol scholarship, generating new

iconographically motivated interpretations which by and large rest on Crow's formulation of the surface/depth opposition. In the second half of the chapter, I articulate an interpretation that does not rely upon imagining something behind or beyond the surface. Instead I focus on the way Warhol's work pushes us toward a recognition of the surface as a potential locus of meaning.

MARILYN AS A DISASTER

Crow begins by considering Warhol's images of Marilyn Monroe, which, to the best of our knowledge, were begun in the weeks immediately following her suicide in August 1962. Monroe's death allows Crow to connect her with Elizabeth Taylor, who suffered from a life-threatening illness in 1961, and to Jackie in mourning for her murdered husband in late 1963. Crow goes on to argue that the association of these celebrities with death relates them to Warhol's pictures of car crashes, race riots, tunafish disasters, electric chairs, gangster funerals and suicides, and that we can therefore recognize a consistent iconography of death and disaster in his Pop silkscreens.

In setting forth this view, Crow seems to rely on an understanding of the photograph as document, or factual visual record.[1] Treated as a document, the photograph itself is relatively transparent, and exists primarily to provide access to its referent. The document stakes its claim to authenticity on this notion of unmediated access to the referent. Correspondingly, Crow moves beyond the surface of an image like *Green Marilyn* to posit the flesh-and-blood Marilyn, the Marilyn who killed herself in August 1962, as the object of his — and Warhol's — interest [Figure 18].

---

[1]Thomas Crow, "Saturday Disasters: Trace and Reference in Early Warhol," in *Reconstructing Modernism: Art in New York, Paris, and Montreal 1945-1964*, ed. Serge Guilbaut (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1990): 311-331. This is a substantially revised version of an article originally published in *Art in America* 75 (May 1987): 129-36. In the original essay, Crow wrote that "the screened image, reproduced whole, has the character of an involuntary trace." The discussion of the photograph as a 'trace' suggested an affiliation with Roland Barthes' view of photography, and created a tension between the Barthesian view and the rather different view of the photograph as document. In the revised version, Crow substantially reduced his reliance on the 'trace' (although it remains in the title), in favor of treating the photograph as a document.

At times Crow claims that the photograph involves both the presence and the absence of the referent. For example, he describes the *Marilyn Diptych* of 1962 [Figure 32] as a "stark and unresolved dialectic of presence and absence, of life and death" and admits that celebrity death is a phenomenon involving the "absence of a richly imagined presence that was never really there."[2] For the most part, however, Crow posits the presence of the referent within the photograph as the basis, indeed as the *sine qua non*, of an iconographical reading.

Along these lines, Crow writes of the *Disaster* silkscreens:

> We cannot penetrate beneath the image to touch true pain and grief, but the reality of suffering is sufficiently indicated in the photographs to force attention to one's limited ability to find an appropriate response. As for the repetition in these pictures, might we just as well understand it to mean the grim predictability, day after day, of more events with an identical outcome, the leveling sameness with which real, not symbolic, death erupts in our experience?[3]

Here Crow presents the notion of somehow reaching into the image to an imagined depth where one might "touch true pain and grief." Lack of emotion is a defect of the surface; it is only by reaching deeper that we can experience a genuine emotional response to these scenes of photographic death. Astute viewer that he is, however, Crow sees that Warhol's repeated images produce a surface tension that does not permit this reach into depth. Thus Crow backs away from the idea that Warhol's depiction of suffering is calculated to produce an empathetic response in the viewer, and claims that what we see instead is only a measure of our inability to empathize with the depicted horrors. Crow cannot help but agree that these images block us from reaching the depths of emotion.

Crow also suggests that the repetition of these images is a formal strategy that recalls the constant recurrence of violence in the media. In making this claim, Crow comes close to Rainer Crone's assertion that Warhol was a "documentary realist," a portrayer of modern times through the truthful and unbiased eye of the camera.[4] Such a position is

---

[2]Ibid., 316 and 315.

[3]Ibid., 322.

[4]Rainer Crone writes that to place Warhol in historical context, one must begin from the following 'points of orientation': "Warhol's choice of subject; the importance of content over form in his

clearly inadequate in regard to Warhol's work — and not just because Warhol does not deliver the infinite variations on a theme characteristic of the mass media's treatment of violence. Instead he offers us the same image again and again, both within single works, for example, the 1963 *Orange Car Crash Fourteen Times* [Figure 49] and across works, as in the *Car Crash* series to which this work belongs. In fact, one of Warhol's complaints about the mass media was its constant variation: "Apparently, most people love watching the same basic thing, as long as the details are different. But I'm just the opposite: if I'm going to sit and watch the same thing I saw the night before, I don't want it to be essentially the same—I want it to be *exactly* the same."[5] Although the repeated images in Warhol's silkscreened paintings are a far cry from *'exactly* the same,' this comment does suggest that the *Disaster* silkscreens should not be read as faithful reproductions of mass media strategies. (Warhol's failure to function as mechanically as he would have liked will be discussed below.)

If we understand Warhol's silkscreens as documents, then we are led to conclude that Warhol repeats these photographs because their referents are repeated. To place these images side by side on canvas is to underline the cultural ubiquity of the events they depict. For example, Crow suggests that repeating photographs of car crashes indicates that death by automobile is a pervasive social phenomenon: "These commemorate events in which the supreme symbol of consumer affluence, the American car of the fifties, has ceased to be an image of pleasure and freedom and has become a concrete instrument of sudden and irreparable injury."[6]

Throughout this chapter, I will be translating distinctions into graphic form to help us keep track of what qualities are assigned to surface and to depth. The upper area on

---

work; the concept 'documentary realism' and the connections with photography that make the paintings documents; painting and machine production; and, finally, the similarity of intent that makes it instructive to compare the work of Warhol with that of Marcel Duchamp." Crone slights the importance of form in favor of content, viewing Warhol's subject matter as a (photographic) document of social life in the period. *Andy Warhol* (New York: Praeger, 1970), 53.

[5]Andy Warhol and Pat Hackett, *POPism: The Warhol '60s* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), 50.

[6]Crow, 321-22.

each diagram refers to what a given writer places on the surface, the lower area to a postulated depth. As I will try to show, these deeper regions are usually superfluous: all we need to produce a rich account of Warhol's art can be generated through elements found only on the surface. To sum up graphically what we have covered so far:

Marilyn's photographed face	photographic surface
the actual Marilyn's (dead) body	referent of the photograph

THE DEPTH OF THE AUTHOR

One surprising aspect of Crow's account is that while he reaches behind Marilyn's decorative surface to find the troubled woman, and behind the *Disaster* pictures to find 'true grief,' these interpretive acts are performed as part of a project that refuses to search for an authorial depth that might lurk behind Warhol's surfaces. As Crow points out, Warhol's imagery has escaped careful evaluation since critics have regarded it as meaningless:

> The conventional reading of Warhol's work turns around a few circumscribed themes: the impersonality of the artist's selection and presentation of images, his passivity in the face of a media-saturated reality, the suspension in his work of any clear authorial voice. His choice of subject matter is regarded as essentially indiscriminate. Little interest is displayed in his subjects beyond the observation that, in their totality, they represent the random play of a consciousness at the mercy of the commonly available commercial culture.[7]

Most critics believed Warhol's assertion that he exercised little authorial control over his art. Because a strong authorial voice could not be discerned in the work, his imagery has been treated as 'indiscriminate' and 'random.'

We might immediately want to question why the lack of a perceptible authorial voice should lead us to the conclusion that the imagery is meaningless, but for the moment let us follow Crow's line of argument:

> The authority normally cited for this observed effacement of the author's voice in Warhol's pictures is none other than that voice itself. It was Warhol who told us that he had no real point to make, that he intended

[7]Ibid., 311.

> no larger meaning in his choice of this or that subject, that his assistants did most of the physical work of producing his art. Indeed, it would be difficult to name an artist who has been as successful as Warhol was in controlling the interpretation of his own work.[8]

Crow objects that an overly strict adherence to authorial intentions (in the form of the persona's statements) has led us to conclude that there is no intentionality in the work. He therefore divides Warhol into three Warhols: the first is the public persona who made all those outrageous comments we know and (perhaps) love; the second is the Warhol we can deduce from careful examination of the work ("the complex of interests, sentiments, skills, ambitions and passions that are actually figured in paint on canvas"[9]); the third is the Warhol who led the way in opening the art world to a range of experimental and hybridized media. To this point, Crow has made no mention of a biographical Warhol, a privileged person hovering behind these personas and controlling their machinations.

But there is a catch. Although Crow rejects the Warhol persona outright, he in fact creates a new persona, a man who expresses his inner emotions on canvas. Speaking of the *Jackie* images, Crow writes: "The Kennedy assassination pictures are often seen as an exception in the artist's output, unusual in their open emotion and sincerity, but their continuity with the best of his previous work seems just as apparent. As with the *Marilyns*, the loss of the real Kennedy referent galvanizes Warhol into a sustained act of remembrance."[10] As Crow points out, the sense that Warhol was a human being capable of emotional response centered around the *Jackie* silkscreens.

Reviewing the *Jackie* pictures in 1965, Thomas Hess wrote:

> 'I think everybody should be a machine,' [Warhol] wrote and his latest pictures do look as numb, banal and modern as the latest suds-free washer.... He faltered only once: in a back room was a rectangle made of 42 identical closeups of Jacqueline Kennedy, bereft and aghast, screened from the famous news photo where she watches Lyndon Johnson being sworn in. Here Warhol blurts a certain tenderness and respect, in his choice of image, in the ghastly lilac colors. There is sentiment—of the Atlantic City souvenir-shop variety perhaps, but

---

[8]Ibid., 312. Terry Atkinson has also considered the problem of what he calls the 'front' and 'back' Warhols that populate Crow's argument. "Warhol's Voice, Beuys's Face, Crow's Writing," in *Art Has No History!: The Making and Unmaking of Modern Art*, ed. John Roberts (London: Verso, 1994), 157.

[9]Ibid., 311.

[10]Ibid., 317.

> would it have occurred to Univac? Warhol had better keep these lapses into 18th-century impulse under control, or he might turn into a human artist.[11]

Hess believes that for the most part Warhol did achieve the look of machine-made art, but he detects a 'certain tenderness and respect' in the *Jackies* which a computer could never have generated. For Crow, however, the *Jackies* are not the exception, but the rule. When the referent is lost to death, Warhol is moved to silkscreen. But 'the real Kennedy referent' is *not* what Warhol chooses to silkscreen. For that matter, the real Marilyn referent is not what Warhol pictures either, choosing an image of her from the period of her rise, rather than her fall. (Later, in 1967, Warhol did make a series of prints using Kennedy's image, but of course these too pictured not his death in Dallas, but his photogenic prime.)[12]

A fourth, and unexpected Warhol, has appeared in Crow's argument. A man capable of emotional response to tragedy, a man who expresses his inner feelings on canvas, a man diametrically opposed to the first Warhol persona, arrives to explain the look of the Jackie silkscreens. Although this creature is much the opposite of the persona who likes everything just the same, he is nonetheless a *presence* in his art, a presence to whom the meaning of the work can ultimately be referred.

Crow staunchly maintains that he is not seeking an Author to stand behind the work, and ejects the troublesome persona from his account in an attempt to avoid authorial intention altogether. Nonetheless, he ends by claiming that he *can* discern an authorial Warhol who cared deeply about the Kennedy assassination and its aftermath. It would seem that in order to claim that these paintings move him, Crow finds it necessary to claim that there was someone who felt moved and expressed that feeling on canvas, where it now

---

[11]T[homas] B. H[ess], "Andy Warhol," *Art News* 63 (January 1965), 11.

[12]*Flash—November 22, 1963* (1968) is a portfolio of eleven silkscreens on paper, made in an edition of 200. Although it is named for the date of Kennedy's assassination and features an image of the book depository and of a rifle, it does not directly picture the dead or dying Kennedy. Warhol made his (lack of) feelings about Kennedy quite clear: "I thought Kennedy was great but I wasn't shocked at his death: it was just something that happened." He discussed Monroe is similar terms: "I wouldn't have stopped Monroe from killing herself, for instance: I think everyone should do whatever they want to do and if that made her happier, then that's what she should have done." Both comments are recorded in "Nothing to Lose: Interview with Andy Warhol by Gretchen Berg," *Cahiers du Cinema in English* 10 (May 1967), 42.

produces that emotion in him. In other words, if there is expression here (of 'open emotion and sincerity'), then there must be someone to do the expressing. Thus while Crow gets rid of the Warhol persona (what he calls the 'first Warhol'), he inserts a new, fourth Warhol behind the work.

The ideology of the Author is recognizable in this view:

> The Author, when believed in, is always conceived of as the past of his own book: book and author stand automatically on a single line divided into a *before* and an *after*. The Author is thought to nourish the book, which is to say that he exists before it, thinks, suffers, lives for it, is in the same relation of antecedence to his work as a father to his child.[13]

Barthes focuses our attention on the temporal dimension of this ideology: the author exists prior to the book and brings it into being. He contrasts this with the 'modern scriptor' who is 'born simultaneously with the text, is in no way equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing, is not the subject with the book as predicate; there is no other time than that of the enunciation and every text is eternally written *here and now*."[14] To translate Barthes' insight into my own preferred metaphor, we might say that the traditional Author stands behind his work, creating it and remaining forever in place to prop it up. In contrast, the 'modern scriptor,' like the Warhol persona, can be located not behind the work but alongside it.

persona (Warhol #1)	Andy Warhol (deceptive public image)
Author (Warhol #4)	Andrew Warhola (true motivations and feelings)

The difficulty of treating Warhol as an Author does make itself felt in Crow's account, as when he writes of the *Jackie* silkscreens:

> The emotional calculus is simple, the sentiment direct and uncomplicated. The pictures nevertheless recognize, by their impoverished vocabulary, the distance between public mourning and that of the principals in the drama. Out of his deliberately limited

[13]Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," (1968) in *Image Music Text*, trans. Stephen Heath, (New York: Noonday Press, 1977), 145.

[14]Ibid.

> resources, the artist creates a nuance and subtlety of response that is his alone, precisely because he has not sought technically to surpass his raw material. It is difficulty not to share in this, however, cynical one may have become about the Kennedy presidency or the Kennedy marriage.[15]

The notion of Warhol as an Author becomes seriously strained in this passage. First Crow states that these pictures express emotion in a 'direct and uncomplicated' way. (Presumably, we are meant to understand that they express sorrow over Kennedy's death.) The pictures further express the difference between feeling that sorrow as a Kennedy intimate and feeling it as a US citizen. Then he asserts that this emotional response belongs neither to Jackie nor to the citizenry. It is Warhol's alone, its uniqueness indicated 'precisely because' Warhol does not personalize the source photographs in any way. Crow closes by saying 'it is difficult not to share in this,' leaving the referent somewhat unclear. (Again, 'this' probably refers to Warhol's feelings about the Kennedys.)[16] Crow does not say it is easy to empathize with these feelings, because looking at the work, it is not. The flattened, repeated images that compose a silkscreen like *16 Jackies* do not seem to leave room on the canvas for the expression of personal feeling [Figure 50]. Rather they seem to indicate, as traditional readings of Warhol's work submit, a resolute *impersonality*. Crow tries to move beyond the persona to reach a deeper Warhol who really does care about the Kennedy assassination. This 'true' Warhol remains difficult to square with the work. In this series of contradictory formulations, Crow betrays the effort needed to produce a reading of Warhol's work as either straightforwardly expressing his feelings or arousing our own.

The tendency to presume an author grows more pronounced in writing that has stemmed from Crow's essay. Trevor Fairbrother's "Skulls," an essay that self-consciously picks up where Crow left off, makes this conjunction clear: "Studies of Warhol have tended to stress divisions by classifying periods, subjects, painting styles, or

---

[15]Ibid., 317-320.

[16]The original version reads: "It is difficult not to share in this straightforward expression of feeling, however cynical one might be about the Kennedy Presidency or the Kennedy marriage," *Art in America*, 134-5.

his intentions (from socially concerned to sycophantic). But following his death, and in anticipation of the much-needed retrospective, it is useful to examine unifying factors."[17]

Fairbrother's comment echoes Crow's foreword to 'Saturday Disasters' as it first appeared in *Art in America* in May 1987: "[This paper's] initial aim was to separate Andy Warhol, the maker of his early paintings, from Andy Warhol, the maker of his own enduring public image. Now, in the period after the artist's unexpected death, this aim joins with the traditional task of searching for the core of meaning in a closed life history."[18] For both Fairbrother and Crow, the death of the biographical Warhol is significant: his death removes him from the flux of the present and seals him in a contained past. From this vantage point, he is no longer a person in process, a mutable, contradictory, indeterminate self, but a 'closed life history,' one that can be examined in terms of 'unifying factors' in order to produce a 'core of meaning.' This 'core of meaning' as it turns out, runs parallel to the search for an iconography, which, like the self here implied, should be consistent over time and possessed of a project both coherent and unique.

This should remind us again of Barthes' warning: "To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing."[19] Although in the body of the essay Crow explicitly rejects the notion that the Author constitutes a 'final signified,' his prefatory remarks, with their emphasis on closure and their promise of a 'core of meaning,' are very close to this traditional view. One might contrast this with the Warhol persona's comment: "I never fall apart because I never fall together."[20] Although Barthes would object to 'closing the writing' in any case, an attempt to do so in Warhol's case is particularly quixotic since he did not profess to be a closed and constant intentional system.

---

[17]Trevor Fairbrother, "Skulls," in *The Work of Andy Warhol*, ed. Gary Garrels (Seattle: Bay Press, 1989), 94.

[18]Thomas Crow, prefatory note in *Art in America*, 129.

[19]Barthes, "The Death of the Author," 147.

[20]Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again)* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1975), 81.

Extending Crow's position that there is an iconography of death in Warhol's early silkscreens, Fairbrother claims that 'death was a major theme' in all of Warhol's production.[21] He goes on to locate the importance of that theme in the biographical Warhol's history:

> One might speculate that his Central European—Czechoslovakian—heritage predisposed him to the grim and the anguished (and to the humorous, for that matter). His childhood was impoverished, plagued by illness, and dominated by Catholicism. Henry Geldzahler remembers midnight phone calls from Warhol in the mid-sixties: '...he would say that he was scared of dying if he went to sleep.'[22]

The body of work gains its thematic consistency from the body of the author, with its unique history and experiences. Because the Author was preoccupied by death, he created work that manifests the same preoccupation. As we have seen, this is precisely the position that Barthes wants us to move away from, the sense that the Author exists prior to the text and is the source of its meaning.

In the discussion period following the delivery of Fairbrother's paper at a symposium on Warhol, Benjamin Buchloh endorsed the iconographic reading, but objected that in the terms of Fairbrother's own argument, Warhol's oeuvre must be unified. Either all of it is readable in iconographic terms, or none of it is:

> This brings up the question that if this is such a compelling part of Warhol's work — and I think you have made the case very strongly — what is the other part and how do we relate the two? What is the iconography of those supposedly meaningless icons that are constituted as random, arbitrary, willful, as destructions of traditional referential iconography? How can these be reconciled with the powerful icons that emerge from the old iconographic approach — Warhol's obsession with death? How do you relate the two parts of Warhol's work as they emerge simultaneously?[23]

Buchloh maintains, and I think he is right, that if we accept an iconographic reading of Warhol's work (deriving its coherence from Warhol's unique subjectivity), then there is a problem with continuing to think of other parts of his oeuvre as random or arbitrary. If we begin to see Warhol's work as possessed of 'deep' meanings, based on seeing Warhol

---

[21]Fairbrother, 94.
[22]Ibid., 101-103.
[23]"Discussion," in *The Work of Andy Warhol*, ed. Garrels, 124.

himself as a 'deep' person, capable of profound thought and emotion, then we cannot simply get rid of that authorial subjectivity when we confront works like the Campbell's soup cans, where an iconographic reading seems utterly implausible. Fairbrother's response that an artist may engage a variety of themes and subjects is not convincing, since what is at stake here is not so much different themes in the work but the sense that only part of the oeuvre has meaning at all. Fairbrother's suggestion that Warhol's oeuvre haphazardly mixes subjects of profound personal interest with off-the-cuff and random ones becomes untenable. Warhol cannot be seen as a glib dilettante for some of the time and as an Author with vested emotional interests in his work for the rest. Once it has been recuperated by an iconographic reading, we cannot simply toss out this authorial persona when it suits us—we must somehow address the fact that the same person who made the death and disaster pictures also made endless painted rows of Campbell's soup cans.[24] It is indeed difficult to consider the *Campbell's Soup Cans* as the work of an Author who expressed deep fears in his art, but this indicates a problem with the Author, rather than the work.

THE DEPTH METAPHOR IN ICONOGRAPHY

Yoking the practice of iconographic interpretation with the Author is a peculiar move, since the classic formulation of this methodology is quite deliberately social and cultural. There is nothing in an iconographic approach *per se* that requires the presumption of an author. In fact, the method of iconographical analysis proposed by Erwin Panofsky was as transpersonal and historical as the Wölfflinian model of stylistic analysis that preceded it.

---

[24]Warhol's celebrity silkscreens have in fact been connected to the Coca-Cola and Campbell's soup paintings by noting that all of them depict commodities. For example, Paul Bergin wrote "Elizabeth Taylor is a commercial property, as commercial as a can of Campbell's Soup, albeit turned out by a different type of machine." "Andy Warhol: The Artist as Machine," *Art Journal* XXVI (Summer 1967), 362. Along similar lines, John Rublowsky claimed that "the portrait of Marilyn Monroe tells the story of a human being transformed, of a woman changed into a commercial property. She has been carefully manufactured, packaged, and sold like a can of soup." *Pop Art* (New York: Basic Books, 1965), 110. This position represents another convincing way to link the surfaces of these works; I have not pursued it here because I have wanted to dislodge the 'commodity' as the master concept for interpreting Warhol's work.

Why, then, do the author and iconographic study accompany each other in the literature on Warhol? One reason, proposed here, is that iconography, like the search for authorial intention, is conceptualized within a paradigm of surface and depth, making it easy to link it with other excavation projects. Another reason, which I will also explore, is that Crow and Fairbrother are working within an expressivist theory of art, and it is this, rather than iconography *per se*, that is responsible for the re-emergence of the Author in their writing.

A brief reconsideration of the introduction to Panofsky's *Studies in Iconology* will show how the categories of iconology are mapped in terms of surface and depth. Panofsky introduces his subject by writing: "Iconography is that branch of the history of art which concerns itself with the subject matter or meaning of works of art, as opposed to their form. Let us, then, try to define the distinction between *subject matter* or *meaning* on the one hand, and *form* on the other."[25] In these brief lines, so forthright, we find that form and content have been fractured, split into irreconcilable opposites; moreover, meaning, by means of a simple conjunction ('subject matter or meaning') has been assigned exclusively to the domain of content. So a host of assumptions come forth to greet us at the very opening of Panofsky's text, and although this opposition between form and content is progressively fudged throughout the essay, until the very last lines of his introduction attempt to rebuild this fragmented whole 'into one organic and indivisible process,'[26] it is nonetheless clear that the heuristic value of iconographic operations lies precisely in its ability to distinguish form and content and to discuss the meanings inhering in the referent.

Panofsky then gives us an example from everyday life, the example of a man tipping his hat:

> When an acquaintance greets me on the street by removing his hat, what I see from a formal point of view is nothing but the change of certain details within a configuration forming part of the general pattern of colour, lines and volumes which constitutes my world of vision.

---

[25]Erwin Panofsky, "Introductory," in *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939), 3. Reprinted as "Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art," in *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955).

[26]Ibid., 17.

> When I identify, as I automatically do, this configuration as an *object* (gentleman), and the change of detail as an *event* (hat-removing), I have already overstepped the limits of purely formal perception and entered a first sphere of *subject matter* or *meaning*.[27]

Here Panofsky imagines something like a pure vision of colors and shapes, detached from meaning, separated from all understanding. (Although his description is strangely reminiscent of viewing an abstract painting, Panofsky is not talking about the particular vision one brings to bear on a painting, but about looking at a man on the street.) This chimera he calls 'form.' Once we allow these colors and shapes to resolve into objects and actions, we have already departed from the world of form and entered the world of subject matter. Form, in Panofsky's formulation, is therefore utterly impoverished: a mere shifting of silhouettes in our field of vision, it means nothing to us.

Panofsky now goes on to build three 'levels' of meaning [Figure 51]. The first is what he calls the factual or expressional level: at this point we identify the forms and assess their emotional resonance based upon our practical experience. Later Panofsky calls this level pre-iconographical, meaning that it constitutes a necessary but insufficient step in iconographical analysis proper. The second level is the conventional, where we connect existing stories, ideas and beliefs with certain configurations of images: this identification of motifs is iconography in the narrow sense. The third, and deepest level, according to Panofsky, is the investigation of intrinsic meaning in the work. On this level, art history loses its disciplinary specificity and joins with other humanistic disciplines in inquiring "into the manner in which, under varying historical conditions, the *general* and *essential tendencies of the human mind* were expressed by specific *themes* and *concepts*."[28] As both his diagrams and his text make clear, Panofsky's iconographical system is structured as a progressive excavation into depth, with the factual identification of objects as the first, shallowest level, the identification of types and motifs as the second level, and the search for insight into the human experience across time as the deepest and most privileged level,

---

[27]Ibid., 3.
[28]Ibid., 15.

the scholarship dignified with the title of iconology. The evanescent shadows of pure formal vision are too superficial even to appear as the uppermost most stratum of Panofsky's layered system of interpretation. Panofsky has so stacked the deck against form that it doesn't even make the illustration; it is rendered, literally, invisible.

Panofsky's scheme reduces form to a purely theoretical, instantaneous flash of vision, and thus form has no place in his system of meaning. If we did add form to Panofsky's schema, there can be no doubt where it would be located:

form

content ---> factual

iconographic

iconological

What Panofsky's discussion makes clear is that the debate between iconography and formalism is structured around the metaphor of surface and depth: iconography presents itself as the antidote to formalism's superficiality by probing into the depths of human meaning.

Both formalist and iconographic schools of thought have become self-conscious enough about their own practices to acknowledge that they are sides of a single coin rather than two warring opposites. Those committed to iconographic interpretation have developed an autocritique of its assumptions (for example, the text-based nature of the method).[29] Similarly formalisms old and new (for example, Russian formalists like Mikhail Bakhtin and present-day formalists like Yve-Alain Bois) have responded at length

[29]I am thinking especially of the volume of conference proceedings entitled *Iconography at the Crossroads*, ed. Brendan Cassidy, (Princeton: Index of Christian Art, Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University, 1993).

to the notion that they concern themselves with 'mere form.' As a result, we are now in a position to appreciate form and content as the severed bodies of Aristophanes' myth, yearning for reunion. The fact that we continue to think of formalism as dealing with the surface while iconography looks for 'deeper' meanings, however, suggests that these spatial assignments stand in the way of reuniting the formalist project with the iconographic one, with appreciating that both are concerned with interpretation. Without embracing the surface as a source of meaning I fear that we will continue to treat form as sense data disconnected from content. And without understanding that iconography, too, deals with the surface of art and the meanings of the imagery found there, we are liable to forgo investigation of those meanings.

The recent trend in art historical thought has been to equate formalism with a quiescent, even retrograde superficiality, and therefore to cast it in a negative light. This kind of attack on formalism is itself a variant of the Platonic discourse I have been tracing. It relies on the same kind of distinction between appearance and essence, and a further conviction that this essence resides not in the physical art object but elsewhere. (Usually the essence is pictured as residing in 'history.') Formalist approaches, in this view, limit themselves to the deceptive world of appearances, rather than the essential reality that those appearances obstruct and disguise. It is not enough to counter this by attributing a positive value to surface appearances; rather we must insist that both form and content are found together, indissolubly, on the surface of the canvas. Art and history are not opposed, but cooperating concepts: history is immanent in the work of art, indivisible from the particularity of its material being.

Intentionality Versus Meaning

The pitfall I am targeting is less a problem with iconography as an interpretive method than a problem with the metaphor of depth in which it is frequently couched (beginning, as we have seen, with Panofsky himself). For in understanding the interpretive act as a project of

excavation, other kinds of depth get smuggled in, including, as we have seen, authorial depth. Seeking meaning in Warhol's art, Crow and Fairbrother end up looking for intention, for what the Author meant the work to mean. The need to install an Author suggests a belief that in order for there to be meaning in Warhol's work, it must have been programmatically buried there by Warhol. Otherwise, the work remains empty. At least this is one plausible way of accounting for the reappearance of the Author in both of their accounts, although iconographic study originally militated against this.

Intentional meaning is typically conceived as a discrete quantity that exists in a work only if it has been deposited there by the author. This assumption — that meaning exists only if a given amount of it has been placed in a work — still has its proponents. One domain in which it frequently appears is in discussions of the common, media-based culture, which is held to be utterly superficial and empty-headed. If we conflate meaning with intentionality, it is not hard to see how this view gets off the ground: there is no meaning in our advertisements, our movies, or our television shows, since no-one bothered to put any meaning there. Or, to be more precise, since the intentionality in every case was identical: to get consumers to buy the product. Yet if we do not construe meaning as intentionality, we can view the common culture as a trove of shared meanings which are generated without regard to individual intentions.

In fact iconography as an interpretive method was developed to deal precisely with the art of a culture that possessed a large, public reservoir of imagery. Renaissance painting was produced in a culture where both painters and viewers shared an extensive visual vocabulary. With the passage of time, iconographic study has been necessary to recover these meanings, which might have been in their historical moment, quite obvious — perhaps even 'superficial.'

During the changes in artistic culture often gathered together under the term Romanticism, the church and state became less important patrons for art, and subject matter was drawn less and less often from this common pool. Now art was understood to

express the artist's feelings about subject matter that he personally had selected; psychological and biographical analysis of art became dominant. Many critics approach Warhol with these methods in hand, but they do not fit well, because Warhol is not an expressive, Romantic artist. Rather, he is an artist in a period that is once again possessed of a visual culture common to everyone. Just as the Crucifixion and the Virgin were an established part of the visual landscape during the Renaissance, images of a car crash or a movie star are part of our shared visual experience.

Warhol is not the source of meaning in his works, any more than Renaissance artists were the source of theirs. Although the artist manipulates images in precise ways, the images themselves are abundant in shared social meanings. To interpret Warhol's works, we do not need to refer to his personal beliefs and desires, any more than we would assume that understanding Piero's images of the Virgin would start with an interview asking what the Madonna means to him. The meaning of a Lamentation, or a *Jackie*, does not well up out of the artist's subjectivity; it speaks to the fact of membership in a group that pre-exists any particular painter or viewer.

This points to an additional problem in Fairbrother's and Crow's readings, which has little to do with iconography. Both Fairbrother and Crow suggest that Warhol's work has made them feel certain things. For these feelings to be valid, they imply, the Author must have felt those same things and intended to express them. This view is the essence of Tolstoy's expressivist view of art: "The activity of art is based on the fact that a man receiving through his sense of hearing or sight another man's expression of feeling, is capable of experiencing the emotion which moved the man who expressed it. To take the simplest example: one man laughs and another, who hears, becomes merry; or a man weeps and another, who hears, feels sorrow."[30] In these lines Tolstoy sets out the basic framework of an expressivist theory, which rests on an emotional Author who deliberately

---

[30]Leo Tolstoy, "What Is Art?" trans. Louise and Aylmer Maude (London: Oxford University Press, 1930), 171. Excerpted and reprinted in *Art and Its Significance: An Anthology of Aesthetic Theory*, 2d edition, ed. Stephen David Ross (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 180.

sets out to reproduce his feelings in others: "To evoke in oneself a feeling one has once experienced and, having evoked it in onself, then by means of movements, lines, colours, sounds, or forms expressed in words, so to transmit that feeling that others experience the same feeling—this is the activity of art."[31] Both Crow and Fairbrother dive into the interpretive depths of intentionality, in part because of their subscription to an expressivist theory of art, in part because iconography's partiality to the depth metaphor.

Warhol insisted on his distance from an expressive, Romantic author by explicitly claiming that he was not the source of his ideas: "I was never embarrassed about asking someone, literally, 'What should I paint?' because Pop comes from the ouside, and how is asking someone for ideas any different from looking for them in a magazine?"[32] This comment only threatens meaning if we conflate meaning with intentionality. By likening himself to a machine, Warhol denied that intentionality played a part in his work. As we will see below, however, his work did not really end up being mechanical. As Gerard Malanga put it, "Andy wanted to keep the human element out of his art, and to avoid it he had to resort to silkscreens, stencils, and other kinds of automatic reproduction. But still the Art would always manage to find a way of creeping in. A smudge here, a bad silkscreening there, an unintended cropping. Andy was always antismudge. To smudge is human."[33]

To review: iconographic readings of Warhol's work create a 'deeper' meaning for Marilyn's face by placing a biological, suffering body behind the glamorous surface, and an 'emotional' meaning for the *Jackies* by focusing on Jackie's real-life widowhood. But this leaves a great deal of Warhol subject matter unaccounted for. Thus Crow, for example, is compelled to break off his elaboration of meaning, to stop it short in 1965, because the *Flowers*, *Cow Wallpaper*, and *Silver Clouds* (to name only the works he

---

[31]Tolstoy in *Art and Its Significance*, 181.

[32]Andy Warhol and Pat Hackett, *POPism: The Warhol Sixties* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1980), 16.

[33]Gerard Malanga, "A Conversation with Andy Warhol," *The Print Collector's Newsletter* (January/February 1971), 125.

explicitly rejects) are not consistent with an expressive persona and do not fit within an iconography of death. All of these works, as we have seen, continue and make explicit Warhol's interest in cosmetic and decorative surface.[34]

To counter this reach into depth, I propose that we see meaning as a surface element, available to everyone by virtue of membership in a common visual culture. We do not need to dive into the murky depths, either of intentionality or of personal emotion, in order to claim that something has a meaning. Neither is meaning incompatible with decorative function. To summarize this visually:

meaning	decorative surface	public imagery
intention	emotional depths	private feelings

STAYING ON THE SURFACE

The only way to save Warhol from the tag of superficiality, it would seem, is to posit a deeper, darker Warhol behind the superficial persona, to reject the cosmetic, decorative elements of his style, and to propose profound meanings for his glamorous icons. We keep on looking for something that will stand behind the surface, shore it up, make it good. When we kick these props away, do our interpretive efforts necessarily collapse? If we refuse to seek a depth past the surface, whether that depth takes the name of the suicidal Marilyn Monroe or the death-obsessed Catholic artist, is there anything left for us to talk about? Perhaps we are simply left to agree with Robert Hughes that Warhol is a "shallow painter...whose entire sense of reality was shaped, like [Ronald] Reagan's sense of power,

[34]Consistent with his anti-surface position, Crow also expresses a preference for design over color in the image of Marilyn Monroe: "I think that the qualities of a certain kind of respect for Monroe, and for what she symbolized, are much more apparent where she's not covered by color than where she is. And I think that there is a layering there in which one is asked to attend to the act that there is a deeper layer underneath the color, one that can change and shift and that occasionally gets exposed, as it does in the Monroe diptych. "Discussion" following "Saturday Disasters" in *Reconstructing Modernism*, 328.

by the television tube"?[35] Or to confirm Carter Ratcliff's persistent suspicion that Warhol's art presents only "the allure of absolute nothingness"?[36] If we slice off the bottom half of this diagram we have been drawing, have we condemned ourselves to utter superficiality?

photographic surface	Monroe's beautiful face	Warhol's public image	shared worldview
referential depth	Norma Jeane's tragic suicide	private person	individual psychology

In one sense, the answer is clearly yes, because 'superficial,' in its literal sense, simply means 'of, affecting, or being on or near the surface.' That the word has also come to mean 'concerned with comprehending only what is apparent or obvious; shallow; apparent rather than actual or substantial; trivial; insignificant' proves nothing other than our persistent attribution of substance to what is deep. This bias, indeed, is written into our word 'substance', which, rendered literally, becomes 'what stands beneath.' If our vocabulary points us rather overwhelmingly toward the conclusion that substance and meaning are exclusive properties of the deeper regions, Warhol's work points us back the other way, offering us a meaning that resides on the surface.

If we do not construe interpretation as excavation, how are we to go about interpreting Warhol's surfaces? Let's begin again with Warhol's much-cited comment: "If you want to know all about Andy Warhol, just look at the surface of my paintings and films and me, and there I am. There's nothing behind it."[37] Warhol begins by saying, "if you want to know all about Andy Warhol," which suggests that there is indeed something to know about him. At the same time the question of who 'Andy Warhol' refers to is problematized: by referring to himself in the third person, Warhol slightly differentiates himself as a person ('I') and his artist-persona ('Andy Warhol'), even as he maintains their

---

[35]Robert Hughes, "The Rise of Andy Warhol, in *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, ed. Brian Wallis (New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984), 57.

[36]Carter Ratcliff, *Andy Warhol* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1983), 9.

[37]Gretchen Berg, "Andy: My True Story," *Los Angeles Free Press* (March 17, 1967), 3.

equivalence. He goes on to say; "just look at the surface," that is, don't ask for verbal explanations, look at what you see; "of my paintings and films and me," suggesting a chain of correspondences between the surfaces of his art, films, and person. There are relationships between those surfaces, but the relations are configured horizontally rather than as a reach into depth. "And there I am," he concludes, now reverting to the first-person pronoun, leaving us unsure whether the 'Andy Warhol' persona can be neatly separated from the person ('I'), and presenting us only with the advice that 'Warhol,' whoever he is, is to be found only on this series of painted, filmed and presented surfaces. "There's nothing behind it," Warhol goes on to say, advising us not to look beyond or behind what we see, because there are no depths of being, painted or personal, that might ground or support those surfaces. What you see is what you get.

The discipline of art history would seem to be ideally equipped to handle such pronouncements and the art that goes with them. If our own medium as historians is that of the word, we nonetheless pride ourselves on an ability to deal with the visual on its own terms, to appreciate what we see as meaningful in its unique way. Thus for art historians, the claim that "what you see is what you get," might be read as an affirmation that what we get from what we see is usually quite a bit indeed. In reference to other artists, similar statements have been understood this way. Frank Stella's famous "what you see is what you see," for example, is defiantly deflationary in its refusal of subject matter, but nonetheless presents painting as a meaningful human endeavor.[38] Warhol's parallel statement, in contrast, has been construed not as a positive assertion of the special modes of visual meaning, but as a severe limitation of meaning.

In fact, an interest in the surfaces of things does unify Warhol's Pop oeuvre. Although the death interpretation treats them as unrelated, both the *Disaster* paintings and the *Campbell's Soup Cans* rivet our attention on the visible surface. This unity, however, is not a 'deep' one: it is based on the similar characteristics of Warhol's painted surfaces.

---

[38]Bruce Glaser, "Questions to Stella and Judd," *Art News* 65 (September 1966), 59.

Warhol's *Campbell's Soup Cans* from 1962 have the character of an investigation, an experimental working through of his ultimate compositional solution. Although we cannot specify the order in which these works were produced, I think we can reasonably treat them as an exploration of a three-dimensionality that was ultimately rejected in favor of the soup can as a flattened-out field on which the label could be displayed.

In works like *Big Torn Campbell's Soup Can (Vegetable Beef)* of 1962 [Figure 52], the ripping and shredding of label serves two major functions. First, it seems to suggest an exploration of the region beneath the surface. What is underneath the logo? The folds and tears in the label not only add dimension to the pictorial space, but they suggest a peeling away of surface to get underneath. The can itself, however, reveals nothing. It is a dull gray, providing even less information than its outer label. It seems to hold neither secrets nor promises, and is never opened to reveal its contents. Second, the damaged label serves to differentiate the can from all other cans of vegetable beef. With its picturesquely mutilated label, this can of soup become individual, unique.

The probing of the can continues through several works from 1962. In *Campbell's Soup Can with Can Opener*, the can is pried open; in *Big Campbell's Soup Can, 19¢* the lid is raised, and in *Crushed Campbell's Soup Can [Beef Noodle]* the can is squeezed out of shape [Figures 53-55]. Taken together these works suggest a narrative of exploration that ends in deformation. But for all this assiduous prying and probing, little new information is gained. Indeed there never even seems to be anything inside these cans . The contents are of no interest; indeed the can itself seems to be beside the point. It is a gray, plain, lusterless object.

Instead it is the label — relentlessly and everywhere identical, eternally cheerful with its red, white and gold palette — that comes to occupy center stage in Warhol's work. These other cans that Warhol drew and painted, objects with mass and volume, objects dented, damaged and ripped, objects with flawed and eccentric personalities, picturesque individuals inhabiting three-dimensional space, disappear in favor of the intact label, mass-

produced, identical, and utterly flat. In Warhol's dominant conception of the motif, as in *Campbell's Soup Cans* (1962) [Figure 56], the can has become nothing more than a surface for the display of the label. Its status as a volumetric container has vanished together with its pretense of uniqueness. What we are left with is a strictly frontal, hieratic, and uniform row of cans.

The possibilities of treating the can as a three-dimensional volume are run through and rejected in favor of the flat but appealing surface. In soup as in art: what counts is not what's stored inside the can, but in what lies on the surface. Moreover, that pleasurable surface becomes the means of instant brand recognition: Warhol makes the soup can the star of his paintings, and then rests his own fame as a painter upon the high visibility of the soup can. As a result of this campaign, Warhol becomes a brand name, his art as instantly recognizable as a can of Campbell's soup. David Bourdon observed that "Warhol made a career out of appropriating famous images and products in order to promote his own reputation. By preempting the celebrity of his subjects—from Campbell's Soup and Coca-Cola to Marilyn Monroe and Elvis Presley—he parlayed his own name and face into commercial commodities that became recognized—and valued—around the world."[39] Here Warhol creates an equivalence between the techniques used to market a product commercially and techniques used by avant-garde movements to create a distinct image, promoted through manifestoes and other advertisements.[40]

This attraction to the surface can also be seen in what the Warhol persona says about the image of Marilyn Monroe:

> I don't feel I'm representing the main sex symbols of our time in some of my pictures, such as Marilyn Monroe or Elizabeth Taylor. I just see Monroe as just another person. As for whether it's symbolical to paint Monroe in such violent colors: it's beauty, and she's beautiful and if something's beautiful it's pretty colors, that's all. Or something. The Monroe picture was part of a death series I was doing, of people who had died by different ways. There was no profound

---

[39]David Bourdon, *Warhol* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1989), 9.

[40]On the similarity between product advertising and the manifestoes of the European avant-garde, see Chapter 2 of Jeffrey Weiss, *The Popular Culture of Modern Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

> reason for doing a death series, no victims of their time; there was no reason for doing it all, just a surface reason.[41]

Here Warhol, in his characteristically obtuse and contradictory way, pushes his interviewer away from iconographic readings, explicitly denying that he's working with thematic categories like 'sex symbols' or 'victims of our time.' Instead he attempts to reassert the categories of surface and beauty: Marilyn makes a good subject for Warhol because she is pretty and decorative and so are his brightly colored silkscreens. He then just as quickly admits that there is a 'death series,' that his work can productively be seen in relation to this category, but he still insists that there is no 'profound' reason for the death theme, 'just a surface reason.'

What would be a 'surface reason' for exploring the death theme? How could a death series be superficial? I propose that we try to understand this by focusing on the centrality of the silkscreen in Warhol's oeuvre. Although I have to this point emphasized the painterly aspect of Warhol's art, the photographic technology of the silkscreen is equally important to his work. His particular use of the silkscreen in his painting is a signature device; therefore, looking carefully at this device should help us reach a better understanding of both his painting and the nature of his 'signature.'

Through the silkscreen, Warhol associates his image-making with the image-making of celebrity culture, where photography plays a central role in enabling near-universal recognition of the depicted subject, at the price of a certain kind of death of that same subject. Warhol leverages his own celebrity as an image-maker on the pre-existing celebrity of figures like Marilyn, Liz, Jackie, and Elvis. And he embeds the photographic medium firmly within his painting practice as a means of establishing the reproductive power of his art, its participation in and access to the world of publicity and celebrity.

If we do not treat the Warhol persona as an Author (someone standing behind his paintings and providing a special guarantee of their meaning), then we do not need to dig beneath it. When we handle the persona as simply another surface to be interpreted, the

---

[41]Berg, "Andy: My True Story," 3.

critical use of the persona's statements become possible: it allows us to extend the play of meaning, rather than cutting it off. Rather than seeing the persona as the cause and the work as its effect, let us treat both as symptoms. The one cannot explain the other: they are instead two manifestations of the same 'disease,' which we might call superficiality.

In dealing this way with the persona, I do not mean to imply that there is no historical, biographical Andy Warhol. It would be ridiculous to deny that he existed as an individual with a particular set of experiences and beliefs, dreams and desires, fears and hopes, tics and habits. But his paintings insist that what is important is not what is particular to him, but the intersection of his particularity and ours; in other words, his work is concerned with what we share.

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC PARADOX

In *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes describes the photograph as a trace. In his development of this term, he seems to draw on Charles Peirce's division of the sign into three main types: symbol, icon and index. Unlike the symbol and icon which, in different ways, are social products bearing an arbitrary relation to their referents, the index is a mark that has been directly produced by the referent, like a lipstick stain or a footprint. According to Peirce, "the index is physically connected with its object; they make an organic pair."[42] He goes on to explain:

> an *Index* is a sign which refers to the Object that it denotes by virtue of being really affected by that Object....In so far as the Index is affected by the Object, it necessarily has some Quality in common with the Object, and it is in respect to these that it refers to the Object. It does, therefore, involve a sort of Icon, although an Icon of a peculiar kind; and it is not the mere resemblance of its Object, even in these respects which makes it a sign, but it is the actual modification of it by the Object.[43]

The footprint is the material result of the foot's imprint in mud; it has a direct physical relation to the foot that made it, rather than a relationship of mere resemblance. In this

---

[42]*The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, Vol. II: *Elements of Logic*, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, The Belknap Press, 1960), §299, 168.

[43]Ibid., §248, 143.

respect the photograph is a strange hybrid, a sign that is indexical because created out of physical contact between emitted light and photographic surface, but *also* a sign that resembles the object. As Peirce describes it:

> Photographs, especially instantaneous photographs, are very instructive, because we know that they are in certain respects exactly like the object they represent. But this resemblance is due to the photographs having been produced under such circumstances that they were physically forced to correspond point by point to nature. In that aspect, then, they belong to the second class of signs, those by physical connection.[44]

Barthes picks up and extends Peirce's discussion of the photograph as indexical trace, viewing the photograph as a surface ineluctably linked with its referent: "I call 'photographic referent' not the *optionally* real thing to which an image or a sign refers but the *necessarily* real thing which has been placed before the lens, without which there would be no photograph."[45]

Although Barthes insists upon the importance of the referent in constituting the photographic image, he just as firmly insists that at the moment the photograph is taken, that referent is forever lost:

> Now, in the Photograph, what I posit is not only the absence of the object; it is also, by one and the same movement, on equal terms, the fact that this object has indeed existed and that it has been there where I see it.... The Photograph then becomes a bizarre *medium*, a new form of hallucination: false on the level of perception, true on the level of time: a temporal hallucination, so to speak, a modest, *shared* hallucination (on the one hand 'it is not there,' on the other 'but it has indeed been'): a mad image, chafed by reality.[46]

For Barthes, then, the photograph is a paradox: it is predicated upon the presence of the referent but just as surely entails its loss. The source photographs of Monroe used by Warhol in his silkscreens thus point us not towards her corpse, but toward her living face which we nonetheless know at this point to be dead: "In front of the photograph of my mother as a child, I tell myself: she is going to die: I shudder, like Winnicott's psychotic

---

[44]Ibid., §281, 159.

[45]Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (1980), trans. Richard Howard, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 76.

[46]Ibid., 115.

patient, *over a catastrophe which has already occurred.* Whether or not the subject is already dead, every photograph is this catastrophe."[47]

The death effect of photography may be heightened by our knowledge that Marilyn Monroe is now dead, but even if she were still alive, the stopping of time in the photograph would imply the movement of our mortal bodies toward death while the photograph remains eternally young. It is the photograph's very ability to preserve a slice of life that causes it so forcefully to connote the decaying and death of its subject. Or, as Christian Metz writes:

> Even when the person photographed is still living, that moment when she or he *was* has forever vanished. Strictly speaking, the person who has been photographed—not the total person, who is an effect of time—is dead...Photography is the mirror, more faithful than any actual mirror, in which we witness at every age, our own aging. The actual mirror accompanies us through time, thoughtfully and treacherously; it changes with us, so that we appear not to change.[48]

The photographed portrait remains eternally young, but only at the cost of reminding us that some mirror exists where aging has continued and death is imminent. Every photographic portrait, even of a newborn baby, anticipates its subject's eventual death. Thierry de Duve also shares this view: "Seen as live evidence, the photograph cannot fail to designate, outside of itself, the death of the referent, the accomplished past, the suspension of time. And seen as deadening artifact, the photograph indicates that life outside continues, time flows by, and the captured object has slipped away."[49]

In the case of celebrity images, the necessary absence of the photographic subject is even clearer. Without photography, there could be no such thing as celebrity: what constitutes a celebrity is precisely mass recognition of a person's image, and the only form of image-making able to ensure such widespread recognition is an industrial one like

---

[47]Ibid., 96.

[48]Christian Metz, "Photography and Fetish," *October* 34 (Fall 1985), 84. Just as Dorian Gray remains eternally young while his portrait ages and withers.

[49]Thierry de Duve, "Time Exposure and Snapshot: The Photograph as Paradox," *October* 5 (Summer 1978), 113.

photography.[50] It is precisely photography's ability to distribute the image everywhere at the same time that presupposes the loss of the referent which is, after all, singular and can only be in one place at one time.

This, it seems to me, is what Walter Benjamin had in mind when he wrote that photography puts the image in places out of reach of the original: the photographic referent is singular while the photograph itself is inherently multiple.[51] According to Benjamin, photography's radical break with past image-making techniques was its lack of reference to any notion of an original. Although technologies for making copies existed before photography, it is photography that conclusively wipes out the notion of the original and the aura it implies. At this point, however, it seems necessary to amend Benjamin's account, for no matter how clearly he has understood the difference of photography from previous image-making techniques, it is equally clear that photography has not resulted in the wholesale destruction of aura. Rather, photography has produced a new kind of aura, a special impression we feel in the presence of the photograph. It is photography's privileged connection with the referent at the moment of taking the picture, its stress on the fact that the person was there, that inscribes the photographic result so indelibly with the loss of that referent. This foregrounding of absence in the very teeth of presence lends the photograph its particular poignance, a poignance we might call photography's 'aura.'

So while I agree with Crow that the temporal link between Marilyn's death and the advent of the silkscreen series is significant, I see this as heightening an already existing, widely experienced, and culturally powerful connection between photography and death. If there is death in Warhol's silkscreens, it has less to do with the death of this particular woman and more to do with the death always implied by the medium of photography. The aura that undeniably emanates from these silkscreens is not the aura that Benjamin links

---

[50]Older conceptions of fame seemed to rely more on the possession of certain merits, although we should not underestimate the role of the image in producing this fame as well.

[51]Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), 220.

with being in the presence of an unique ritual object, but a new kind of photographic aura that is already predicated upon loss.

To move past the photographic paradox into the untroubled presence of the referent is to miss the additional resonances that can be discerned when form and content are viewed in tandem. This line of inquiry has been laid out by David James, who observed that "in the prints for which [Warhol] became famous, the activity of the iconography and the conditions of production are homologous, the one narrating the other."[52] Instead of moving quickly past the photographic surface to its referent, it is important to recognize that Warhol's selected subject matter has everything to do with the photographic medium in which it is depicted. Photography is the mass medium and Warhol's subjects are photographic, mass media subjects. In a 1967 article on Warhol, Paul Bergin addressed this homology between form and content, especially as it related to the *Disaster* pictures:

> The most obvious mistake such people make [in understanding these works as 'documents'] is the placement of too much emphasis upon the machine which is depicted and not enough on that one which does the depicting. The at-first shocking image of an automobile accident has, probably because it is, after all, a news photo, something of a narrative sense, which is an element completely absent from Warhol's other work. The casual observer is likely, then, to regard these paintings as didactic, Warhol as a low-tone Goya. Such a person is likely to think the repetition of the image an immature attempt to drive the 'message' home. Overlooked in this incorrect interpretation is the fact that the source of the image is a news photo, taken by a camera, which is incapable of making a value judgement and reproduced by a printing press, also a machine and also lacking a conscious mind. It is in this twice-removed way that the artist receives the image. He has no contact with the death itself and can react then only to the image, not the actual death.[53]

Bergin cautions us against being quick to assume that the representation of these news photos constitutes a commentary or lesson; instead he points to the homology between mechanized subject matter (automobiles) and mechanized artistic process (photography). Bergin pushes this point too far when he writes that the camera and printing press are incapable of making value judgments. In his desire to see Warhol's work as the realization

---

[52]David E. James, "Andy Warhol: The Producer as Author," in *Allegories of Cinema: American Film in the Sixties* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 60.

[53]Bergin, "Andy Warhol: The Artist as Machine," 361.

of a genuine machine art, Bergin edits out the human operators of camera and printing press, who of course have everything to do with the selection of this image as one to be taken and subsequently reproduced. Nonetheless, Bergin's account is a useful corrective to the desire to treat the photograph as a transparent surface through which we dive into referential depths.

What Bergin emphasizes is that the photographic surface itself is enormously meaningful: this points us less toward the particular incident depicted than to the media's general obsession with the representation of such incidents. Warhol's notoriously inaccurate titling of his work — *Five Deaths* for a photograph that depicts four survivors, *Race Riot* for a photograph that depicts a police action against demonstrators — suggests his indifference to the particular tragedy represented in the source photograph. When we embrace the photograph as paradox rather than as document, it becomes possible to read the media itself as a structuring element of contemporary life, rather than just the 'actual events' the media depicts, as the subject of Warhol's work. And when we see the photographic paradox as involving a particular kind of death-in-life or life-in-death, then the media's preoccupation with all varieties of human suffering and death, from fires, accidents, and bombings to earthquakes, famines and wars, takes on a rather different cast. An identity between form (mode of presentation) and content (certain themes) begins to emerge. If we see the media as a configuration of photographically-based forms, then we can understand that the media does not simply record and distribute the factual existence of death (i.e., photograph as document), but is structured by the experience of death that is the hallmark of its form (i.e., photograph as paradox). In other words, death is the primary and obsessional subject matter of the media in large part because of the particular qualities of the photographic medium. This also suggests how we might begin to read the Jackie silkscreens. Warhol is interested in the Kennedy assassination as an occasion for public spectacle; his subject is not personal feelings of grief but the way in which mourning is orchestrated through the mass media.

Warhol's formal decisions, as much as his choice of Marilyn as subject matter, underline this connection. The file Warhol kept on Marilyn during the 1960s contains dozens of photographs of the star. In almost every one she performs some coy gesture: she winks, waves, yawns, smiles. Often a more elaborate mise-en-scène has been staged. Yet for his silkscreens Warhol selected the most static and immobile image of Marilyn in his file. That Warhol chose this still and rather lifeless photograph of Marilyn is clearly important for our argument here. As Christian Metz has written, the photograph is characterized by "immobility and silence" which "are not only two objective aspects of death, they are also its main symbols, they *figure* it."[54] That virtually all of the other photographs of Marilyn in Warhol's file picture her in an animated pose emphasizes the significance of this particular choice. The image of Marilyn used in this silkscreen has strong connotations of death not only as a result of the peculiar temporal structure of photography generally, but through the 'immobility and silence' especially notable in this particular photograph.

As noted in Chapter 1, Warhol's made two different groups of Marilyns: a large number of canvases were made in 1962 with a rectangular 20 x 16 screen (*Green Marilyn* [Figure 18] is one of these), and a much smaller number were made in 1963 with a square 40 x 40 screen (*Turquoise Marilyn* [Figure 17] is our example from this group). In the 1964 silkscreen the image is cropped more closely, cutting off more of Marilyn's neck and providing less background around her face and hair. This screen edits out the detail of Marilyn's collar, which helps us to locate her in a particular sartorial-historical moment, and therefore produces an image even more disembodied and dislocated than the series made immediately after her death. In this 1964 painting, Marilyn's severed head fills the visual field, an apparition starker and more disturbing than the creature of Warhol's initial series. Warhol formulates his boldest and most effective presentation of Marilyn as both alive and dead—that is to say, as a photographic subject—not as an immediate response to

---

[54]Metz, 83.

the death of the biographical figure, but two years later through additional formal manipulation of the image. It is not the actual Marilyn's corpse that is the referent of this image: let *that* poor Marilyn rest in peace. It is the ever-alive-nonetheless-dead Marilyn, the eternal media creature, who continues to fascinate us and who evidently fascinated Warhol.

PERSONA NON WARHOLA

The homology between Warhol's art and the photographic medium has another dimension, for as we have seen, photography is predicated upon a certain kind of death and dispersion in the public realm. Warhol seems to embrace this aspect of photography with the same avidity that characterizes his approach to the fame-making aspect of the media. We might consider his use of the silkscreen as a means of infecting his painting with the absence characteristic of photography. By superimposing the photographic and the painted surface, Warhol attempts to stage the death of the Author. By fusing painterly touch with the deathly life of the photograph, he attempts to kill off the concepts of intention, genius, and presence that have traditionally been understood to attend the painted mark. The photograph helps Warhol to commit a version of authorial suicide. In doing so, Warhol puts a positive spin on the anguished cry of Foucault's author:

> 'Must I suppose that in discourse I can have no survival? And that in speaking I am not banishing my death, but actually establishing it; or rather that I am abolishing all interiority in that exterior that is so indifferent to my life, and so neutral, that it makes no distinction between my life and my death?'[55]

Foucault reverses our understanding that authors and artists live forever in their works, maintaining instead they produce a set of marks that function utterly without regard for the survival of their makers. It is this fact that we attempt to disavow with our myths of authorial presence in a text. Just as death is established by the photograph, rather than warded off, so too is authorial control in Warhol's silkscreens. In these works, Warhol the

---

[55]Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (1969), trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 210.

maker, an actual person with an actual inner life, is transformed into an anonymous and mechanically reproduceable surface that is no longer anchored in any particular being. The often remarked indifference of Warhol's canvases is thus rooted not in the indifference and passivity of Warhol's persona, but the indifference of the photographic surface to anything concerning its maker. Warhol figures himself not as a privileged presence, standing behind his art, but as a pure conduit, who is not the origin but simply the recirculator of what he finds. Artistically Warhol seems to function as nothing so much as a medium, as a sensitive photographic surface imprinted by the images passing before a viewfinder.[56]

But however much Warhol wants to become a passive surface, imprinted with the changing data of the culture, he cannot completely give up authorial control. For example, in an interview, he said:

> I think that would be so great, to be able to change styles. And I think that's what's going to happen, that's going to be the whole new scene. That's probably one reason I'm using silk screens now. I think somebody should be able to do all my paintings for me. I haven't been able to make every image clear and simple and the same as the first one. I think it would be so great if more people took up silk screens so that no one would know whether my picture was mine or somebody else's.[57]

Here Warhol claims that he is using silkscreens because it would be 'so great' to change styles frequently. Presumably, the logic is something like this: silkscreening is Warhol's preferred artistic process, because no-one can really tell if the artist had a hand in making the work or not. The use of photography permits an anonymity and a consequent mobility of style.

This comment suggests that the use of the photographic silkscreen is motivated by Warhol's attempt to standardize his working procedure to the point that he becomes unnecessary. But problems with this supposedly anonymous method of production creep back in, as Warhol admits that he hasn't been able to produce exact copies of his work. He

---

[56]Mary Josephson has written eloquently on Warhol as a medium in "Warhol: The Medium As Cultural Artifact," *Art in America* 59 (May/June 1971), 40-46.

[57]Andy Warhol, "What Is Pop Art? Answers from 8 Painters, Part I," *Art News* 62 (November 1963), 26.

says: "I think somebody *should* be able to do all my paintings for me," which indicates more of a desire and less of an actual working method. Moreover, despite repeated gestures that called his authorship into question, Warhol eventually complied with the demands of the market that a consistent and recognizable author be the single source (of production and value) of his work. Ultimately he had to issue statements denying the assertions of Factory habitués like Brigid Polk that they did his paintings for him. These statements, it seems clear, were not motivated by a wish to receive credit where credit was due. They stem rather from a desire to stabilize the market for his paintings. This in itself is interesting, since it lays bare Warhol's own lack of control over whether or not he relinquished control. In this case the market, coupled with his wish to remain a viable commodity in that market, intervened as a decisive factor in forcing Warhol to maintain the authorial function. Warhol is thus forced to reverse his earlier attempts to give up authorial autonomy; but, ironically, in this reversal, the truly heteronomous character of that authorship is revealed. This teaches us a valuable lesson about the founding limits of intentionality, even as it presents us with the sad spectacle of Warhol policing the very boundaries he had so productively and provocatively muddled.

Another way to come at the issue of Warhol as a machine is to note that there are two potentials inherent in technology: one is a celebratory strain in which humans dominate nature, the other a pessimistic strain in which nature masters humanity. These can be represented on the one hand by Francis Bacon, who wrote glowingly of the human ability to exploit natural resources and on the other by Adorno and Horkheimer, who in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* tried to show that by approaching nature in an instrumental fashion, humanity ended by instrumentalizing itself.[58]

These two positions are evident, too, in the machine aesthetic of modern art. Early advocates of the machine aesthetic tended to take the positive view. There was an optimism that greater technological development would put humans in a better position to control

[58]Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944), trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 1972).

their own destiny: the various industrial utopias from Marx onward were predicated on such a position. But the second possibility — that humans would decisively lose control of their destiny through subordination to the machine — was always present. The machine, in this second view, symbolizes not our triumphant autonomy, but our own automation.

One would think that Warhol's frequently quoted "I want to be a machine" would have served as a means of connecting him to a modernist machine aesthetic. But this connection has not been made because Warhol embraces the second strain more than the first. In Warhol we find a machine aesthetic based on the loss of autonomy, on submission to the machine, and on feminized tropes of reproduction and consumption rather than on heroic and masculinized tropes of production.

To discuss Warhol in this way is of course to work within a contradiction. Here I am approaching the work of a single author in a monographic format, while at the same time attempting to dislodge the primacy of the author, by arguing that this author makes a consistent and systematic attempt to dislodge that concept. In short, my own account is riven by the category of the author, which, on the most significant levels of conceptualizing the project, I have not been able to out-think. This contradiction testifies to the continuing impact of these categories; it is a consolation that Warhol, too, operated within these contradictions — sometimes to 'his' benefit, sometimes to 'his' regret.

I have so far tried to oppose the iconographic reading of the Pop silkscreens as images of mourning on two levels. Death is a preoccupation of the Pop works, but this impression of death, while heightened by the actual death of the photographic referents from Marilyn Monroe to the anonymous victims of car crashes, is already given by the medium of photography. I have attempted to show that Marilyn is not only dead but that her death is presupposed by the photographs of her, that her absence is not a loss to be mourned but is constitutive of our contact with her in the first place. I have also tried to show that interpreting these pictures as expressions of loss posits a persona anterior to the work, someone who is doing the expressing. In contrast, I have argued that Warhol

identifies with the loss of origin characteristic of photography, leaving us with a notion of the author *as* medium. These silkscreens leave us with a multiplying set of surfaces that do not gain their meaning by being traced to an origin: there is no-one to be found behind the work, nothing to give it an 'underlying' meaning.

SUR/FACE

As Stephen Koch has pointed out, "there are faces everywhere in his art, caught not only by the eternal Instamatic and Polaroid, but in the silk-screens, in the films (which are, to a degree unknown to any other modern director, portrait films), there are the faces of the Warhol superstars, there are the faces of the Warhol women."[59] The centrality of the face in Warhol's oeuvre underlines the fact that his paintings have a particular kind of human presence. Warhol's silkscreens of celebrity faces help us to begin reading some specificity into the surface/depth metaphor. For the connection between the words 'surface' and 'face' stares us, as it were, in the face: we don't even have to dig deep into the word's etymology in order to find this verbal link. Here, too, we find a split between a person's appearance (their façade, the face they present to the world) and their essence (their internal contents, expressive of who they really are). The face serves as a pivot point between these two regions, for while it undeniably belongs to the appearance, it is also a privileged site for discerning a person's inner truth. The eyes, especially, are thought to be 'windows on the soul,' a means of moving from the circumstantial evidence of appearance to inner depth.

The artistic category that corresponds to looking into someone's eyes is portraiture; the use of Marilyn's face in a painting thus raises the question of whether this can be properly called a portrait. The reigning definition of a portrait in our age of bourgeois individualism is still more or less the presentation of an individual as an individual, in other words, the creation of a likeness expressive of the unique qualities of that person.

---

[59]Stephen Koch, *Stargazer: Andy Warhol's World and His Films*, (New York: M. Boyars, 1985), 29.

Although the ideological constraints of such a definition are now more obvious to us (its presumption that the portrait records rather than constructs the individuality it presents, its ahistorical suggestion that in all periods it was 'individuality' rather than social standing, certain privileges or standardized attributes that were emphasized)[60], nonetheless, this definition remains part of our 'common sense.'

Richard Brilliant's recent study, simply entitled *Portraiture*, sticks fairly close to this standard understanding. For this reason Brilliant's commentary on Warhol's *Marilyns* is helpful in measuring the deviation of Warhol's 'portrait' from our typical understanding of the portrait:

> Fifty identical images of the actress-celebrity, Marilyn Monroe, slightly modified by colour and tone, are deliberately shown together in a single work [the Tate's *Marilyn Diptych*], almost fourteen feet wide, to make a statement about the banality of popular imagery, about the insistent stereotyping of such images, about figural and non-figural pattern formation, about mechanical printing — but very little about Marilyn Monroe (itself an alias). Warhol's *Marilyn* is about image-making rather than portraiture because the work so clearly emphasizes the mechanism of popular representation in the modern age but not the person represented.
>
> Here, and elsewhere, Warhol seems to deprive the portrait of much of its deeper referential content in order to suggest both the artificial confection of her public personality and the relative invisibility of the person behind the public image, the latter offered as a commodity for the viewer's consumption.[61]

Brilliant's account implies several things about the traditional portrait: 1) portraits are meant to reveal something about the person depicted and 2) the identity of the person depicted rests not on the surface of the image, not in the 'likeness,' but in some deeper quality, some element behind the surface toward which the portrait gestures more or less effectively. Warhol's *Marilyns*, therefore, are not primarily portraits since they do not evoke this kind of behindness or beyondness to the person. Instead, Brilliant notes that repetition of her image functions not only formally to keep our attention on the surface of the painting, but also psychologically to block access to "the person behind the public

---

[60]For a helpful discussion of these issues see Patricia Simons, "Women in Frames: The Gaze, the Eye, the Profile in Renaissance Portraiture," in *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*, ed. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), 38-57.

[61]Richard Brilliant, *Portraiture*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991).

image" and instead keep us on the level of "the artificial confection of her public personality."

Although Brilliant refers to the *Marilyns* as portraits, he notes that "Warhol's *Marilyn* is about image-making rather than portraiture because the work so clearly emphasizes the mechanism of popular representation in the modern age but not the person represented." This observation seems correct: we have no access to someone like "Marilyn herself" in this image; her face calls up not specific personal characteristics, but more generic identities like celebrity, sex symbol, Hollywood star. Warhol seems to refer to the star-making apparatus rather than to Marilyn Monroe. But can we really oppose Marilyn to this apparatus, claim that her likeness could represent something other than the ascendancy of that apparatus? Brilliant seems to suggest that such a move is possible: he seems to be calling for a portrait of Norma Jean Mortensen, the woman behind the public mask. But it seems to me that Marilyn becomes a privileged image for Warhol precisely because in her case it is impossible to imagine something like a stable identity, a "Norma Jean" behind "Marilyn." The difficulty in finding the woman behind her mask is heightened when one realizes that the stories of "Norma Jean" growing up poor in Los Angeles, her early marriage to the boy next door, her struggle to rise out of the chorus, are all central elements in the Marilyn Monroe myth. Every aspect of the star's 'private' life (her addictions, her low self-esteem, her marriages and affairs) became more grist for the public mill. 'Norma Jean' designates no-one other than the mythic precursor of the great Monroe, the little girl trapped in the voluptuous body of the Hollywood goddess. But of course it is her self-presentation as vulnerable child in voluptuous woman's body that is the essence of 'Marilyn Monroe' as persona.

In short, Marilyn seems to be a strategic image for Warhol because her media image actively frustrates the desire to penetrate to the person beneath. Warhol's choice of a particularly expressionless and still image of Marilyn seems designed to enhance and extend this frustration. There is no 'Norma Jean' lurking in Marilyn's putative depths, this

is Marilyn as sheer beautiful cosmetic surface. If we don't attribute a 'Norma Jean' behind Marilyn, any more than we place a true Warhol behind the persona, are we left to say that Marilyn's image is meaningless?

THE ICONOGRAPHY OF STYLE

In the course of "Saturday Disasters," Crow suggests that Marilyn Monroe, Liz Taylor, and Jackie Kennedy represent different standards of feminine beauty (blonde vs. brunette, overblown vs. discreet, buxom vs. petite, glamorous vs. stylish) and together constitute a "semiotics of style."[62] Crow's reference to semiotics helps us to target another problem with assuming that there is something behind Marilyn's facade that gives her image meaning. Instead we might agree with Saussure that Marilyn's image takes on meaning in relation to other signifiers, rather than in relation to the referent.

Looking at the files of publicity photographs Warhol collected on various celebrities, it becomes clear that Marilyn's image can be read in this light. Her image is constructed differentially: that is to say, what she stands for is as much who she is not—Brigitte Bardot, Kim Novak, Greta Garbo —as who she is. Marilyn comes to signify Americanness in contrast to Bardot's Frenchness; her image stands for a certain naiveté or 'naturalness' in relation to Garbo's sophistication; her status as sex goddess is thrown into relief by Novak's ingenue.[63] We are thus able to see Marilyn as a blonde incarnating a specific set of features in relation to other media blondes of the day. Her image is also structured in relation to brunettes, to whom a different set of qualities are typically attributed.

---

[62]Crow, 317.

[63]Richard Dyer positions Monroe in relation to other discourses prevalent at the time, such as the *Playboy* discourse, which he characterizes as offering a new definition of sexuality, a sexuality that is to be free, natural, and guiltless. Monroe was, for *Playboy*, the exemplar of this new "natural" sexual being. Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society*, (NY: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 27-42. This strikes me as remarkably similar to Warhol — another famously dumb blond — who presents himself as a sort of natural artist who never has to work at it, but simply relies on instinct. It seems equally true that for both Warhol and Monroe this natural, innocent approach conceals an enormous ambition.

Crow in fact writes that Marilyn and Liz were a diacritical pair: "Each was maintained in her respective position by a kind of negative symmetry with the other, by representing what the other was not."[64] But if Marilyn (pliant, vulnerable) and Liz (tempestuous, passionate) are marked as opposites by hair color, they are twins in terms of curvaceous sex appeal. By contrast, Jacqueline Kennedy comes to represent a different set of options — as Crow puts it, she creates a "slim, dark, aristocratic standard of beauty."[65] A whole field of attractions and repulsions is set up between the poles of these different standards of female beauty, and the images of these women take on particular meanings within this set of relations.[66] Moreover, the use of stars suggests the realm of unconscious fantasy, the dreams that we project on to these figures and imagine them living out for us.

Returning to the *Jackie* silkscreens with this in mind, we can see that they are among the least 'realist' or 'documentary' works Warhol ever made. In *Jackie (The Week That Was)* (1963), he reverses each photograph to highlight not its documentary value, but its existence *as* a photograph [Figure 57]. This painting is one of his most effective presentations of the mass media as a realm of fantasy in which celebrity images take on a life of their own, mutating in relation to our desires, beginning to *act*, seemingly, on their own. In the bottom right squares he gives us an imagined scene of Jackie 'facing herself,' as if in a mirror. In the two squares directly above, she begins to divide, to separate into two women, who head off in different directions. This same passage of the painting can be read differently, since two of the panels are painted in white and two in tan, thus creating a set of diagonal patterns. The white block on the bottom right begins to lead the eye, tic-tac-toe-like, to the upper left part of the painting: this diagonal series suggests Jackie slowly turning from private thoughts to compose a smiling public face, which at last, in the top left square, is triumphantly displayed.

---

[64]Ibid., 316.

[65]Ibid.

[66]A wonderful analysis of these semiotics can be found in Wayne Koestenbaum, *Jackie Under My Skin: Interpreting an Icon*, (New York: Plume/Penguin, 1995). His reading of Jackie and Liz as modern-day Cleopatras is particularly interesting, 77-8.

Directly to the right of the top left-hand square Warhol places the same image in reverse, creating a slightly different sense of her face, as if we have traveled into a looking-glass world. Moreover this doubling creates a Rorschach-like blot where the identical, but reversed photographs join each other. The two images directly beneath this pair explore the same effect, creating a distorted, funhouse face for President Kennedy, composed of two right halves of his face, put together. This pair also suggests that it is her image that compels us, for JFK becomes a weird cipher, a child's puzzle, receding in importance; Jackie stands in front, taking up the visual space. Once again, the figure of a woman is placed on the surface, but the background images of JFK do not seem to constitute a 'deeper' level.

None of these readings is meant to be definitive. Indeed none can be, as one visual rhyme seamlessly gives way to another. Rather what I mean to emphasize is the way one's eye careens around the canvas, following these strange patterns, quite independently of concepts like 'Jackie's grief at losing her husband.' This patchwork of Jackies foreground our own capacity to invent her, to endlessly imagine her, given only a few stock images of her face. In this sense *Jackie (The Week That Was)* goes much farther than *Sixteen Jackies* [Figure 50]. Both works share the same fashionable decorator palette of blue and tan, and both suggest wallpaper-like repetition. But *Sixteen Jackies*, with its lines of Jackies moving in different directions, as if at cross purposes, is less complex than *The Week That Was*. *The Week That Was* steers us closer to the realm of unconscious fantasy, to all that we make out of almost nothing at all.

And to say this ends up being quite different from saying that it is the grieving Jackie whom Warhol cares for — not just because no Author is required, no depth either to Warhol or to Jackie (who after all was begrudgingly admired for her refusal throughout her life to drop even one hint as to the nature of her self, shielding those depths scrupulously under the rubric of her 'private life.') Without those supposed depths, we are left with one more intriguing, glamorous woman. Have we simply returned to the view that Warhol has

a meaningless fixation on glamor? Without any depths of character to probe, is there any possibility of meaning?

There is meaning on the surface, it's just not particularly deep. Nor is it serious. It concerns the world of appearances, including the world of fashion and glamor and all that we are accustomed to dismissing as trivial. Stylish surface has its own particular powers, its own meanings, its own iconography, if you will. It has been difficult to grasp this, especially in relation to Warhol's art, because he rather doggedly lines up the most superficial surfaces available. Not only does he embrace cosmetic color and modernist wallpaper as models for his art-making, he further conflates them with pulp photographic imagery. Warhol's subject matter is drawn from a cultural realm that has been dismissed as an effeminate substitute for high culture and that is also distinguished by a lack of intentionality in its production.

Although the threatening meaninglessness of Warhol's subject matter is usually brought up in relation to his pictures of consumer products or of women, there is at least one exception:

> The *John Joseph H.* pictures are exceptional because of the extreme degree to which they embody Warhol's philosophy of nothingness and suggest the social implications of his style. John Joseph H. is the quintessence of a deadly type of expressionless vacuity, and he reminds us of the mindless threat that such vacuity poses to civilization. He is, unmistakably, a punk.[67]

In this case, it is the picture of a criminal male [Figure 58], rather than a beautiful female, that prompts the critic to sound the decline of Western civilization. This is not, however, the most common scenario.

It is now pressing to spell out what value could possibly inhere in the glamorous, objectified females that populate Warhol's art. In the next chapter I address the fact that women have been told that it is more important for them to be beautiful objects than to be deep subjects. Nonetheless, I try to show that these critiques have to this point been

---

[67]Andrew Kagan, "Most Wanted Men: Andy Warhol and the Anti-Culture of Punk," *Arts Magazine* 53 (September 1978), 119.

articulated within the framework of an ideology that privileges subjective depths over the alluring surfaces of objects. Without denying the powers and privileges that accrue to the subject — women continue to struggle to be accorded them — it seems to me that we need at this point some understanding of the powers and privileges that accrue to the object. Re-evaluating the object by engaging with Warhol's own spectacularly superficial objects is the task of the fourth chapter.

Chapter Four THE POWERS OF THE OBJECT

The language of surface and depth, as we have seen, appears in diverse contexts and performs a variety of ideological functions. In this chapter, our focus turns to the ramifications of this language for our views of human subjectivity. In Western philosophical thought, the deep has usually corresponded to the authentic, internal self while the superficial names the deceptive front that disguises our genuine motivations. As Charles Taylor has written:

> In our languages of self-understanding, the opposition 'inside-outside' plays an important role. We think of our thoughts, ideas, or feelings as being 'within' us, while the objects in the world which these mental states bear on are 'without.' Or else we think of our capacities or potentialities as 'inner,' awaiting the development which will manifest them or realize them in the public world. The unconscious is for us within, and we think of the depths of the unsaid, the unsayable, the powerful inchoate feelings and affinities and fear which dispute with us the control of our lives, as inner. We are creatures with inner depths; with partly unexplored and dark interiors.[1]

Our common sense views of the self are difficult to oppose: "So we naturally come to think that we have selves the way we have heads or arms, and inner depths the way we have hearts or livers, as a matter of hard, interpretation-free fact."[2] However intuitive such a model may seem, Taylor wants to challenge the universality of this way of thinking about the self. His history is written to oppose this seeming naturalness. He therefore starts with a very different paradigm of the self in Plato, and traces the development of the modern localization of the self, constructed as an internal realm opposed to the external world, through Augustine, Descartes, Locke, and Montaigne.

---

[1]Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 111.

[2]Ibid., 112.

The development of inwardness as a privileged trope for subjectivity is a complex topic. For our purposes, the main point is that the spatial reassignment of subjectivity to the inside of the self is integrally linked with a new conception of subject and object:

> The shift can be thought of as a new subjectivism. This is Heidegger's description, and we can see why. It can be so called because it gives rise to the notion of a subject in its modern sense; or otherwise put, because it involves a new localization, whereby we place 'within' the subject what was previously seen as existing, as it were, between knower-agent and world, linking them and making them inseparable.
>
> The opposition of subject to object is one way in which the new strong localization arises.[3]

What Taylor calls the 'modern localization of the self,' that is, our sense that the self is something *internal*, corresponds to our separation from the world. Instead of existing within a cosmos in which all things are connected through a divine ordering principle, the world becomes a series of objects foreign to me, with which I have no *a priori* connection. Subject and object are now opposed to each other: "the subject is, as it were, over against the object."[4] In this new paradigm, we see others as objects in our field of vision and have difficulty understanding their subjectivity, which is now pictured as 'underneath' the surface. When subjectivity becomes completely internalized, the surface becomes a problem: now it can be opaque and deceptive as to the true intentions lurking beneath.

We are already familiar with Warhol's persistence in sticking to the surface. As we have seen, Warhol's lack of interest in subjective depths has led many to assume that his work is either meaningless or banal. Worse, his celebration of women as objects can make his work seem downright reactionary in its gender politics. But there is great interest for feminists in Warhol's appreciation of the surface and its powers. Warhol does not oppose the notion of subjective depths, but he does point us toward what the surface of the object has to offer in its own right.

Complaints about Warhol's superficiality have clustered around two concerns. First, his work seems to glory in representing the most superficial of objects. Not only

---

[3]Ibid., 188.
[4]Ibid.

does Warhol paint surfaces, he also frequently paints objects, such as the Campbell's soup can and the Statue of Liberty. Moreover, even the humans he depicts seem to be drained of their subjectivity. Second, his persona seems to present a blank surface without an interior depth. He presents himself as an object to be looked at, more than a deep subject. One purpose of this chapter is to show that these two concerns are not as different as they may initially seem. As we will see, paintings have often been seen and discussed as if they were persons. Warhol's paintings do suggest a set of links between human and painted surfaces: exploring these connections is the purpose of this chapter.

DEEP IN WARHOL'S CLOSET

In 1968, Roland Barthes boldly condemned the Author to death, but just a year later we find Michel Foucault still presuming the existence of such a creature by asking what an author is. Foucault's question, posed on the heels of Barthes' declaration, suggested that a more conservative approach to authorship was necessary, one invested in probing the commitments (to property, to originality, to autonomy, to authenticity) behind the concept, but unwilling to throw the authorial baby out with the ideological bathwater. Taken together and considered from our vantage point now, the great value of both these essays was that the following question *became* a question that had to be grappled with: how *does* the author's life shape, limit, enable, constrain, construct, or otherwise impact the author's work? Instead of assuming a one-to-one correspondence between the facts of life and the work of art, we are now challenged to develop a more complex model for how life and works might interrelate.

Barthes' chief objection to the Author was that "to give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing."[5] The Author was assassinated because he was imagined to lie beneath the work, furnishing the sole ground for interpretive effort and restricting the range of potential meanings. But a

[5]Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author" (1968), in *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath, (New York: The Noonday Press, 1977), 147.

loophole is provided: if we do not position the author as existing beneath the work and guaranteeing certain authoritative readings, then we may still have something to say about the author after all. Biography — itself not a person's 'life' but a representation of it — can become one more interpretive touchstone, not the authoritative or final one. So let us consider Warhol's life itself as an elaborate and self-conscious work. Treated as one more carefully created work alongside the rest of his oeuvre, this life holds promise for us: this persona and these works can and do mutually illuminate each other.[6]

Over the past few years, interest in Warhol's biography and especially in his sexuality has generated a number of new interpretations of his work. Trevor Fairbrother, for instance, has recreated the gay context for Warhol's 'boy drawings' from the 1950s, while Richard Meyer has persuasively treated the *Most Wanted Men* (1964) and the *Elvis* pictures as an "encoding of gay content."[7] In both of these essays, pictures of men serve to link the biographical with the artistic: the subjects of the paintings are considered as the objects of Warhol's sexual desire.

Given "the sheer force of obliterative homophobia at work in contemporary Pop Art criticism,"[8] it is crucial to foreground Warhol's gay thematics as Fairbrother and Meyer do. This project has been extended by the recent volume entitled *Pop Out*, which is specifically devoted to 'outing' Warhol's subject matter, making its references to homosexual and camp culture clear. But there are several pitfalls here. First, the artist's biography is treated as a relatively straightforward group of facts that exist prior to the work and contribute to bringing the work into being. As a result, these interpretations suffer from a circular structure: we know that Warhol desired men because desirable men appear in his

---

[6]Indeed Barthes seems to anticipate this strategy in his own *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* (1975), trans. Richard Howard, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1977).

[7]Trevor Fairbrother, "Tomorrow's Man," in *Success Is a Job in New York: The Early Art and Business of Andy Warhol*, ed. Donna M. DeSalvo (Grey Art Gallery and Study Center and The Carnegie Museum of Art, 1989): 55-74, and Richard Meyer, "Warhol's Clones," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 7:1 (1994), 89. Fairbrother does note that gay sensibility includes more than gay subject-matter, but his own account gives far more air time to the latter.

[8]Simon Watney, "Queer Andy," in *Pop Out: Queer Warhol*, ed. Jennifer Doyle, Jonathan Flatley, and José Esteban Muñoz (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 21.

paintings, and we know that these depicted men are objects of desire because Warhol desired men in real life. Not only are there many other ways that sexuality could be expressed besides through the depiction of desired objects, but sexuality itself is too complex, contingent, idiosyncratic, and changeable to be reduced exclusively to the matter of object-choice. Eve Sedgwick has been a leader in moving the discussion of sexuality beyond the issue of same-sex or opposite-sex object choice to which it has been, in the twentieth century, for the most part reduced. In her view, the opposition between homosexual and heterosexual is actually a defense by which we try to ward off the true range of human sexual diversity.[9]

The focus on images of men also runs the risk of creating a distinction between Warhol's 'private,' homoerotic pictures and his 'public' icons like Marilyn Monroe and Campbell's soup, with pictures like the *Most Wanted Men* and the *Elvises* falling in between (public works that encode private desires). Kenneth Silver has suggested on the contrary that Warhol's sexual radicality consisted less in his homosexuality *per se* than in his refusal to sequester that sexuality within the confines of a 'private' realm. As Silver points out, the boy drawings were not intended to be private. Their rejection by the art world meant that they remained private for many years, and that rejection probably contributed to a tactical change in Warhol's subject matter that did not, however, make his subsequent art any the less sexually charged. Warhol continued to express his desires in the public forum of his art, and his continuing refusal to differentiate public and private was one of the ways he massively disrupted art world norms.[10] Moreover Silver suggests that 'superficiality' itself was a crucial strategy through which Warhol articulated his sexuality: "Indeed, I have come to think that Warhol's insistence on our taking his art at face value,

---

[9]See especially "Introduction: Axiomatic" in *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). For a critique of the notion that homosexuality particularly involves a 'sameness' in object-choice, see Michael Warner, "Homo-Narcissism; or, Heterosexuality," in *Engendering Men: The Question of Male Feminist Criticism*, ed. Joseph A. Boone and Michael Cadden (New York: Routledge, 1990): 190-206.

[10]Kenneth E. Silver, "Modes of Disclosure: The Construction of Gay Identity and the Rise of Pop Art," in *Hand-Painted Pop: American Art in Transition, 1955-62*, ed. Russell Ferguson (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1992), 194.

his insistence that we remain on the surface of things, derived from acute awareness that 'depth,' intellectual or pictorial, could all too easily begin to assume the shape of 'the closet,' from the depths of which one might never reemerge."[11]

In other words, by assuming that there is a depth 'behind' Warhol's subject matter, Warhol's gay-oriented critics have inadvertently created a closet for Warhol, a closet that Silver suggests Warhol was never in because he kept everything, including his sexuality, on the surface. If we do not rely on the idea of 'deep' or 'secret' sexual desires, but simply look at the surfaces of Warhol's paintings, we can see that he is fascinated by objects. This chapter follows Silver in that it resists dividing Warhol's oeuvre into overtly gay and relatively straight Pop imagery. I propose that unifying his images of men, women and things is a sensitivity to, and an appreciation of, the powers of the object in all of its guises. That these guises are more often female than male in our culture is a fact that his work indicates but does not, in my view, reinforce. Rather, I read his work as helping us to challenge the assignment of objecthood and surface exclusively to women

Moreover I swim against the unidirectional interpretive current of most biographical readings by allowing Warhol's paintings to illuminate his life. Therefore I begin not with the biographical fact of Warhol's sexuality but with some of his most famous works, the silkscreens of actress Marilyn Monroe. Warhol appropriates three main aspects of Monroe's star persona — her cosmetically applied glamor (Chapter 2), the association of her image with the technologies of film and photography (Chapter 4), and her status as a spectacular object (considered here) — as the distinctive signs of his own artistic practice. By manipulating paint as a kind of make-up, by employing photographic reproduction to disseminate the image, and by treating the finished painting as an object that is alluring to the gaze, Warhol makes his work, and his self, over in Monroe's image.[12]

---

[11]Ibid., 200.

[12]Bradford Collins discusses Warhol's "makeover of personal and social ambition" in "The Metaphysical Nose-Job: The Remaking of Warhola, 1960-1968," *Arts Magazine* 62 (February 1988): 47-55, but if the life has come alive in Collins' account, the works are treated as relatively inert documents of the process of self-invention.

SPECTACULAR OBJECTS

In her famous essay on "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Laura Mulvey writes:

> This paper intends to use psychoanalysis to discover where and how the fascination of film is reinforced by pre-existing patterns of fascination already at work within the individual subject and the social formations that have moulded him. It takes as its starting-point the way film reflects, reveals and even plays on the straight, socially established interpretation of sexual difference which controls images, erotic ways of looking and spectacle.[13]

If we do agree to start here, we will undoubtedly find nearly any publicity shot of Marilyn Monroe, such as the famous still from *The Seven-Year Itch* (1955), to be a textbook illustration of the male gaze in action [Figure 59]. It is not difficult to read off from this image Mulvey's claim that

> In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role, women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*.[14]

In this photograph her skirt is lifted by the "accidental" blast of wind from the grate, both heightening and assuaging the castration anxiety of the properly Mulveyan viewer who looks on. Indeed when Mulvey's essay was reprinted in the collection *Art After Modernism*, it was illustrated with another image of Monroe, a still from *How to Marry a Millionaire* (1953), suggesting that Marilyn was felt to illustrate the position of the female star within cinematic patriarchy in a particularly acute and exemplary way [Figure 60].

The concern that this criticism may apply as well to Warhol's images of the actress has been voiced by Thomas Crow who writes that "the pictures' seeming acceptance of the reduction of a woman's identity to a mass-commodity fetish can make the entire [Marilyn] series seem a monument to a benighted past or an unrepentant present."[15] Images like the *Marilyn Six Pack* (1962) certainly invite such a reading: here the woman's face is explicitly

---

[13]Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," (1973) in *Visual and Other Pleasures*, (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1988), 14.

[14]Ibid., 19.

[15]Thomas Crow, "Saturday Disasters: Trace and Reference in Early Warhol," *Art in America* 75 (May 1987), 133.

likened to a can of beer, a commodity designed for male consumption [Figure 14]. But what if we don't begin here, don't assume that the "straight, socially established interpretation of sexual difference" is what's at stake? How might we reorient the terms of Mulvey's discourse to produce a different reading of Warhol's Marilyn images?

We might start by noting that in Warhol's paintings of Monroe, the body of this most palpably carnal of all screen icons has disappeared. Warhol does not silkscreen Marilyn's body as revealed by her runaway dress in the still from *The Seven-Year Itch.* Even today this image frequently stands in for Marilyn's star quality, as can be seen in a recent advertisement for Absolut Vodka, where Marilyn's essence is conjured up by her raised skirt, which gyrates in the gust of air from a heating grate [Figure 61]. Nor do Warhol's images participate in the kind of naturalizing rhetoric of one publicity shot from *Niagara* (1953), which shows Marilyn spread out in front of Niagara Falls, her body on display as a spectacular force of nature no less splendidly beautiful and powerful than the falls themselves [Figure 62].

In striking contrast to all of these, the body of Warhol's Marilyn is missing — she is only a head, lopped off at the neck. Warhol in fact used another publicity still made in connection with *Niagara* as his source image [Figure 63]. Although this photograph features a plunging neckline and bare shoulders, it shows much less of Marilyn's body to begin with, and far less by the time Warhol crops it. In *Green Marilyn* (1962) the voluptuous screen goddess has been reduced to a face which doesn't even seem to be part of a head [Figure 18]. The visual cues that would indicate the three-dimensional architecture of the face have been largely erased, dematerialized by washing out the gray tones in the photographic silkscreen. Two years later Warhol pushes that dematerialization even further, cropping the image even more tightly so that only the barest stub of Marilyn's neck remains visible [Figure 17]. As a result, the face fills almost the entire canvas, its features providing a flattened-out field to which color can be applied. In this respect, a current Mercedes advertisement makes a good point of contrast to Warhol's *Marilyns*. In

this advertisement, yet another still from *Niagara* and the caption "Glamour" stand in for the Monroe aura [Figure 64]. Here retouching is used to heighten the shine and glow of Monroe's skin, increasing the sensuous palpability of her face.

Warhol edits out Marilyn's body, preferring Marilyn's face and the highly artificial cosmetic connotations clinging to it. Thus Warhol's *Marilyns* signify not the abundant and innocent 'nature' of her publicity images, but the careful construction of the star's image through layers of coiffure and makeup. Instead of reinforcing ideas of womanhood which are so amply available in the Monroe imagery, Warhol instead makes use of another potential latent there, which is the utter artificiality of the star's image. By flattening the face out like a canvas, by applying to it brightly colored paint of various cosmetic hues, Warhol uses Marilyn's face to signify not nature but artifice. In addition to emphasizing the kind of work that goes into putting forth this image, he points out that the world of images is not the only one.

Although Warhol is often pictured as terminally starstruck, unable to distinguish between fantasy and reality, a number of his comments in *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol* demonstrate that Warhol makes a strong distinction between the glamor industry and real life, and suggest that he is sympathetic to the problem of real-life people trying to look like people in movies. In one remark, Warhol moves quickly between a discussion of paint and makeup: "What makes a painting beautiful is the way the paint's put on, but I don't understand how women put on makeup. It gets on your lips, and it's so heavy. Lipstick and makeup and powder and shadow creams. And jewelry. It's all so heavy."[16] The ease with which Warhol moves from a comment about paint to one about makeup is noteworthy. But Warhol implicitly contrasts the experience of the body (the heaviness and sheer discomfort of all that makeup) and the glamorous appearance it produces. Crucially,

---

[16]Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol: From A to B and Back Again* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1975), 67.

Warhol's complaint, "it's all so heavy," puts us in the gravitational field of the physical body, and not in the two-dimensional realm of painting.[17]

Both Marilyn Monroe and Warhol's paintings of her attract attention to themselves in a self-conscious way, that is, both draw the eye and at the same time make clear that they were intended to do so. Or, to put this a different way and to bring us back to Mulvey, to-be-looked-at-ness is a quality not just of feminine appearance under patriarchy, it is a quality of painting. *Turquoise Marilyn* solicits our gaze and then displays itself before us with a desire-to-be-desired no less excruciating than Marilyn Monroe's. As an artist, Warhol seems to identify much more closely with the bearer than with the maker of meaning, seems much more attuned to the pleasures of being an object than to those of being a subject. And this is a possibility that Mulvey, after all, does not foreclose, as she writes that "there are circumstances in which looking itself is a source of pleasure, just as, in the reverse formation, there is pleasure in being looked at."[18] Far from testifying to an antifeminist impulse, then, I see Warhol's paintings of the actress as built upon a desire to make her style his. But we will want to understand why Warhol presents spectacular objecthood as feminine.

WARHOL STRAIGHTENS OUT?

In order to understand Warhol's use of the Marilyn image, we need to review several changes in his art between 1960 and 1962. First, as we saw in Chapter 1, many of his early subjects are the low-budget advertisements buried in the back pages of magazines and

---

[17]Throughout the chapter on beauty, Warhol insists upon the image as artificial construction: "Beauties in photographs are different from beauties in person. It must be hard to be a model, because you'd want to be like the photograph of you and you can't ever look that way. And so you start to copy the photograph," 63. Warhol extends this sense of the impossibility of looking like a photograph by saying: "Someone once asked me to state once and for all the most beautiful person I'd ever met. Well, the only people I can ever pick out as unequivocal beauties are from the movies, and then when you meet them, they're not really beauties either, so your standards don't even really exist. In life, the movie stars can't even come up to the standards they set on film, 68. Warhol also wrote: "Beauty doesn't have anything to do with sex. Beauty has to do with beauty and sex has to do with sex," 67. In the context of these other remarks, we can construe this as separating image from reality, two dimensions from three. (Of course, Warhol also insisted that sex was best as image and fantasy; the reality was bound to be disappointing.)

[18]Mulvey, 16.

newspapers. Toward the end of 1961, Warhol began painting front pages. Where he had focused on low-prestige, fairly unsophisticated advertising, he turns to headlines and particularly to the glaring headlines of the New York tabloids. Now the images are reproduced whole. In works like *A Boy for Meg* (1961) and *Daily News* (1962) [Figures 65 and 66], the images have a simplicity and stark clarity that makes it clear that the details have been smoothed away in favor of precise contours, yet no content has been obviously suppressed. *129 Die in Jet* is in fact a simplified version of this front page, but it does not produce a sense that anything has been edited out [Figure 67]. The lack of details focuses our attention on the central image, producing a greater graphic impact. Where there was marginality, erasure and omission, we now see precise conformity to big-budget media spectacle with its broad audience.

Stylistically there is a change as well. In the work from 1960 and 1961, numerous details of the appropriated image are effaced. Moreover these effacements are rendered quite obvious; usually by failing to reproduce several letters of a word, as in *Advertisement* (1960) [Figure 9]. These omissions point to their own incompletion, leading us to ponder what is missing and why it has been suppressed. Similarly in *Crossword* (1960) [Figure 68], Warhol gives us a puzzle, a series of blanks with clues to help us fill in the missing words. Normally a crossword puzzle is meant to be solved, but beginning a third of the way down the list of clues, Warhol effaces letters from the words, making the puzzle insoluble.

Another work from this early period, *Telephone* (1961) [Figure 69] seems to play quite deliberately with the idea of a coded self portrait. *Telephone* depicts an old-fashioned model of the kind pictured in Charles Sheeler's *Self-Portrait* of 1923 [Figure 70]. Not only the phone, but the vivid contrast between white and black seems to be taken from Sheeler's drawing. Sheeler inscribes himself in the drawing of this ordinary object by making his phone number, Audubon 451-, visible on the earpiece, and also by including a portion of his reflection in the windowpane behind the phone. As much as Warhol takes from *Self-*

Portrait, however, he takes out. Warhol seems to borrow the idea of representing himself through a domestic object, but he departs from Sheeler in removing the evocative mise-en-scène that gives the object a stage to resonate in, replacing the sensitive drawing in conté crayon with flat unmodeled graphic contrasts, and omitting both the reflected self-portrait and the coded self-portrait in the form of the phone number. While the image itself is clearly indebted to *Self-Portrait*, it is only in this basic resemblance that Warhol allows a whisper of self-portraiture to appear in *Telephone*.[19]

The shift from early, coded works to Pop art is apparent, too, in the changeover from images of male to female celebrities. To judge from comments like Michael Fried's review of his 1962 Stable Gallery show, the transformation was a savvy one. Remember that this was Warhol's first show in New York:

> These [paintings of Marilyn Monroe] are the most successful pieces in the show, far more successful than, for example, the comparable heads of Troy Donahue—because the fact remains that Marilyn is one of the overriding myths of out time while Donahue is not, and there is a consequent element of subjectivity that enters into the choice of the latter and mars the effect. (Epic poets and pop artists have to work with the mythic material as it is given: their art is necessarily impersonal, and there is barely any room for personal predilection.) Warhol's large canvas of Elvis Presley heads fell somewhere between the other two.[20]

In part, it is the heterosexual norms of the dominant culture that pushed Warhol's work away from the depiction of male objects and toward the depiction of female objects. Objectness in our culture is female; this is one reason why Fried can describe the early silkscreens of Troy Donahue as tainted by a subjective preference, while the *Marilyns* seem exemplary of the tastes of the culture as a whole.

Reviews of Warhol's work from the fifties focused on the sexual specificity of his imagery. One critic signaled the gay subcultural address of the work by referring to Truman Capote: "Andy Warhold (sic) has developed an original style of line drawing and a willingness to obligate himself to the narrow horizon on which appear attractive and

---

[19]For details on this painting, see the catalogue entry in Carol Troyen and Erica E. Hirschler, *Charles Sheeler: Paintings and Drawings* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1987), 96-7.

[20]Michael Fried, "New York Letter," *Art International* VI (December 1962), 57.

demanding young men involved in the business of being as much like Truman Capote or his heroes as possible. His technique has the effect of the reverse side of a negative, although his lines are broken and the spaces not clouded."[21] Others used the language of 'inversion' and 'narcissism': "Andy Warhol's 'Drawings for a Boy Book' comment, inevitably often cruelly, by means of a hard psychological line and such symbolism as strings of inverted hearts on the young men. For example, Tom's head narcisisstically is lifted with closed, rather eyeless eyes to an anonymous pair of lips suspended in space."[22]

Faced with such marginalization, Warhol found a way to express the powers and pleasures of the object in a manner more acceptable to the dominant culture. The dominant culture, evidently, was not ready to accept men as objects. Neither the straightforward eroticism of *Untitled*, c. 1957 [Figure 71], nor the impersonal tracing of a male anatomical drawing in *Untitled*, c. 1961 [Figure 72], nor the silkscreens of Troy Donahue's face were found acceptable, indicating, as they did 'a personal predilection.' So Warhol turned to the image of Marilyn Monroe, object par excellence, and found himself a major artist.

Nonetheless, Warhol's work does not limit objecthood to women. Interestingly, Fried describes the *Red Elvis* (1962) as 'somewhere between the two,' that is, between the personal (tainted by subjective desires) and the epic (impersonal, public) [Figure 73]. In his paintings of Elvis made the following year, Warhol in fact arrives at his most spectacular presentation of an embodied object in the image of a man.

Elvis is as good an example of the spectacular body as any female star, and thus he combats the normative assignment of the female body to play the role of spectacle in our culture. In John Fiske's helpful account of the continuing appeal and importance of Elvis, he writes:

> When, in 1956, the young Elvis erupted onto the US public scene, attention focussed immediately on what he did with his body and then on how he could be stopped from doing it. His nickname, Elvis the Pelvis, identifies the part of the body that caused the trouble. His performance of 'Hound Dog' on the *Milton Berle Show* of 5 June 1956

---

[21]B[arbara] G[uest], "Clarke, Rager, Warhol," *Art News* 53 (Summer 1954), 75.
[22]R[onald] V[ance], "Andy Warhol," *Art News* 55 (March 1956), 55.

> was more than adult America could endure in dignified silence. So it erupted in disciplinary fervor. The uproar had little to do with the song, but everything with the body of the singer. The performance of his hips was widely seen as one of offensive sexual abandon.[23]

Elvis was permitted a subsequent appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, provided that the camera show nothing below his waist, but as Fiske points out, "Elvis still moved wildly, his audience screamed enthusiastically, and he constantly looked down, so by sharing his gaze, his fans 'saw' what the camera was not allowed to show them."[24] Despite attempts to censor Elvis's provocative body (or perhaps because of them), it was his outrageous sexual performance of his own body that made him a rock and roll star.

This censorious response to the male body did not take quite the same form in the summer of 1963, when Warhol was making these canvases to show at the Ferus Gallery in September. Nonetheless there is something significant in the passage from *Red Elvis* (1962), which reproduced a shot of Elvis's head, cradled in the crook of his arm, to the *Elvises* made for the Ferus Gallery show. The sense of containment in the photograph used to make *Red Elvis*, the way his head seems pinned in place by the four corners of the photographic frame, is overcome entirely by the expansive, assertive posture of the later Elvis photograph, where he appears with gun drawn, feet spread wide apart. This effect of expansion is underlined by the over-lifesize scale of the works and by their wraparound installation at the Ferus Gallery [Figure 39].

In these 1963 *Elvises* the desirable body of a man is the object of the gaze. Furthermore, Elvis's gyrations were seen to galvanize a specifically female audience of fans. The transgression resided not just in the fact of the male body pronouncing its sexuality, but in the fact that this body was gazed upon by *young women*. The familiar coding of man as possessor of the gaze, woman as object to be gazed upon, was reversed in this particular case. The possibility of such reversibility, we might conjecture, was an important part of the threat seen to reside in Elvis's body. Of course, picturing female

---

[23]John Fiske, "Elvis: A Body of Controversy," in *Power Plays, Power Works* (London: Verso, 1993), 94.

[24]Ibid., 95.

teeny-boppers as possessors of the gaze has its conventional side as well, since Elvis is pictured more as the active generator of a reaction, while the young girls looking on are helpless to control themselves in his presence. By picturing Elvis's audience as exclusively female, moreover, the gaze is maintained as heterosexual.

Warhol's *Elvises*, it seems to me, revel in this reversibility, and help us to begin to detach women from their role as naturalized objects of the gaze. There is always the risk, however, that the male image will not remain both object of the gaze *and* male, but will collapse back into the realm of the feminine, feminized by being looked at. This risk is warded off in the case of the *Elvis* images by the selection of a still that presents the actor in a durable stance of macho masculinity: the Wild West gunslinger, who confronts us boldly, pistol drawn.

Warhol plays an ambiguous game with this image. On the one hand, works like *Single Elvis* [Figure 74] have a much more palpable, bodily presence than other Warhol silkscreens. Both the large scale of the image and the silkscreen, which uncharacteristically retains the half-tones that produce three-dimensional modelling, contribute to this evocation of the body.[25] This effect is heightened when we consider Warhol's other silkscreens, where the medium is used as much to efface the image as to evoke its palpability. Think, for example, of the exquisite *Natalie* (1962), which produces a strong sense that the overzealous practice of repetition will ultimately serve to make the image inaccessible, rather than rendering it close, palpable, incarnate [Figure 75]. The obsession driving the repetition will, if left unchecked, result in a canvas completely obliterated by the silkscreen ink.

But there are a number of other Elvises that do not evoke the body. In *Triple Elvis* [Figure 76] repeating the image on top of itself turns Elvis into a monster like a cyclops,

---

[25]This emphasis on the body cannot be directly correlated with the gender of the subject. Among the pictures of celebrity men, Elvis is the only full length, Brando is seated on a motorcycle, and Beatty and Donahue are head shots. Warhol's women are for the most part depicted through head shots, with the exception of Jackie, who occasionally appears as a half-length, and Liz, who is seated on horseback in *National Velvet* (1963) and with bust included in *Double Liz* (1963).

whereas in *Triple Elvis* [Figure 77], repetition gives the sense that the body is fading away. These canvases, like *Natalie*, call attention to the act of repetition in the silkscreen process itself, and its potential to make the object less, rather than more, present. Here, repetition of the image detaches it from its bodily referent; it becomes pure surface through repetition rather than alluding to the body as site of sensual experience. Thus I would have to disagree with Richard Meyer's claim, speaking of the *Double Elvis* [Figure 78], that

> this doubling, beyond simply reinforcing the phallicism of the source image, activates the erotic possibility of man-on-man contact. The pressure points of *Double Elvis*, its moment of maximum charge and ambiguity, are those places at which the two bodies overlap or touch: the cross of upper thighs and the join of outstretched arms.[26]

Especially in the context of the Ferus Gallery installation, which Meyer goes on to discuss, the over-lifesize Elvises seem not at all like potential sexual partners for each other. Rather they seem to be bodily surfaces that, in Meyer's words, "take pleasure in superficial imitations, obvious mimicries, self-conscious simulations."[27]

The Elvis paintings make it clear that Warhol is just as interested in men as spectacular objects of the gaze (if not more, to judge from the sensuous tangibility of some of the Elvis paintings). Nonetheless, it is the object itself, not its gender, that most intrigues Warhol. We know this because he is equally famous for making the Campbell's Soup Can, an object that solicits the gaze without any reference to gender. Moreover his consideration of the object extends explicitly to painting and sculpture. It is the object, without depth, without subjectivity; the object, with its power to stun us into mute fascination, that Warhol wants to make. And to be.

WARHOL AS OBJECT

When interviewers invite him to speak about his work, to take up a privileged role in shaping its meaning, Warhol typically declines, preferring to remain silent. He prefers not to possess a subjectivity, styling himself instead as a mute and passive object. In

---

[26]Meyer, 96.
[27]Ibid., 97.

Mulveyan terms, Warhol is more frequently the object of the gaze than its masterful wielder.

Photographs of Warhol stress this aspect of his persona. Richard Avedon's *Andy Warhol, Artist, New York City, 8/20/69* (1969) was made a little over a year after Warhol was shot by Valerie Solanis [Figure 79]. Solanis' statements, as well as the name of her one-woman Society for Cutting Up Men, leave little doubt that her action was meant as a symbolic castration of Warhol. Warhol indeed presents his body as passive and mutilated, prominently marked by the wound of Solanis' symbolic castration.[28] He presents himself as an object, literally unable to return the viewer's gaze.

If Warhol's images of Marilyn proceed additively, by layering the surface with cosmetics, this image seems to peel away the glamorous surface to reveal the truth of castration. From the lifting of his sweater to the tautly displayed hand to the folding back of his underwear, this photograph utilizes a rhetoric of exposure — and its particular sensation derives from the idea that Warhol is baring his soul for the first time, that we will finally hear confession from the master of New York sangfroid.

But what, after all, gets told? That beneath his regulation black turtleneck and leather jacket lies a scar — and beneath his scar? The regular stitches covering the wound suggest that this wound conceals nothing; it too can be unzipped without revelation. And of course, in a medical sense, this wound leaves its remainder only on the surface. It is on the surface of the body, where scar tissue congeals into whitish lumps, that we have visual evidence of the bullet's passage and of subsequent surgeries. So while there is no attempt here to deny the body, it is treated as another surface, an utterly banal support for what is layered upon it rather than the key that will decode that surface into a more meaningful set of messages. Castration itself gets a dead-pan treatment, inviting neither horror nor

---

[28]Another bizarre parallel between Andy and his *Marilyns*: in 1964 a woman walked into the Factory and fired a pistol at a stack of Marilyns leaning against the wall. These canvases became known as the "Shot Marilyns"; it is interesting that the aggression against Warhol was first taken out on his *Marilyns*, and only later on the artist's own body. The anecdote is related in David Bourdon, *Warhol* (New Yorl: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1989), 190.

contempt but rather boredom. Indeed Warhol's body seems to comment upon our very urge to reveal and to penetrate the body's secrets as a kind of misguided behavior.

Warhol's refusal to be a subject appears frequently in critical commentary as well. Stephen Koch gives Warhol's object status an even-handed treatment. Of Warhol's seeming lack of subjectivity, he writes, "Warhol seemed not to have a personality in this sense: Instead, he had a persona; his actions revealed not so much who he was, but *what* he was."[29] Elaborating on this insight, Koch makes a series of comments about Warhol as an object:

> He wants to be transformed into an object himself, quite explicitly wants to remove himself from the dangerous anxiety-ridden world of human action and interaction, to wrap himself in the serene fullness of the functionless aesthetic sphere. Desiring the glamorous peace of existing only in the eye of the beholder, he tries to become a celebrity, a star, making no bones at all about his preference for objecthood over being human.[30]

Out of this personal predilection develops a strategy for putting an aesthetic frame around his life: "Warhol managed to use his fundamental passivity to transform himself into something rather like one of his own objects: Absolutely noticeable, yet apparently absolutely meaningless."[31]

Despite framing himself as an object rather than a subject, Warhol was able to wield enormous power, causing Koch to dub him "the tycoon of passivity."[32] Elsewhere Koch writes: "Warhol is one of the masters of passive power. During the 1960s, he made himself into one of his own objects: tawdry and brilliant, unmistakable, instantly grasped, but with a resonance that kept flickering at the edges of attention, his image seeming to build meanings that then fell away like static in fantasy that seems to come and go at once."[33] Koch suggests that an object alone can have power; it does not need to be connected to a subjective program to have strong effects in the world.

---

[29]Stephen Koch, *Stargazer: Andy Warhol's World and His Films* (New York: M. Boyars, 1985), 8.

[30]Ibid., 22-3.

[31]Ibid., 25.

[32]Ibid., 23.

[33]Ibid., 7.

But Koch's balanced commentary on Warhol as an object is relatively rare. Warhol's self-presentation as an object is more likely to provoke rage in his interpreters. Thus Donald Kuspit makes similar observations, but finds himself increasingly apoplectic about Warhol's preference for objecthood over subjectivity:

> Warhol's menagerie of superstars, each a psychic clone of Warhol himself—an emblem of his mentality—is the ultimate collection of false selves, of decorative nothings. They bespeak the decorative nihilism of Warhol's narcissistic art. Indeed narcissism and nihilism converge in the decorative. Warhol turns ordinary narcissistic stars into completely decorative presences, into hermetically sealed narcissists or superstars like himself.[34]

Warhol's unforgivable sin is to present himself not as a self with depth but as a decorative surface. For Kuspit, this is tantamount to lacking a self altogether:

> He invented a pseudo-self out of his indifference, in effect denying his anxiety, which was too great and too deep to be healed. His simulated self was a way of living with it, a functional alternative to the self so overwhelmed and crippled by anxiety it no longer seemed real. Warhol's make-believe, theatrical self looked like the believable real thing only to the other celebrity psychotics with whom he surrounded himself. He himself never mistook it for a real self: he knew it was a prosthetic self.[35]

Part of the rage here is generated by the presumption that Warhol's model of subjectivity (or the lack of it) is a postmodernist one, and thus that we have entered an age in which subjectivity itself is no longer possible. The privileges of a particular model of subjectivity are imagined as lost forever. Warhol stands accused of causing this loss through his lack of interest in those privileges, his deliberate rejection of subjectivity in favor of the powers of the object. Kuspit also emphasizes Warhol's ability to manipulate people. Without *doing anything*; without even being a self, the object can be powerful. For all the psychological jargon that Kuspit employs here, his goal is not therapeutic but disciplinary. It is clear that he wants Warhol to *stop it,* to call off his weird prosthetic self and the

---

[34]Donald Kuspit, "Fame As the Cure-All: The Charisma of Cynicism—Andy Warhol," Chapter 5 of *The Cult of the Avant-Garde Artist*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 79. One might compare Kuspit's disparaging remarks on the clone with Richard Meyer's statement that "the scandal of both Warhol's work and the clone's style of self-presentation was that each prized the surface of desirable sameness over the depths of humanist subjectivity, each valued 'wanton consumerism' above expressive 'individuality.'" (98)

[35]*Ibid.*, 81-2.

postmodern barbarians at the gate. But subjectivity is not historically lost to us. Rather, we might see objecthood as subjectivity's underappreciated counterpart: the two necessarily go together.

We might say that the scandal of Warhol's mute, object-like persona, then, is the scandal of choosing to be the bearer rather than the maker of meaning, and critical outrage centers around this decision. But the picture is somewhat more complex. Although a certain degree of feminization enters Kuspit's opinions through the back door of narcissism, another critic connects Warhol's objecthood explicitly with gender. Surface, artifice, insincerity, and theatricality are smoothly equated:

> Warhol's recipe for how to live as a star is to renounce one's memory and exist in the condition of a film. It is a recipe not for hollowness but for the two-dimensionality of an on-screen existence. Life is replaced by the imitation of life, by zirconium look-alike diamond teardrops of a Douglas Sirk melodrama, by the tears of poor little rich girls, and poor little poor boys in Pittsburgh playing poor little rich girls, of people who prefer ersatz to real and live in all-night discos bathed in ersatz Day-Glo lights under the sheltering darkness of New York.[36]

Life and art are confused, two dimensions replace three. As the flat, superficial object replaces the deep humanist subject, gender, class, and nature itself become confused: are these boys or girls? poor or rich? The artificial setting of the disco (which turns night into day) promotes such confusions.

So perhaps the issue is not so much boy or girl, subject or object, but the attempt to be both a subjectivity and a spectacular object. These issues are raised by Christopher Makos' photograph of Warhol from 1981 [Figure 80]. Warhol's heavy makeup and skewed blonde wig signify a floozy variety of hyperfemininity, while his plaid tie connotes masculinity and perhaps even a certain degree of privilege accruing to the professional class. His shirt and jeans are relatively unisex. Perhaps the strongest point of contrast is between Warhol's hands, which appear decidedly masculine in relation to the pallor of his cosmetic mask.

---

[36]Daniel Herwitz, *Making Theory/Constructing Art: On the Authority of the Avant-Garde*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 261.

David Bourdon's caption says that this image "refers to Man Ray's 1921 portrait of Marcel Duchamp in the guise of Rrose Sélavy," suggesting that the photograph functions to shore up the similarities between the two artists and to announce an affiliation through an interest in drag.[37] Given the presence of drag queens such as Candy Darling and Ondine in his immediate social milieu, the sources for Warhol's cross-dressing lie closer to home. Moreover there are striking differences between the two photographs; namely, that Warhol is *not* cross-dressed. He wears what is more or less male dress, accompanied by heavy makeup and a long blonde wig. His appearance is not that of man as woman, but an intermixture of male and female vestimentary codes. The strangeness of this photograph resides less, I think, in the frisson of a male in female dress than in Warhol's ability to make both the tie and the makeup seem equally plausible on him. The weirdness comes at second hand, in the relative ease with which these different gender codes coexist on his slender frame.

This intertwining of male and female codes also appears in Warhol's art. In a 1960 painting, *Strong Arms and Broads* [Figure 81], Warhol deforms the source advertisement, which promises to build "Strong Arms and Broad Shoulders" for its male consumers into something more ambiguous. Out of this explicit address to men, he creates the word 'broads,' a slang term for women that explicitly refers to the breasts. In a late photographic work, *James Dean* [Figure 82], he shows the male actor's face, screened on a T-shirt, which is stretched tightly across a woman's body, producing the same kind of muddled interplay between male and female.

The blurred line between male and female, subject and object, is threatening to many critics, such as Herwitz (cited above) and Robert Hughes:

> Thus Warhol's silence became a Rorschach blot, onto which critics who admired the idea of political art—but would not have been seen dead within a hundred paces of a realist painting—could project their expectations....If the artist, blinking and candid, denies that he was in any way a 'revolutionary' artist, his admirers knew better; the white mole of Union Square was just dissimulating. If he declared that he

[37]Bourdon, 11.

> way only interested in getting rich and famous, like everyone else, he could not be telling the truth; instead, he was parodying America's obsession with celebrity, the better to deflate it. From the recesses of this exegetical knot, anything Warhol did could be taken seriously.[38]

This comment is interesting in that it begins with 'Warhol's silence' but is followed by a series of denials and declarations made by Warhol which, apparently, aren't to be trusted. Once Warhol has presented himself as a superficial object, he must remain silent, prohibited from a return to the position of subjectivity.

There is something to Hughes' claim that Warhol is like a Rorschach inkblot. We might take this to mean that Warhol's image is an open-ended one, and can be constructed differently by different viewers in accordance with their own desires.[39] But Hughes goes on to say that this projective quality was a deception of the public: Warhol was a reactionary, just interested in fame and riches. This puts Hughes in the curious position of claiming that he knows what the Rorschach blot is *really* a picture of. His Warhol is not just one more projected image, but the truth underneath all projections.

In making his series of massive Rorschach blots in 1984 [Figure 83], Warhol seems to endorse the Rorschach idea. What does the use of Rorschach imagery signify, beyond an interest in pop psychology? Making his images like inkblots, Warhol seems to suggest that the viewer's projection of fantasies is central to his project. Jacqueline Kennedy's image, for example, functions as a projective for all of us; by appropriating that projective for his art, Warhol embeds the possibility of these fantasies within it. This doesn't mean that Jackie's image can mean anything at all — it functions within certain limits — but it does suggest that her image is important as a site for elaborating fantasies. These fantasies, however, are not the 'personal' property of the viewer: we know that they

---

[38]Robert Hughes, "The Rise of Andy Warhol," in *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, ed. Brian Wallis, (New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984), 54.

[39]Thomas Hess seems to agree that the work itself is an empty vessel, although he pictures it filled not with the viewer's desires, but with cash: "Warhol makes empty metaphysical vessels that are continually being filled with real money, which is an undeniable triumph, sociologically. "Andy Warhol," *Art News* 63 (January 1965), 11.

are shared because we all participate in a common culture that is based upon them. If these fantasies were purely personal, then Jackie's image would not be everywhere.

As Hughes points out, Warhol certainly fashioned his own image along these lines. In response to questions about his background, Warhol often replied, "why don't you make it up?" Warhol points to the role that projection plays in the public's imagination of celebrity lives, namely our persistent wish to imagine these figures as having biographically lived out various fairy-tale narratives. Thus he invites the interviewer to project freely, to build a story about 'Warhol's life' that fits the interviewer's fantasies: "I'd prefer to remain a mystery. I never like to give my background, and, anyway, I make it all up different every time I'm asked. It's not just that it's part of my image not to tell everything, it's just that I forget what I said the day before and I have to make it all up over again."[40]

In the same interview, Warhol also said: "Interviews are like sitting in those Ford machines at the World's Fair that toured you around while someone spoke a commentary; I always feel that my words are coming from behind me, not from me. The interviewer should just tell me the words he wants me to say and I'll repeat them after him. I think that would be so great because I'm so empty I just can't think of anything to say."[41] It is along these lines that we should begin to interpret the statement that 'Pop comes from the outside.' These images are not generated out of Warhol's subjectivity; they are common property and if they are meaningful to him they are also meaningful to most other people.

By approaching Warhol's persona uncertain of what it means, we are able to see that Warhol fashions his persona as an object, and that this self-fashioning meets with censure and disdain. In other words, the privileges of subjectivity have had their costs for men; one of those costs is the prohibition against being an object. The case of women, who have been allowed object status and not subject status, is not precisely parallel, but it is related. Since subjectivity is the prerogative of men it is also more socially valued; thus

---

[40]"Nothing to Lose: Interview with Andy Warhol by Gretchen Berg," *Cahiers du Cinema in English* 10 (May 1967), 39.

[41]Ibid., 43.

women's exclusion from this domain is at this moment more pressing than men's exclusion from the realms of objecthood. Nonetheless, there are good reasons, for both men and women, for loosening this boundary between subjects and objects, since we are all inevitably both.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

WARHOL IN THE FIFTIES:

Buchloh, Benjamin H.D. "Andy Warhol's One-Dimensional Art: 1956-1966." In *Andy Warhol: A Retrospective*, 39-61. Ed. Kynaston McShine. New York: MoMA, 1989.

_____. "The Andy Warhol Line." In *The Work of Andy Warhol*, 52-69. Ed. Gary Garrels. Seattle: Bay Press, 1989.

Collins, Bradford R. "The Metaphysical Nose-Job: The Remaking of Warhola, 1960-1968." *Arts Magazine* 62 (February 1988): 47-55.

"Crazy Golden Slippers." *Life* 42 (January 21, 1957): 12-13.

Guest, Barbara. "Clarke, Rager, Warhol." *Art News* 53 (Summer 1954): 75.

_____. "Warhol and Sherman." *Art News* 51 (September 1952): 47.

Kornbluth, Jesse. *Pre-Pop Warhol.* New York: Panache Press at Random House, 1988.

Perlman, Bennard B. "The Education of Andy Warhol." In *The Andy Warhol Museum*, 147-166. Pittsburgh: The Andy Warhol Museum, 1994.

Rosenthal, Nan. "Let Us Now Praise Famous Men: Warhol as Art Director." In *The Work of Andy Warhol*, 34-51. Ed. Gary Garrels. Seattle: Bay Press, 1989.

Vance, Ronald. "Andy Warhol," *Art News* 55 (March 1956): 55.

POP WARHOL:

Antin, David. "Warhol: The Silver Tenement." *Art News* 65 (Summer 1966): 47-9, 58-9.

Bourdon, David. *Warhol.* New York: Harry N. Abrams, Publishers, Inc., 1989.

Coplans, John. *Andy Warhol.* New York Graphic Society Ltd. n.d.

Crone, Rainer. *Andy Warhol.* New York: Praeger, 1970.

_____. *Andy Warhol: A Picture Show by the Artist.* New York: Rizzoli, 1987.

_____. "Form and Ideology: Warhol's Techniques from Blotted Line to Film." In *The Work of Andy Warhol*, 70-92. Ed. Gary Garrels. Seattle: Bay Press, 1989.

Crow, Thomas. "Saturday Disasters: Trace and Reference in Early Warhol." In *Reconstructing Modernism: Art in New York, Paris, and Montreal 1945-1964*, 311-331. Ed. Serge Guilbaut. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1990.

Danto, Arthur C. *Beyond the Brillo Box: The Visual Arts in Post-Historical Perspective.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1992.

Foster, Hal. "Death in America." *October* 75 (Spring 1996): 37-60.

_____. *The Return of the Real.* Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1996.

Fried, Michael. "New York Letter." *Art International* VI (December 1962): 57.

Herwitz, Daniel. *Making Theory/Constructing Art: On the Authority of the Avant-Garde.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

Hess, Thomas B. "Andy Warhol." *Art News* 63 (January 1965): 11.

Kagan, Andrew. "Most Wanted Men: Andy Warhol and the Anti-Culture of Punk." *Arts Magazine* 53 (September 1978): 119-121.

Kuspit, Donald. "Fame As the Cure-All: The Charisma of Cynicism—Andy Warhol." Chapter 5 of *The Cult of the Avant-Garde Artist.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Printz, Neil. "Painting Death in America." In *Andy Warhol: Death and Disasters*, 11-22. Houston: The Menil Foundation, Inc., 1988.

Ratcliff, Carter. *Andy Warhol.* New York: Abbeville Press, 1983.

Smith, Patrick. *Andy Warhol's Art and Films.* Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1981.

Yau, John. *In the Realm of Appearances: The Art of Andy Warhol.* Hopewell, New Jersey: The Ecco Press, 1993.

WARHOL IN THE SEVENTIES AND EIGHTIES:

Bourdon, David. "Andy Warhol and the Society Icon." *Art in America* 63 (January/February 1975): 42-45.

Fairbrother, Trevor. "Skulls." In *The Work of Andy Warhol*, 93-114. Ed. Gary Garrels. Seattle: Bay Press, 1989.

Geldzahler, Henry and Robert Rosenblum. *Andy Warhol: Portraits of the Seventies and Eighties.* London: Anthony d'Offay Gallery, 1993.

Hughes, Robert. "The Rise of Andy Warhol." In *Art after Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, 45-58. Ed. Brian Wallis. New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984.

Stuckey, Charles. "Andy Warhol's Painted Faces." *Art in America* 68 (May 1980): 102-111.

Whitney, David, ed. *Andy Warhol: Portraits of the '70s.* New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1979.

WARHOL ON WARHOL:

Berg, Gretchen. "Andy: My True Story." *Los Angeles Free Press*, March 17, 1967, 3.

"Nothing to Lose: Interview with Andy Warhol by Gretchen Berg," *Cahiers du Cinema in English* 10 (May 1967): 38-43.

Swenson, G.R. "What is Pop Art?: Answers from 8 Painters, Part I." *Art News* 62 (November 1963): 24-27, 60-63.

Warhol, Andy. *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol: From A to B and Back Again.* New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1975.

Warhol, Andy and Hackett, Pat. *POPism: The Warhol '60s.* New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980.

THE COSMETIC TRADITION:

Armstrong, Carol. "Manet/Manette: Encoloring the I/Eye." *Stanford Humanities Review* 2 (Spring 1992): 1-45.

_____. "Facturing Femininity: Manet's Before the Mirror." *October* 74 (Fall 1995): 75-104.

Baudelaire, Charles. "The Painter of Modern Life" (1863). In *Selected Writings on Art and Literature*, 390-435. Trans. P.E. Charvet. London: Penguin Books, 1972.

Boime, Albert. "Sargent in Paris and London: Portrait of the Artist as Dorian Gray." In *John Singer Sargent*, 75-110. Ed. Patricia Hills, et al. New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1986.

Clay, Jean. "Ointments, Makeup, Pollen." Trans. John Shepley. *October* 27.(Winter 1984): 3-44.

Hamilton, Edith and Cairns, Huntington, ed. *The Collected Dialogues of Plato.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961.

Fairbrother, Trevor. "The Shock of John Singer Sargent's 'Madame Gautreau.'" *Arts Magazine* 55 (January 1981): 90-97.

Lichtenstein, Jacqueline. *The Eloquence of Color: Rhetoric and Painting in the French Classical Age* (1989). Trans. Emily McVarish. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

_____. "Making Up Representation: The Risks of Femininity." Trans. Katharine Streip. *Representations* 20 (Fall 1987): 77-87.

Masters, Roger D. and Kelly, Christopher, ed. *The Collected Writings of Rousseau.* Hanover: Dartmouth College and University Press of New England, 1992.

Puttfarken, Thomas. *Roger de Piles' Theory of Art.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.

Reilly, Patricia L. "The Taming of the Blue: Writing Out Color in Italian Renaissance Theory." *Genders* 12 (Winter 1991): 77-99.

Roque, Georges. "Writing/Drawing/Color." *Yale French Studies* 84 (1994): 43-62.

CLEMENT GREENBERG:

Bois, Yve-Alain. "Les amendements de Greenberg." *Les Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne* 45/46 (Automne/Hiver 1993): 52-60.

Clark, Timothy J. "Clement Greenberg's Theory of Art." In *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate*, 47-64. Ed. Francis Frascina. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1985.

Duve, Thierry de. "Silences in the Doctrine." In *Clement Greenberg between the Lines*, 39-86. Paris: Éditions dis Voir, 1996.

_____. "The Monochrome and the Blank Canvas." In *Reconstructing Modernism: Art in New York, Paris, and Montreal, 1945-1964*, 244-310. Ed. Serge Guilbaut. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1990.

_____. *Kant after Duchamp*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1996.

Greenberg, Clement. *Art and Culture: Critical Essays*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1961.

_____. "Modern and Post-Modern." *Arts Magazine* 54 (February 1980).

Kramer, Hilton. "A Critic on the Side of History: Notes on Clement Greenberg." *Arts Magazine* 37: 1 (October 1962): 60-63.

Kroll, Jack. "Some Greenberg Circles." *Art News* 61 (March 1962): 35; 48-9.

O'Brian, John, ed. *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Vols. 1 and 2, 1986. Vols. 3 and 4, 1993.

Orton, Fred and Pollock, Griselda. "*Avant-Gardes* and Partisans Reviewed." *Art History* 4 (September 1981): 305-327.

Wald, Alan M. *The New York Intellectuals: The Rise and Decline of the Anti-Stalinist Left from the 1930s to the 1980s*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987.

MICHAEL FRIED:

Bürger, Peter. *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1974). Trans. Michael Shaw. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

Fried, Michael. "Art and Objecthood." *Artforum* 5 (June 1967): 12-23.

_____. *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

_____. *Courbet's Realism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.

_____. *Manet's Modernism, or, The Face of Painting in the 1860s*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Krauss, Rosalind. "Theories of Art after Minimalism and Pop." In *Discussions in Contemporary Culture, Number 1*, 59-64. Ed. Hal Foster. Seattle: Bay Press, 1987.

Melville, Stephen. "Notes on the Reemergence of Allegory, the Forgetting of Modernism, the Necessity of Rhetoric, and the Conditions of Publicity in Art and Criticism," *October* 19 (Winter 1981): 55-92.

_____. *Philosophy Beside Itself: On Deconstruction and Modernism*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986.

WALLPAPER AND DECORATION:

Bourdon, David. "Andy Warhol." *The Village Voice* (December 3, 1964): 11.

Clark, T.J. "Jackson Pollock's Abstraction." In *Reconstructing Modernism: Art in New York, Paris, and Montreal, 1945-1964*, 172-243. Ed. Serge Guilbaut. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1990.

Cottingham, Laura. "The Masculine Imperative: High Modern, Postmodern." In *New Feminist Criticism: Art, Identity, Action*. Ed. Joanna Frueh, Cassandra L. Langer and Arlene Raven. New York: Harper Collins, 1994.

Greysmith, Brenda. *Wallpaper*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1976.

Hess, Thomas B. "Andy Warhol." *Art News* 63 (January 1965): 11.

Hoskins, Lesley, ed. *The Papered Wall: History, Pattern, Technique*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994.

Levine, Steven Z. "Décor/Decorative/Decoration in Claude Monet's Art." *Arts Magazine* 51 (February 1977): 136-9.

Lynn, Catherine. *Wallpaper in America from the Seventeenth Century to World War I*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1980.

McClelland, Nancy. *Historic Wall-Papers: From Their Inception to the Introduction of Machinery*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1924.

Stuckey, Charles. "Warhol in Context." In *The Work of Andy Warhol*, 3-33. Ed. Gary Garrels. Seattle: Bay Press, 1989.

THE AUTHOR:

Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author" (1968). In *Image-Music-Text*, 142-148. Trans. Stephen Heath. New York: The Noonday Press, 1977.

Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes (1975). Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, Inc., 1977.

Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (1969). Trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Pantheon Books, 1972.

_____. "What Is an Author?" (1969). In *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Interviews and Essays by Michel Foucault*, 113-138. Trans. Donald F. Bouchard. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977.

THE PHOTOGRAPH:

Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (1980). Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang, 1981.

Bergin, Paul. "Andy Warhol: The Artist as Machine." *Art Journal* XXVI (Summer 1967): 359-363.

Josephson, Mary. "Warhol: The Medium as Cultural Artifact." *Art in America* 59 (May/June 1971): 40-46.

Metz, Christian. "Photography and Fetish." *October* 34 (Fall 1985): 81-90.

Duve, Thierry de. "Time Exposure and Snapshot: The Photograph as Paradox." *October* 5 (Summer 1978): 113-125.

ICONOGRAPHY:

Cassidy, Brendan, ed. *Iconography at the Crossroads.* Princeton: Index of Christian Art, Department of Art and Archaeology, Princeton University, 1993.

Panofsky, Erwin. *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1939.

WARHOL'S SEXUALITY:

Collins, Bradford R. and Coward, David. "Through the Looking-Glass: Reading Warhol's Superman." *American Imago: Studies in Psychoanalysis and Culture* 53 (Summer 1996): 107-38.

Fairbrother, Trevor. "Tomorrow's Man." In *Success Is a Job in New York: The Early Art and Business of Andy Warhol*, 55-74. Ed. Donna M. DeSalvo. Grey Art Gallery and Study Center and The Carnegie Museum of Art, 1989.

Moon, Michael. "Screen Memories, or, Pop Comes from the Outside: Warhol and Queer Childhood." In *Pop Out: Queer Warhol*, 78-100. Ed. Jennifer Doyle, Jonathan Flatley, and José Esteban Muñoz. Durham: Duke University Press, 1996.

Meyer, Richard. "Warhol's Clones." *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 7:1 (1994): 79-109.

Sedgwick, Eve. *Epistemology of the Closet.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

Silver, Kenneth E. "Modes of Disclosure: The Construction of Gay Identity and the Rise of Pop Art." In *Hand-Painted Pop: American Art in Transition, 1955-62*, 179-204. Ed. Russell Ferguson. Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1992.

Warner, Michael. "Homo-Narcissism; or, Heterosexuality." In *Engendering Men: The Question of Male Feminist Criticism*, 190-206. Ed. Joseph A. Boone and Michael Cadden. New York: Routledge, 1990.

ON SUBJECTS AND OBJECTS:

Baudrillard, Jean. *Seduction* (1979). Trans. Brian Singer. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990.

Beauvoir, Simone de . *The Second Sex* (1949). Trans. H.M. Parshley. New York: Vintage Books, 1989.

Dyer, Richard. *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society.* New York: Saint Martin's Press, 1986.

Fiske, John. "Elvis: A Body of Controversy." In *Power Plays, Power Works*, 94-123. London: Verso, 1993.

Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism.* Durham: Duke University Press, 1991.

Koch, Stephen. *Stargazer: Andy Warhol's World and His Films.* New York: M. Boyars, 1985.

Lacan, Jacques .*The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis.* Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Norton, 1978.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Child's Relations with Others" (1960). Trans. William Cobb. In *The Primacy of Perception*, 96-155. Ed. James M. Edie. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. "The Primacy of Perception and Its Philosophical Consequences" (1947). Trans. James M. Edie. In *The Primacy of Perception*, 12-42. Ed. James M. Edie. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964.

Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1973). In *Visual and Other Pleasures.* Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1988.

Silverman, Kaja. "Fragments of a Fashionable Discourse." In *Studies in Entertainment: Critical Approaches to Mass Culture*, 139-154. Ed. Tania Modleski. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.

Sontag, Susan. "Notes on 'Camp,'" (1964) and "On Style" (1965). In *Against Interpretation, and Other Essays*, 275-292; 15-36. New York: Octagon Books, 1966.

Taylor, Charles. *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.

Wilde, Oscar. Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young," *Chameleon* I: 1 (December 1894): 1-3. In *The Artist as Critic: Critical Writings of Oscar Wilde*, 433-4. Ed. Richard Ellmann. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968.Danto, Arthur C. *Beyond the Brillo Box: The Visual Arts in Post-Historical Perspective.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1992.

Wolf, Naomi. *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women.* New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1991.

Please Note

Pages 198-280