

**IDOLATRY AND THE ARTIST'S ROLE WITH  
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE WORK AND THOUGHT  
OF ANDY WARHOL**

**THESIS**

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“Just Halfway through this journey of our life  
I reawoke to find myself inside  
a dark wood, way off course, the right road lost...

...My guide and I began that hidden route  
to journey back towards the shining world  
not caring now to take a moments rest.  
We climbed, with him in front and me behind,  
till through a rounded aperture I caught  
some glimpse of those delights that heaven holds.  
And we emerged, once more to see the stars.”

(Dante Alighieri, 1265-1321)



Marilyn 1967

Screenprint (91.5 x 91.5cm)

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**ABSTRACT:**

This thesis uses Hirsch's dual notion of intention, i.e. conscious, intentional meaning and symptomatic, unconscious meaning, in order to avoid a dead end in the critical assessment of Warhol's work. T.S. Eliot's term "objective correlative" refers to a phenomenon whereby "an inner emotional reality" is evoked by its "external equivalent". (Bénet,1965). Thus, given that no work of art is purely self-referential (as distinct from its being autonomous), Hirsch's notion allows that viewer reconstruction of a painting involves shared values and concerns; that a painting reconstructed by a viewer acquires the status of an icon through which the viewer participates in the artist's sacred cosmos.

Sociology of art tends on the whole to extrapolate from actual works to the alleged conditions that gave rise to them. That it cannot predict what specific works will arise from given conditions makes it unscientific. However, its usefulness lies in its ability to reveal what values and concerns are shared by artist and viewer. This is vital for an interpretation of Warhol's work.

Warhol's biography leads directly into the meaning of his work. The sickly child of an immigrant steelworker, he grew up in Pittsburgh - an epitome of the technocratic-industrial environment - and was exposed from an early age to a violent and ugly world where the disparity between the super-wealthy and the struggling workers was deeply disturbing.

That Warhol himself became a multi-millionaire artistic tycoon is significant, for it means that his works, his icons, were participatory in the very cultural myths and

neuroses they appear to display or even despise. That his work has meaning and is open to interpretation there is no doubt. For example, a man-made soup can, as a manifestation and containment of the sacred, is coercive. Here the sacred becomes familiar, affordable and disposable. An electric chair, a man-made instrument of death, gives man supremacy over mortality and the divine prerogative of purging the world of all evil.

The essay, however, does not attempt to answer the broader questions raised by Fromm and Roszak about the spiritual emptiness of the twentieth century and the existential crises experienced by those who hunger for meaning and fasten greedily onto anything that seems to proffer a glimpse of something beyond. The essay, nevertheless, strives within this context to elucidate the valid in Warhol's work.

## PREFACE

“They fall back on the shamelessly modest assertion that they do not understand...”

(Adorno, 1978, p. 216).

This essay aims to examine and evaluate the art of Andy Warhol. His work has been chosen because it presents a recurring problem central to the nature and status of art, namely, what art is and how it is to be interpreted. One of the problems Warhol's art raises in particular is what art refers to, or is about.

The problem is of concern here because it is taken, in this essay, that what we call works of art usually refer to something beyond themselves i.e. that works of art cannot be purely self-referential without being meaningless or at best decorative. They may be autonomous. As F.C. Bradley says:

“The nature of a work of art is to be not a part, nor yet a copy of the real world (as we commonly understand that phrase), but a world in itself, independent, complete, autonomous; and to possess it fully you must enter that world, conform to its laws, and ignore for the time the beliefs, aims and particular conditions which belong to you in the other world of reality.” (Winterson, 1995).

If the role of art is to communicate, it cannot point only to itself without obscuring what it intends to communicate. Art has autonomy and draws attention to itself, but if it means anything, it cannot be self-referential. For example THIS IS A SIGN is self-referential but is understood in a wider discourse of signs. Signs point to something, and even if not self-referential, for example, THIS WAY TO THE BUS, remain “linked to the conscious thought” behind them. (C.G. Jung, 1979, p. 55).

If art is a form of communication are there requirements necessary for it to be successful? The meaning of Bushman rain animals is locked into a complex mythology so that the paintings we see on cave walls require a good deal of scholarly interpretation. (Lewis Williams, Images of Power, 1989). Similarly, the interpretation of a picture by Hieronymous Bosch, like the 1510 triptych in the Prado, is not easy to make without an understanding of the Christian theology and cosmology of the time.

In the twentieth century what art means, or what paintings refer to beyond themselves, is a difficult question. Schools of aesthetics have burgeoned in this century, ranging from the historical to the psychological, but none have maintained that art is about nothing at all, or that it self-reflectively vanishes into its own construction, because then it would no longer be what is understood by art.

Even movements like Dada and Surrealism, by the mere fact that they were “deliberately anti-art and anti-sense” and sought to free creativity from “reason and every aesthetic or moral preoccupation”, were not self-referential. (Murray,1976,p119 &43.). Dada and Surrealism could make sense, or be interpreted, *only* in the context of the established art they were trying to undermine or counteract. According to Kearney, “Foucault finds evidence of the contemporary disclosure of the arbitrariness of the sign.” (Kearney,1991,p.269). Magritte’s paintings or Warhol’s billboard reproductions confirm for him “that signs do not refer to objects in any fixed way”and “assault the established conventions of reference by refusing to allow of any unique or original model.” (p.269).



The Treason of Images 1928-9

René Magritte  
Oil on Canvas 60 x 94 cm

Causing the viewer to doubt “the rapport between such images and their originals”, such images “undermine the very notion of representation.” (p.269). Magritte’s “pipe is not a pipe” and Warhol’s Campbell’s soup cans are “reproductions of a commodity that is itself the product of an advertising image”. (p.269). It is taken in this essay that Ready-made, Found art and ink blots, made in the name of art, and which are interpreted as the viewer (consciously or subconsciously) decides, go against the notion of intention and raise questions about private and public meaning.

According to Hirsch, the producer’s intended meaning “cannot be *certainly* known” (1971,p.16). However, he concedes that “the risk of resorting to semi-private implications - available at first only to a few - is very often worth taking, particularly if the new usage does finally become widely understood.” (p.15). He stresses that “validity of interpretation is not the same as inventiveness of interpretation” (p.10). The question here is where and in what, validity resides.

It is a commonplace that in the twentieth century Westerners have lost their grip on, or understanding of what in other times was called the sacred. According to Roszak, the loss of the sacred is manifest in our experience, our status of being, so that “...we have become an idolatrous culture.” (Roszak,1989,p.110). “Idolatry is not a moral failing; it is a mistaken ontology, grounded in a flawed consciousness. It is the substitution of a lesser for a greater reality.” (p.134). He cites the work of William Blake as exemplifying the notion that “single vision” and “Newton’s sleep” helped cause the collapse of the sacred. (p.107). Newton's sleep alludes to the scientific revolution; a process of psychic privation which has contributed to the technocratic

politics of urban-industrialism and the artificial environment. Single vision, carried by Judeo-Christianity into the scientific revolution, refers to ways in which western humanity's transcendent powers have been denatured. According to Roszak, the "psychology of single vision", in its attempts to institutionalise the sacred, "has betrayed its brightest ideals." (p.107). In his opinion, the "alienated natural philosophy", which has achieved cultural supremacy in the modern, western world, is consequential of single vision which, ironically, began as a "defense of the sacred." (p.107).

But what is meant by the sacred? According to Walter, the sacred is composed of two elements: "Firstly, the sacred is or represents an object of worship, of ultimate worth to which people are committed and which forms their ultimate concern... Secondly, the sacred is a source of absolute meaning that provides believers with a validated place in the scheme of things." (Walter,1979,p.10). This implies that the sacred can be evoked in both religious and secular terms: Tillich describes it as being in touch "with the ground of our being" (Fuller,1985,p.192); Sartre as "grasping the central concern of freedom." (Olson,1962,Chapter 4).

Yet the link between the sacred and the aesthetic remains difficult to describe. It may be true, as Fuller claims, that "in most aesthetically healthy societies religion and aesthetic life were inextricably intertwined: this is true whether you look at Aboriginal arts, ancient Egypt, Greek sculpture and architecture, African tribal cultures, Muslim decoration, seventeenth-century Spanish painting or the arts of the East. Traditionally, religion has sustained the ornamental systems of a society, shaped its principal

architectural forms and given rise to its iconography.” (Fuller,1985,p.189). But all his argument shows is that belief systems and works of art may be harmoniously integrated. Nor does he suggest what belief systems may be appropriate for modern art. When he claims that “The Gothic world’s aesthetic achievement had rarely been approached by any previous culture; nothing like it has been seen since. And this achievement, of course, was inextricably bound up with the cultural triumph of the Christian Church”, it does not follow that art must somehow renew its bond with established religion. (p.189). Besides being partisan, this begs the question of what is meant by the sacred.

Perhaps it is necessary to stress once more the notion that a work of art cannot be self-referential (cf. p.1). What, then, should art refer to for it to be significant or valuable?

Fuller attended an exhibition called “Prophecy and Vision” which included a conference on the Spiritual in Art. (1985,p.187). However, despite “angelic fanfares”, “hermetic scenes based on fusions of biblical incidents...and a very private symbolism” and others attempting a “less-full blooded relationship to Christian imagery”, the exhibition remained merely “reflective of that crisis and fragmentation of values...so typical of Late Modernism.” (p.188). Seen in this light, the mere incorporation of “serious” themes or topics in a work does not guarantee its worth. Because a painting shows a crucifixion, or the Virgin Mary holding the infant Jesus, it does not make it good or profound art. On a secular level, the incorporation of relevant political themes does not necessarily make for significant art. In any case, to

employ the discredited dichotomy of form versus content leads to an uninformative dead end.

The present writer is not the only one to feel that to talk about the lack of the sacred in the work of Andy Warhol is not to be entirely off the point. Fuller thinks Warhol's work is palpably devoid of the sacred and is sustained by an afflicted society that has lost both its sense of values and its judgement. Warhol's works, he says, were "...ubiquitously displayed and bought by the public museums and endlessly written about in the art press." (Fuller,1985,p.19-20). Warhol's "relinquishment of imagination, skill and tradition, his collusion with the creatively sterile techniques of anonymous mass-production and contemporary advertising, his refusal of aesthetic values, all represented the occlusion and eclipse of everything . . . believed to be worthwhile about the production of art." (p.19).

What then, can we regard as worthwhile about the production of art? Is the worthwhile to be located in the work itself or in what the viewing public wishes to make of the work? And is the worthwhile synonymous with the sacred? It would be narrow minded and pointless to begin an enquiry into Warhol's work having already made up one's mind that his work is lacking in the dimension of the sacred. It is hoped that an examination of his biography and work will clarify what, at this point, seems like a semantic and aesthetic *cul de sac*.

## CHAPTER ONE

“We have not stumbled into the arms of Gog and Magog;  
we have *progressed* there.”  
(Roszak,1989,p.ixx)

In order to understand what in other times was called the sacred, it is useful to look, however briefly, at the difference between “primitive” and “historic” religions. (Rupp,1979,p.28). Hargrove states that it is “...assumed that primitive cultures ...constantly faced by that which could neither be explained or controlled...trembled in awe at most occurrences and ‘*objects*’” in the natural environment. (Hargrove,1979,p.26). “*All* were imbued with an immanent power.” (p.26). The sacred and nature were indivisible in primitive religions, and shamanistic rituals of propitiation were “spells to lull the punishing elements.” (Paglia,1995,p.1). Superstition even surrounded image making, for imagery was crucial to survival. Depictions of animals, cudgelled with their rudimentary weapons, would ensure, for primitive tribes, success in the hunt. (Gombrich,1954,p.23). Rupp, quoting Bellah, says because primitive religions, oriented to a single cosmos, know nothing of a “‘wholly different world relative to which the actual world is utterly devoid of value...their mythical world is related to the detailed features of the actual world.’” (Rupp,1979,p.28). The question of our origins forms the main themes of mythical, symbolic worlds, (Frye,1978,p.182), and rituals “serve to reinforce the solidarity of the society”. (Rupp,1979,p.28). “The meaning of myths lies in the vision of life and nature they hold at their core.” (Roszak,1989,p.132). According to Campbell, myths are clues to the “spiritual potentialities of the human life.” (Campbell,1988,p.5). Myths are “themes of the mind” and in some way represent “permanent features of the

human spirit or psyche...or enduring essential principles...or secret motivating depth.” (p.26). In dreams and myths, symbols are a particular form of “expressing thoughts and feelings by images of sensory experience.” (Fromm,1963,109). Ritual “is symbolic expression of thoughts and feelings by action.” (p.109). Roszak believes that “either one re-experiences” mythical vision, or “one has missed the message - in which case the myth is bound to become an empty literal shell, a fiction, a lie.” (Roszak,1989,p.132). Myth, devoid of magic, bound to a lesser reality, “becomes an idol.” (p.132). Moreover, Campbell laments the fact that ritual, “the physical enactment of myth” that once conveyed “an inner reality”, has now become “merely form.” (Campbell,1988,p.7).

Religion now, according to Luckman, consists of “...specific historical institutionalizations of symbolic universes. Symbolic universes are socially objectivated systems of meaning that refer, on the one hand, to the world of every day life and point, on the other hand, to a world that is experienced as transcending every day life.” (Luckmann,1967,p.43). In the mind of primitive man, instinctive concepts relative to the actual world were integrated into symbolic universes “...into coherent psychic patterns...or numinous symbols, held holy by common consent.” (Jung,1979,p.94). However, unlike primitive religions, historic religions are dualistic and based on a difference between the supernatural and the natural: “the difference between this world and life after death illustrates a recurrent popular formulation.” (Rupp,1979,p.28). Historic religion, in its rejection of this world, played a “purposive role in social change.” (p.29). According to Paglia, the concept of placable nature, a forbearing God and an extramundane reality is “the most potent of man’s survival

mechanisms” and without it our culture and society would regress into despair and fear. (Paglia,1995,p.1). Thus historic religions, like Christianity, tend to reinterpret primitive mythology, ritual and symbolism “to mitigate the coercive aspects in comparison with unadulterated magic.” (Hargrove,1979,p.70).

Devotees of an unseen deity would view the worship of “mere *things*” as grotesque and debased, especially if these “things were made by the worshiper's (sic) own hand and then set up before him for devotion.” (Roszak,1989,p.113). Thus expiating itself of the primeval power of the hand and eye, Judaism gives centrality to the voice of God manifest in a sacred omnipresence. (p.112). Hearing the voice of their God who “revealed his magisterial presence by speaking into the world from beyond it”, Judaism became “the religion of the word and the book.” (p.113). Shamanistic tradition was abandoned and replaced by “prophetic consciousness”, so breaking with that ancient religious lineage which Judaism has taught us ever since to regard as “primitive”. (p.113).

Similarly, one of the first tasks of Christianity “was to destroy non-Christian mythology” including anything “that could serve as a rallying point for a cultural tradition outside Christianity.” (Frye,1976,p.20.). Emperor Constantine, coerced by his army, assured the ultimate triumph of Christianity and, in making it the State religion of the Roman world, “the authoritarian trend in Christianity became dominant.” (Fromm,1963,p.48). The discipline and energy of Church organisation was admired by the Civil Service. The army, recruited among the servile proletariat, were attracted by the Church's acceptance of outcasts and sinners.

(Graves,1952,p.422). In the year A.D. 311, as the greatest power in the realm, the Christian Church had to reconsider its relationship to art. (Gombrich,1954,p.92). A determination to break with any pagan traditions raised difficult questions about the decoration of their basilicas. The function of imagery within this religious context became an issue of contention and caused violent disputes. (p.92). There was a great concern that pagans would perhaps have difficulty in grasping the message of the one almighty and invisible deity if they saw statues representing the divine, “just as a statue by Pheidias was thought to represent Zeus.” (p.92). Ultimately, defence against criticism of the use of imagery in churches often took the form of a quote by Pope Gregory the Great (r.590-604): “Painting can do for the illiterate what writing does for those who can read”. (p.95).

Fear of committing the sin of idolatry caused continuous dissent between iconoclasts (image smashers) and iconacules over the “proper purpose” of art in churches. (p.97). “If God in His mercy could decide to reveal Himself to mortal eyes in the human nature of Christ,” they argued, “why should He not also be willing to manifest Himself in visible images? We do not worship these images themselves as the pagans did. We worship God and the Saints *through or across* their images.” (p.97).

The capacity of a natural object or icon to be magical or enchanted, to be transformed into something greater than itself, was rejected as paganism. Traditionally, idolatry is “a variety of magic, and magic, in its pristine form, is sacramental perception.” (Roszak, 1989,p.116). However, magic “must bring the sacred perilously close to the profane, always with the hope that the profane will, at its touch, reveal the hidden

wonders it contains; always at the risk that the sacred will be diminished into some lesser manifestation which can legitimately be called an idol.” (p.122). Where idols did not exist, except in the suspicion of those who were quick to spy them out, a seemingly sure-fire strategy to protect the sacred from idolatrous degradation was to refute nature’s authentic wonder and enchantment and to prohibit magic entirely. The containment and concentration of the sacred within the Christian concept of God is infinitely removed from nature. Profane nature, lacking “sacramental transparency”, becomes an idol, an alienated, lesser reality. (p.134).

Firminus Lactantius (c.240-c.320), an early Christian writer and tutor to the son of Emperor Constantine the great, concluded: “nor is nature as a whole to be regarded as God. Rather, nature is a lesser object created by God and existing wholly apart from him.” (p.122). Thus emphasis was placed on the theocentric quality of their icons.

However, not just any beautiful painting of a mother with her child could be accepted as the true, sacred image or icon of the Mother of God: artists were enjoined to harness their imaginations to inveterate sacred visual types.

Painstaking care was taken to eschew veneration of the effigy itself “so as to worship God *through* the image.” (Kearney,1991,p.9). Iconographers were required to observe the “ancient Byzantine formulae of representation”, and the “Church authorities effectively discouraged experimentation with more expressive, realist or life-like modes of painting.” (p.9). The aim of these prescriptions was to prevent “interferences

from the human personality of the iconographer out of deference to the infinite nature of the divine Creator Himself.” (p.9).

Byzantine iconacles therefore had a clearly articulated intellectual intention for their imagery. Their mosaics are examples of art which cannot be separated from their function i.e. that of communicating Christian beliefs to the illiterate. The manifest function of The miracle of the loaves and fishes (A.D.520) from the Basilica of St. Apollinare Nuovo, Ravenna, is a depiction of the gospel story of the feeding of the five thousand. However, “it is clear that the type of art which was thus admitted was of a rather restricted kind.” (Gombrich,1954,p.95). Pope Gregory perpetuated the general prevailing perception of art at the time. Art’s function was to impart Christian ideology as clearly and simply as possible. “Anything that might divert attention from this main and sacred purpose should be omitted.” (p.95). The Byzantine mosaics are a “symbol and token of Christ’s abiding power” embodied in the Church. This exemplifies the way in which Christ looks steadfastly at the beholder: “It is he whom Christ will feed.” (p.96).

The depiction of Christ the Pantocrator, in its anonymity and expressionlessness, is an apt example of the icon’s primary function. As a receptacle of the sacred, the icon induces the onlooker to travel, “*through* the vacant regard of the image”, towards the transcendent suprasensible God, without lingering at the superficial level of merely human sensations and expressions, or “the beguiling, luminous eyes of a mortal face.” (Kearney,1991,p.9). Man develops, in this process, what Freud calls an “illusion.”(Fromm,1963,p.11).



Christ the Pantocrator

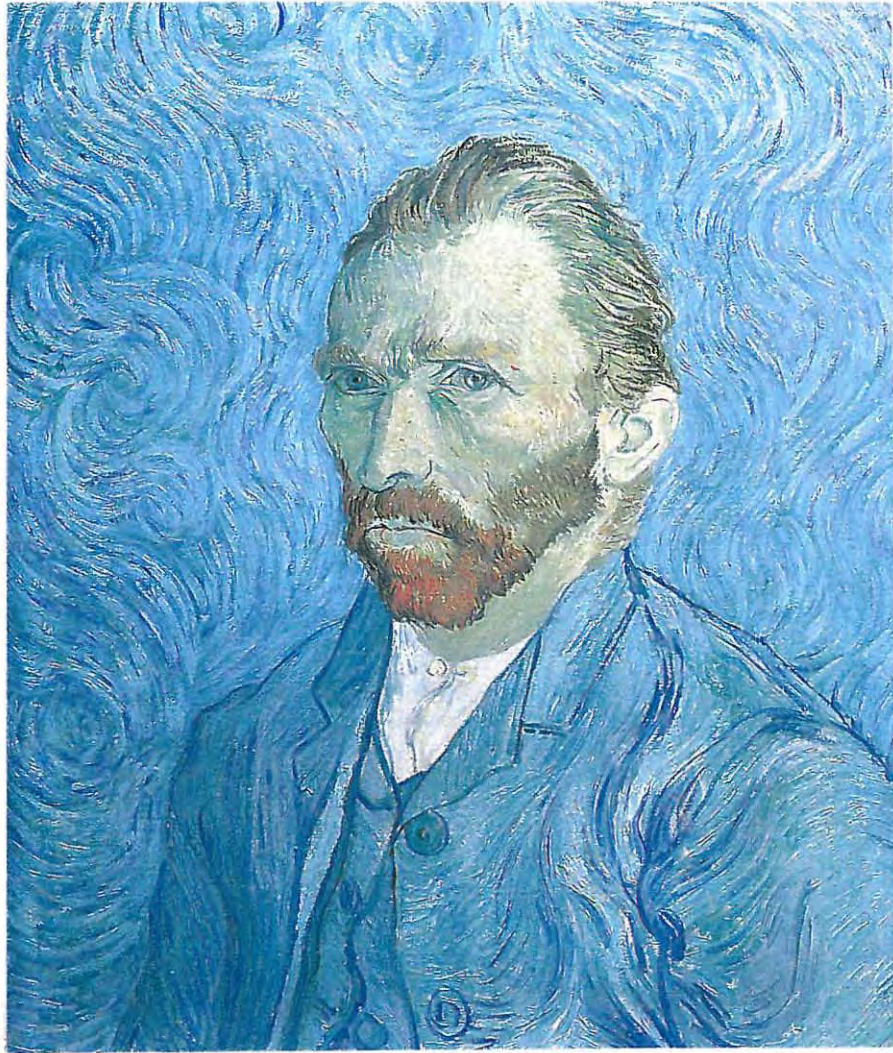
Confronted with uncontrollable, perilous forces outside of, and within himself, he regresses to childhood experiences and feelings of safety. He remembers his father “whom he thought to be of superior wisdom and strength, and whose love and protection he could win by obeying his commands and avoiding transgression of his prohibitions.” (p.11).

Though common myth was objectified and interpreted as historical reality through the use of imagery (Hargrove,1979,p.12), nevertheless, according to Gombrich, the Byzantine mosaics were not purely didactic. This Christian imagery also embodied “something more than everyday reality - the holy.” (Gombrich,1954,p.97). The artists went to great lengths to give expression to the sacred purpose of these images, to imbue these effigies with that which separates the sacred being from the ordinary person. They were successful in that the images became more than illustrations, - they were “mysterious reflections of the supernatural world.” (p.97). The iconoclasts believed that Christian imagery, once “properly prepared, set up, adorned and decorated, becomes the locus of the spirit. It becomes what it is taken to represent.” (Freedburg, 1989,p.31). As a containment of the sacred, the image becomes a direct link with the spiritual being.

According to Romanyshyn, when humanity begins to “distance itself from the created world” it is the “first step toward a reversal between itself and the divine” and the deity “will be placed at the vanishing point as humanity will take over the role of creation.” (Romanyshyn,1978,p.108). Christianity, in an attempt to make spirituality paramount by “wiping out paganism’s secular glimmers”, has merely reinforced the

“west’s absolute ego-structure.” (Paglia,1995,p.45). Kearney says that, according to Freud, religious prohibition against making images, “has developed in the course of the centuries into a religion of instinctual renunciation.” (Kearney,1991,p.45). According to Roszak, living in our urban-industrial technocracy, we are within earshot of Pascal’s “cry of sheer existential terror: ‘Cast into the infinite immensity of spaces of which I am ignorant and which know me not, I am frightened!’ ”. (Roszak,1989,p.124).

Van Gogh’s “expressionist auto-portraits” show the replacement of “Christ the Divine martyr”, by the “artist as human martyr” and that the “sacramental prayer” has become an “existential cry”. (Kearney,1991,p.10). Gablik describes such a work as an “anxious object” which cannot “elicit the standard, cherished responses to art”. (Gablik,1984,p.52). Van Gogh’s image would “openly contradict traditional functions of uplifting, redeeming and reconciling, substituting instead the disequilibrium of shock and doubt.” (p.52). In Gablik's opinion, the art of the last fifty years in particular “has been dominated by a style of perception that is difficult, wilfully inaccessible and disorienting.” (p.52). While the “primary function” of such works has been “to create a critical consciousness”, the assimilation of “potentially subversive forms of art” by a “mass bureaucratic culture” has deprived such works of their antagonistic force and critical function by “converting them into commodities.” (p.52). Gablik goes on to say that Warhol’s comments, “- like everything Warhol does”, are “amusing and morally ambiguous,” but have no real effect and remain “a disconcerting sign of just how far artists have drifted in the direction of cultural conformity.” (p.56). Warhol brings into question the whole sphere of “authenticity”



Self Portrait 1889  
Vincent van Gogh  
Oil on Canvas (65 x 55 cm)

and “the root of his power” lies in the preservation of an enigma. (p.56). Warhol “guards his secret well - we will never really know what goes on behind the mask” moreover “lack of moral tone of his vision is... an essential element in the conclusion of the modernist story.” (p.56).

Nevertheless, the aim of this essay is to fathom what Warhol’s art refers to or means, to establish what is valid in it. Marx felt that “the supreme value of a work of art - its ultimate aim and reason for being - is achieved along with and through other values: social, moral and religious.” (p.29). Gablik, echoing Fuller, says that “the real problem of modernity” is “the loss of belief in any system of values beyond the self.” (p.30). But Gablik also says that art has “always interacted with the social environment”. (p.51). Because it “reflects, reinforces, transforms, or repudiates”, art is always in “some kind of necessary relation to the social structure” and is “never neutral”. (p.51). “There is always a correlation between society’s values, directions, and motives and the art it produces.” (p.51). If “the lines between what is acceptable as art and what is unacceptable no longer exist” (p.75) and the “plausibility of the tradition collapses” having lost its “charismatic, ‘meaning-giving’ function”, (p.76), then, asks Gablik, “how can meaning survive when nothing acts as a regulating principle within the practice to protect whatever presuppositions and interests are involved?” (p.77).

Established religion, in its notion of an institutionalised sacredness, provides a source of authority and keeps individual striving “in balance, because it was but one variable in a total system.” (p.80). Erich Fromm speaks of the “ ‘anguish of choice’ ” becoming a “burden and a danger, since everything now depends on the individual’s

own effort, and not on the security of his traditional status.” (p.78). Thus Gablik argues that the “role of criticism today...is to engage in a fundamental reconstruction of the basic premises of our whole culture...it is not just a matter of seeing things differently, but of seeing different things.” (p.128). “Direct knowing is the only thing that can break the cultural trance: deliberately and soberly changing one’s mind about the nature of truth and reality, and about what is really important.” (p.128). Without providing a sound methodology, Gablik does say that it is necessary to look at art in terms of “purpose rather than style - if we are to succeed in transforming personal vision into social responsibility”. (p.128). Challenging the “oppressive assumptions of our secular, technocratic Western mentality” and changing our ideas about what is “really important” brings us again to the question of ultimate concerns in the modern world. (p.128).

Remy and Servais put forward the view that “modernity” oppresses the sacred and if socially legitimate practices and beliefs are embodied in “modernity”, they are often exclusive, inducing the excluded to seek refuge in the “illegitimate sacred” for a sense of security and identity in the modern universe. (Remy, Servais,1973,p.75). An awareness is growing in modern society that “technical progress and scientific knowledge may not lead to utopia”, that modernity might lead to a loss of humanity and even “total destruction.” (Hargrove,1978,p.274). Paglia says that the logical analysis by science of nature’s operations has “lessened human anxiety about the cosmos” by demonstrating the “materiality” and “frequent predictability” of nature’s forces. (Paglia,1995,p.6). Hence, science, like religion and art, can be described as a “counter-effect”. (Fromm,1950,p.11). Fromm quotes Freud, who says that

“counter-effects suppress and control” that which man is powerless to cope with rationally i.e. “forces of nature outside and instinctive forces within himself.” (p.11). To be meaningful as a social institution, the sacred “must be related to human experience.” (De Waal Malefijt, 1968,p.359). Marty describes the “search for higher states of consciousness” or “an infinite all” as a search for liberation from an “oppressive surrounding order”. (Marty,1973,p.34). In other words, the continued existence of the sacred contemporaneously, as a symbolic affirmation of social reality, depends on the “flexibility of interpretation and re-interpretation” of its “symbolic content”. (p.359). A sacred or “religious symbol” would be “both a model of and a model for reality.” (Lessa,Vogt,1972,p.108). It is important to note that shared beliefs and values “bind a group with a sense of belonging, of superiority to other groups, and of the essential rightness of their beliefs.” (Leslie, Larson, Gorman,1973,p.442) Participation within a shared belief system “expands the ego” of the individual by “making his spirit significant for the universe and the universe significant for him.” (p.519).

What is revealed is that counter-effects, concomitant with the anxiety that caused them, if effective, become sacred, no matter how they are manifest. Shared counter-effects become shared symbolic orders.

For Rupp, the most important change from historic to modern concepts of the sacred has its origin in the collapse of dualism. No longer characterised by undifferentiated monism, or simple dualism, modern life has become, according to Bellah, “ ‘an infinite possibility thing’ ”, as already described. (Rupp,1979,p.29). He goes on to say

that because of the collapse of metaphysical dualism in the post-enlightenment West, the question of the sacred, or the quest for the “self’s ultimate environment” (p.34) has to be reformulated. He echoes De Waal Malefijt in that the nature of this ultimate environment becomes more focused if it is viewed from the perspective of its “relation to human activity.” (p.35).

What did Warhol believe in? By his own admission, Warhol professed to believe in “nothing”. (Warhol,1975,p.183). Rupp, however, claims that unqualified nihilism is untenable: “That people continue to live is itself an implicit denial of total nihilism”, and choosing to end one’s life is an act “which at least affirms its own significance.” (p.36). Steiner says that to ask what art is or how to interpret its action are, “ultimately theological questions.” (Steiner,1989,p.227). If Warhol wasn’t a nihilist, what was he?

Warhol said:

“I’m sure I’m going to look in the mirror and see nothing. People are always calling me a mirror and if a mirror looks into a mirror, what is there to see? ...Some critic called me Mr Nothingness Himself and that didn’t help my sense of existence any. Then I realized that existence itself is nothing and I felt better. But I’m still obsessed with the idea of looking into the mirror and seeing no one, nothing.” (Warhol.1975,p.7).

Roszak quotes Nietzsche’s question:

“ ‘Has there not been...an unbroken progress in the self-belittling of man...’ ” rolling “ ‘faster...away from the center...into the thrilling sensation of his own nothingness?’ ” (Roszak,1989,p.187).

According to Fromm, Warhol's statement would form part of "...an all-inclusive mental picture of the world which serves as a frame of reference from which he can derive an answer to the question of where he stands and what he ought to do." (Fromm,1963,p.24). Yet, a "mental picture" is not sufficient because as an entity, "endowed with a body as well as a mind", man has to "react to the dichotomy of his existence not only in thinking but also in the process of living, in his feelings and actions." (p.24). Certainly the following examination of the available details of Warhol's "process of living, feelings and actions", offers some understanding of his dichotomy.

## CHAPTER TWO:

“ ‘Watching you sleep...’ ” Andy Warhol.  
(Bockris,1990,p.207).

At the end of 1961, having recovered from a nervous breakdown and fearing that he might be susceptible to another, Andy Warhol decided it was essential to do something that would have “a lot of impact”, that would be “different” and “very personal.” (Bockris,1990,p.165). Something different would be something unlike abstract expressionism. Warhol said, “ ‘I’m starting pop art...because I hate abstract expressionism. I hate it!’ ” (p.155). He paid Muriel Latow (an interior designer who was struggling unsuccessfully to support her own gallery) fifty dollars for a “fabulous idea”. (p.165)

“ ‘What do you like most in the whole world?’ Muriel asked. ‘I don’t know. What do I like most in the whole world?’ ‘Money,’ she replied. ‘You should paint pictures of money.’ ‘Oh, gee,’ Andy gasped, ‘that really is a great idea. In the silence that followed, Muriel elaborated. ‘You should paint something that everybody sees every day, that everybody recognises...like a can of soup.’ For the first time that evening, Andy smiled.” (p.165).

“Robert Heide: ‘Andy told me...many an afternoon at lunchtime Mom would open a can of Campbell’s for me, because that’s all we could afford,’ ...I love it to this day.’ ” (p.166).

“You could not get more personal with Andy than a can of soup or the money needed to buy it. Muriel Latow had turned a spotlight in Andy’s mind on his childhood. In a flash he realized that he had always wanted to paint the contents of his mother’s

kitchen.” (166). Reminiscent of Proust’s *madeleine*, a tin of Campbell’s soup obliterated the present and propelled Warhol back to his childhood.

What a person is, is mostly a result of social imprinting during “impressionable years” (Campbell, 1973,p.45). However, within the framework of this essay, it is unnecessary to write Warhol’s full biography, or even to examine all his subjects. Extracts and examples of both have been chosen for their relevance to my hypothesis. As Warhol’s background throws so much light on his work and thought, it is instructive to look at its main outline.

Cajoled by a priest and a box of chocolates, (Bockris,1990,p.20), Julia Zavacky married Andrej Warhola in Mikova in the Mezilaborce region of present-day Czechoslovakia. (Castleman,1990 p.113). In 1913, Andrej moved to the United states, leaving his wife and a sickly child to await finance for their passage. The child died, and circumstances prevented Julia from immigrating until 1921. They had two other children, Paul (born 1923) and John (born 1925). (p.113).

During the depression, on August 6, 1928, Andrew Warhola was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, (Bockris,1990,p.7), to a xenophobic, devout Byzantine Catholic mother (p.9) and an ambitious, brutal father. (p.39). Warhol said, once, about coming into life, that it would be best:

“ ‘...to be born fast, because it hurts, and die fast, because it hurts, but I think if you were born and died within that minute, that would be the best life, because the priest says that way you’re guaranteed to go to heaven.’ ...He said that being born was a mistake, that it was ‘like being kidnapped and sold into slavery.’ ” (p.7).

A lonely, sickly, ugly child, his isolation was further offset by the extended Warhola and Zavacky families “who maintained close ties with each other throughout Andy’s childhood.” (p.9). Eastern Europeans (Ruthenians), contemptuously labelled “‘hunkies’”, were treated with suspicion and derision and their children were ostracized, ridiculed and abused at school. Marginalised, they kept to themselves ‘Po nasemu’ (‘in our own manner’). (p.12). The people who surrounded Warhol in his youth were reflected in his character. From the Warholas, Andy inherited “his relentless drive, his abstemiousness, aggressiveness and tightfisted attitude towards money.” (p.19). From the Zavackys he acquired a “tendency to cry easily, a desire to perform, a belief in destiny and magic, a penchant for death and disaster and an ability to mythologize everything that happened to him. His ancestors often suffered from these traits but Andy would learn how to put them to work.” (p.19).

The place where Warhol was born presented a “Hieronymus Bosch vision of modern times” (p.9) echoing Blake’s dark satanic mills. In Pittsburgh, everything was in constant and rapid motion. An industrial hell, “riding on a sea of constant coming and going, of commerce, politics, sex, alcohol and greed...”, situated at the delta of three rivers, the city was the vital conduit between east and west...producing the coal and steel essential to run industrial America. (p.10). “It was a cartoon of the extremes of capitalism. Corruption at every level of civil government was so rife that human rights were largely ignored.” (p.10).

Duane Michals, a photographer, who grew up at the same time as Andy and later became his friend, recalled that: “ ‘Because our rivers were orange I thought all rivers

were orange. At night the steel mills lit up the sky;... The mills made a lot of noise; you could hear the cranes dropping enormous things and booming all the time. There was a certain drama about it, kind of scary too. When I was a kid, I thought it was terrific...just the best place to live.' ” (p.10).

The city was dominated by a small group of very wealthy industrialists. “Ostentatious in their tastes and flamboyant in their lifestyles, the Pittsburgh millionaires were keen to be accepted by society. Their families constantly traversed Europe, buying up art and enticing aristocrats to marry their offspring”, whilst at home the living conditions of their workforce went unattended. (p.11).

“ ‘Here was the very heart of industrial America,’ ” wrote the famous American journalist, H.L. Mencken. (p.12). Here was the epitome of its “ ‘most lucrative and characteristic activity, the boast and pride of the richest and grandest nation ever on earth - and here was a scene so dreadfully hideous, so intolerably bleak and forlorn that it reduced the whole aspiration of man to a macabre and depressing joke.’ ” (p.12). Here was a juxtaposition of wealth beyond imagination or computation and dire poverty. Mencken alludes to filth, abominable living conditions, an “ ‘unbroken and agonising ugliness, the sheer revolting monstrousness, of every house in sight.’ ” (p.12). As a growing child, this was Warhol’s world. “Housewives would spend part of each morning, afternoon and evening sweeping the ore dust off the front porches; new buildings were quickly blackened; white shirt collars were ringed with soot by noontime. Society ladies sometimes wore gas masks to go shopping downtown.” (p.11). “Prostitution and the numbers racket were rife and alcoholism was endemic

among Pittsburgh's workers...when it rained, the shit ran down the hills to join the piles of irregularly collected rubbish on which rickety, pale children played." (p.14). Warhol later described his hometown as " 'the worst place I have ever been in my whole life.' " (p.14).

According to sociologist Philip Klein: "The drive of progress in Pittsburgh has been unusual in force and has emphasized certain contrasts of modern life... social stratification is possible - sectional, radical, political and economic. To understand Pittsburgh one must conceive of it as a huge factory with a national market as its perspective, drawing its resources from all parts of the land and looking to all parts for the disposal of its product... The forces that control its destinies are basically economic, are forces that move with the large strides of national progress and regression." (p.13).

Areas where industries were less predominant were less affected by the depression than Pittsburgh. Dismissals happened overnight and a dismal pessimism overwhelmed the traditional optimism of the American people. "Gone was the exuberance, the belief in easy money and easy living. Life grew dark as the skies over the city... " (p.13).

Warhol's mother, Julia, spent most of her time making flower sculptures out of tin cans, which she would sell for a minimal amount. Andy recalled them fifty years later: " 'The tin flowers she made out of those fruit tins, that's the reason why I did my first

tin can paintings... She was a wonderful woman and a real good and correct artist, like the primitives' ” (p.15).

“‘This is hell if there is a hell anywhere,’ one miner was quoted as saying. ‘No work, starving, afraid of being shot, it is a shame for a man to tell such bad truth.’ ” (p.13). During the depression, Andrej Warhola lost his job, but did not take part in the demonstrations. He was an “unusually ambitious man whose goal was to lift his family out of the slums and give his children a chance for a better life.” (p.15). “...In early 1934 the Warholas moved from Moultrie Street in the Soho Ghetto to Dawson Street in Oakland...it was a fifteen minute walk to Schenley High School...” (p.25).

Essential “themes of the twentieth-century American spirit: confidence, drive ambition, greed, power, naivete, hope, chance, corruption, perversity, violence, entropy, chaos, madness and death” found their epitome in Pittsburgh. (Bockris,1990,p.14). Warhol’s imagery, eventually, would echo these themes.

In 1933, after an upsetting day at school, Andy’s mother decided that he should stay at home with her. Together, they drew pictures. (p.24). Warhol “just picked it up and had a natural ability from the time he was a youngster.” (p.32). He “turned to his mother for protection from the rough males in the family” (p.18). Warhol’s mother was a “very good storyteller” and “her favourite topics were the bible and her life in Mikova.” (p.18). Although “imaginative, emotional, expressive, strong, resilient, and humorous,” (p.19), Julia was “largely out of touch with the reality of their lives outside the home and refused to learn English. Her mind was full of religion, the ghost

of her dead daughter, and her memories.” (p.23). Yet, when Andy, aged seven, wanted a film projector, because it was within her capacity, Julia got a job “doing housework for a dollar a day until she had the \$20” to obtain it for him. (p.33).

In 1936, when Warhol was eight, he contracted chorea or St Vitus’s dance, an illness “that defined his childhood.” (p.34). Before the discovery of penicillin, rheumatic fever was common among children who lived in close proximity in insanitary neighbourhoods. In some cases the disease was fatal, in others, it developed into chorea. “Named after a third-century Christian child martyr, this disorder of the central nervous system in its worst form causes loss of co-ordination of the limbs and spastic fits.” (p.34). Its worst effects are psychological because children who contract it often think they are going insane. (p.34). Warhol recalled that: “I was always sick so I was always going to summer school and trying to catch up”. (p.33). When he tried to write or draw on the blackboard his hand would shake. He was bullied and “became terrified of going to school” and “afraid of socialializing.” (p.34). When the symptoms became impossible to miss, i.e. when “he started slurring his speech, touching things nervously with shaking hands, fumbling and had difficulty sitting still”, Andy was confined to bed for a month. (p.34). The doctor told Julia that Andy “needed mental and emotional peace and constant care.” (p.35).

His convalescence was “a golden time in Andy’s childhood” for he was able to detach himself from the outside world and from everyone but his mother.” (p.35). To amuse himself, he drew, read movie magazines, played with paper dolls. (p.35). He started to collect autographed photographs of movie stars, beginning with Shirley Temple.

(Castleman,1990,p.113). "In 1936, the year she made *Poor Little Rich Girl*, Shirley Temple became Andy's idol and role model...Her attitude towards everything is that it's a game. Within this plot lies the basic philosophy of Andy Warhol's life: work all the time, make it into a game, and maintain your sense of humour." (Bockris,1990,p.38).

In 1938, in a "rare fit of generosity" Andrej bought a radio. (p.35). Andy and his mother would listen to programmes like "Suspense or One Man's Family." (p.35). Andy was enormously influenced by the movies and the radio. His favourite radio character was "The Shadow, whose signature statement was, 'Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? The Shadow knows...'" (p.59).

When it was decided that Andy should return to school, he rebelled. John Elachko, a neighbour, used to playing surrogate father to the Warhola boys while their father was away, forced Andy to go to school using physical violence. Andy developed a nervous twitch and had a relapse. (p.37). "The incident bred in him a lifelong abhorrence of violence and a strong desire to detach himself from any kind of physical force." (p.37). "The illness had also caused a skin condition that would plague Andy throughout his life." (p.37).

When eventually Andy returned to school, a definite pattern emerged in his relation to his peer group. He associated almost exclusively with girls. Margie Girman, a small Ukrainian, Byzantine Catholic, became his friend. Warhol could identify with her. "Part of him wanted to be her." (p.29).

In 1938, Andy began attending the free art classes for talented young people at the Carnegie Institution. (Castleman,1990,p.113). “Although Pittsburgh was a provincial city, it was an excellent place to study art in the 1930’s and 1940’s. The Carnegies, Mellons and Fricks were among the leading collectors in the world. The interest of the Pittsburgh millionaires in art both as an aesthetic and a financial investment led them to sponsor art competitions, art centres and free Saturday-morning art classes at the Carnegie Museum for talented children from all over the city.” (Bockris,1990,p.49). This was the first step in his career, the first time he was singled out and able to make his way into another world via his art. (p.50) Andy later told Ultra Violet, that the art classes made a particular impression on him because;

“they gave him his first chance to meet children from the neighbourhoods beyond his ethnic ghetto and to observe how the well-to-do dress and speak. Several times he mentioned two youngsters who arrived in limousines, one in a long maroon Packard and the other in a Pierce-Arrow. He remembered the mother who wore expensively tailored clothes and sumptuous furs. In the 1930’s, before television and with no glossy magazines for poor families like Andy’s and few trips to the movies, the art classes opened a peephole for Andy to the world of the rich and successful. He never forgot what he saw.” (p.51).

According to Joseph Fitzpatrick, who was an extraordinary teacher, Warhol must have been “ ‘Highly intelligent to do what he was naturally doing, because he was so individualistic and ahead of his time...He was magnificently talented...but...had no consideration for other people. He lacked all the amenities. He was socially inept at the time and showed little or no appreciation for anything. He was ill at ease with members of his class or with any of the people with whom he associated. Maybe he was withdrawn because of his lack of social background, and developed the approach to cover. But he did seem to have a goal from the very start. You weren’t conscious of

what it was, but he stayed right with it.’ ” (p.51). Fitzpatrick taught art as away of life. “Look, to See, to Remember, to Enjoy! he would bellow...” (p.51). He influenced Warhol and encouraged him to do whatever he wanted to do. “ ‘What I taught him may not have helped with the kind of thing he did later on, but it acquainted him with different styles.’ ” (p.51).

In 1941, Warhol entered Schenley High School. While at high school he was “determined and serious.” (p.55). Fitzpatrick also taught at Schenley and became Warhol’s mentor. (p.55) It was during this time that a new group called ‘teenagers’ emerged in American society. (p.52). Inundated with news of the war, Warhol’s peer group were making a “whole brash new world of their own.” (p.53). Frank Sinatra became their idol. They danced the jitterbug and wanted to dress and look alike. Their uniform included “saddleshoes, bobby sox and a string of pearls. Hair and make-up tips filled the new teen-oriented magazines they devoured.” (p.53).

This fashion conscious life style appealed to Warhol, and later he would “have a large following among teenagers and a great influence on and interest in the youth culture.” (p.53). There was a strong emphasis on appearance. “A national survey defined the teenagers’ most serious problem as acne,” and Andy was to be counted in their number. (p.53). He was highly strung and the stress affected his appearance. He had, however, become “highly disciplined and self directed in his work.” (p.53). His talent was recognised and he gained approval from both his peer group and his teachers. It is important to note that he drew “compulsively, constantly, and amazingly.” (p.53). A Jewish girl named Ellie Simon became his close friend. She was empathetic to Andy’s

problems. Julia was jealous and disapproving. She warned that they could never marry because of their “different religions.” (p.56).

Another colleague, Shaffer, recalls that: “He had an ugly body...a kind of hunched back...I did not suspect him of being gay. It wasn’t the sort of thing one thought about at that time.” (p.57).

In the most revealing comment he ever made about his childhood, Andy wrote in *Popism*:

“ ‘I learned when I was little that whenever I got aggressive and tried to tell someone what to do nothing happened - I just couldn’t carry it off. I learned that you actually have more power when you shut up, because at least some people will start to maybe doubt themselves.’ ” (p.38).

Warhol's *Popism*, a memoir of the 1960's, was published in 1980. Peter Conrad, an English critic had this to say in the *Observer*:

“ ‘*Popism* is a necrotic book, in which the bloodless, undead, silver-maned Warhol broods over the demise of the decade and of his own talent. *Popism* reads like a report from beyond the grave. It recalls the Sixties as a zombified hell, fuelled by speed and acid, fed by junk food, populated by hermaphroditic sadists like Warhol’s pop group the Velvet Underground or by cybernetic girls frugging in electric dresses...a long and demented binge...which at this distance... seems...frivolous...’ ” (p.534).

In contrast, in Roszak’s opinion, the nineteen-sixties represented “the last burst of the human being before he was extinguished.” (Roszak,1989,p.xi). Dissent was rife, seeming to portend massive, far-reaching changes. There was an awareness of Eliot’s

'Wasteland' becoming literal as "our state of soul" becomes the "state of nature." (p.xii). The protest at that time was against "everything industrial progress represented: its obsession with material goods, its ruthless domination of the biosphere...its contempt for the organic, the primitive...." (p.xiii). Political consideration of these issues was unprecedented.

Dissent was everywhere while one of Warhol's concerns was the demise of his talent. According to Adorno, talent is about fury or sublimated rage, a necessary fury to "free oneself from confinement" or the "capacity to convert energies once intensified beyond measure to destroy recalcitrant objects." (Adorno,1978,p.109). Through this process we can grasp "the secret of things". (p.109). The image he evokes is of a child, momentarily appeased, once the "quavering voice has been wrenched from the mutilated toy." (p.109). Talent is the ability to transform rage into the "conciliatoriness of art." (p.109).

Based on Freud's theory that " 'subconsciously you remain the same age throughout you life' ", Bockris suggests that Warhol, while "polarizing his audience as an artist during his prime, remained, at least partly, the eight year old (sweet and humble as ever with his girlfriends and, on occasion, an arrogant prince at home) who now emerged from the cocoon of his illness and convalescence." (p.38). Simultaneously, the new fantasy life he was creating in his imagination gave him "an inner focus" which engendered his art. (p.38). It was now that his "two-sided character began to emerge." (p.38). Fromm says that the violation of moral and intellectual integrity "weakens or even paralyzes...personality" and results in an " 'adjusted' " person.

(1950,p.74). By this process, the person becomes a “commodity, with nothing stable or definite...except his readiness to change roles.” (p.75). Any derived security will be shortlived, for the betrayal of the “higher self, of human values, leaves an inner emptiness” and an inability to love. (p.75) Without love, a person is “an empty shell even if his were all power, wealth and intelligence.” (p.76). “The movies...defined Warhol’s life...they became his passion, a necessity, an escape... Just as he identified with girls rather than boys in his daily relations, he chose a female rather than a male movie star to idolize.” (p.38). Film revealed a different, fantasy world.

Warhol wrote in his book *America*:

“It’s the movies that have really been running things in America ever since they were invented” They show you what to do, how to do it, when to do it, how to feel about it and how to look how you feel about it. . . .

“I tried and tried when I was young to learn something about love and since it wasn’t taught in school, I turned to the movies for some idea about what love is and what to do about it. In those days you did learn something about some kind of love from the movies but it was nothing you could apply with any reasonable results. Mom always said not to worry about love, but just to be sure to get married. But I always knew that I would never get married, because I didn’t want any children. I don’t want them to have the same problems I have. I don’t think anybody deserves it.” (p.58).

The war emphasized the need for diversion and entertainment. The cinema became popular. “Everything was big, dramatic, dynamic and sharp...Andy got a new child star to identify with when the sultry twelve year old Elizabeth Taylor burst onto the scene in National Velvet...Walt Disney was developing epic cartoons like Fantasia...Magazines and newspapers proliferated.” (p.60). These Warhol read “voraciously, paying particular attention to photographs, many of which he tore out

and used in collages and drawings. This is where he picked up the kind of images he would later use in paintings that would shock and dismay people with their 'bad taste'." (p.60).

In 1942, Warhol's father died of tuberculous peritonitis. According to John's wife, Marge, Andrej had " 'worked hard...wanted...college educations for all his sons, but especially Andy because he knew that he was intelligent...he had seen something in Andy.' " (p.27). Warhol, only fourteen years old, suffered a strong emotional reaction to his father's death. In a state of terror, he refused to "look at the body and this was probably the only funeral he ever attended. His fear of death would lead to a hardcore detachment from anything concerning it." (p.44).

In 1944, Julia's doctor diagnosed cancer of the colon and recommended "an operation...called a colostomy." (p.46). In the opinion of John Warhola, after the experience of his father's death and during his mother's illness "Andy got closer to God." (p.48). The paradox is that while saying he believed in nothing, he nevertheless prayed in church with his mother.

During the forties, the news was almost exclusively about the war. The media, as always, like "some of Andy's Zavacky relatives", thrived on local disasters: "Deaths...earthquakes, explosions and plane crashes were grist to the mill..." (p.60). Images of thousands of wounded and "mutilated soldiers crammed into hospitals all over the country" and of "people committing suicide (usually women jumping out of windows) were standard fare...Andy had the dubious honour of waking up on his

seventeenth birthday to read the *Pittsburgh News* headline SECRET ATOM BOMB TO WIPE OUT JAPS ...accompanied by President Truman's threat, QUIT OR DIE!" (p.60).

Warhol wrote in *America*:

“ ‘When I was little, I never left Pennsylvania, and I used to have fantasies about things that I thought were happening in the Midwest, or down South, or in Texas, that I felt I was missing out on. But you can only live life in one place at a time. And your own life while it's happening to you never has any atmosphere until it's a memory. So the fantasy corners of America seem so atmospheric because you've pieced them together from scenes in movies and lives from books. And you live in your dream America that you've custom-made from art and schmaltz and emotions just as much as you live in your real one.’ ” (p.60).

A tertiary education “held the promise of escaping from Pittsburgh,” reeking of its noxious industrial effusions and effluents, to the “crystal city of New York.” (p.61). Warhol, given a choice between the “University of Pittsburgh and the Carnegie Institute of Technology”, chose the latter because “it had a better art department.” (p.61). Escape was “desperately important to him.” (p.61).

Attending Carnegie Technicon in Oakland, on its “beautifully landscaped campus” brought Warhol closer to the “mansions where the Pittsburgh elite lived” and to a “zone of culture distinctly separate from the workday life of the city.” (p.62). It is important to note that the “curriculum was a meld of Bauhaus or utilitarian design and fine art.” (Castleman,1990,p.13).

*“Laborare est orare - To labour is to pray - was the motto of the school.”* (Bockris,1990,p.62). Inarticulate, Warhol struggled, and was “incapable of forming his thoughts coherently in writing.” (p.63).

“Working at night was a habit Andy had developed in high school because he was afraid of the dark and it was the only time he could be completely uninterrupted.” (p.63). His friends, Ellie and Gretchen helped him write his papers. However, he could not cover up his difficulties when he was called upon to speak. This was a serious concern because passing “Thought and Expression” was mandatory. (p.63). On hearing the news Warhol burst into tears. He was never able to cope with rejection and “it was one of the few things that could reduce him to tears.” (p.63). Mrs Twiggs, however, gave him the benefit of the doubt and suggested he return during the summer. His relationship with Papa Hyde, in the opinion of one of his classmates was “extremely important.” (p.67).

Papa Hyde said:

“Andy, damn it, you just must stop drawing in a manner where you try to please me or you’re trying to get a good grade. You do it the way you see it. I don’t care how good it looks. How bad it looks. You’ve got to do it to please yourself. And if you don’t do it, you’ll never amount to a damn. Be goddamned what I think...You must do it to please *you* ...regardless of what anybody thinks.” (p.67)

At this time, Warhol’s brother Paul had started a new business. While Warhol helped with the deliveries during the summer he “sketched everything he saw around him ... in ten seconds... without taking the pencil off the paper.” (p.67). “He drew what he

saw... in a very simple manner... he really got the essence of this depressed side of life". (p.67). Warhol won an award and drew the kind of attention to himself that Fitzpatrick had observed "he knew how to gain while appearing to avoid." (p.68).

In 1948, Warhol put his "precious portfolio into a brown paper bag" and took a Greyhound bus to New York. (p.78). " *'The ultimate dream of any Painting and Design person was to go to New York and get a studio. That word 'studio' was enormously charged, it was more charged than sex...I mean this was it!'* " said Albert Goldman. (p.85). "He was taken with the image of Truman Capote who now became his idol and role model." (p.79).

His first commercial art commission was published in *Glamour*. Here was the beginning of the metamorphosis of Andy Warhola into Andy Warhol. (p.91). Tina Fredericks, the art director of *Glamour* magazine, was intrigued by Andy and the way his drawings "blended commercial and fine art." (p.87). When she asked for drawings of shoes "little did she know the wellspring she stirred...Andy not only loved shoes, he loved feet." (p.88). Andy later sold an entire portfolio of watercoloured drawings of shoes called " *'A la Recherche du Shoe Perdu'* ". (p.134). A drawing of a young sailor on his knees injecting heroin into his arm was published as a full-page advertisement in the *New York Times* for a radio programme about crime and reproduced as an album cover. (p.97). For this, Andy won "his first Art Directors' Gold medal - the Oscar of the advertising industry." (p.98). The "dark side of commercial art - the use of advertising images to play on hidden aggression and loneliness, status seeking and sex appeal, documented by Vance Packard in his book *The Hidden Persuaders* - was to become a theme in Warhol's most famous pop-art paintings." (p.98). From 1950-59

Warhol did freelance work for several magazines, window decorations for fashionable stores and was “retained by I. Miller shoe stores where his advertisements and window displays become famous.” (Castleman,1990,p.113). In 1952 he began showing his drawings and “noncommercial artworks in galleries.” (p.113). Reviews were “lukewarm” and when Warhol sold one or two drawings priced at \$50 he would say, “Oh my God, bombed again!”, but in the future, “translation of this vulnerability into hostility would spur him to success.” (Bockris,1990,p.135).

Warhol had a real breakthrough in 1956 with his “Crazy Golden Slippers” show at the Bodley Gallery. This was a collection of “large blotted line drawings of shoes painted gold...the distanced, iconographic golden slippers were a distinct contrast to the voyeuristic male portraits he had shown at the beginning of the year.” (p.141). “He gave each shoe a name: Elvis Presley, James Dean, Mae West, Truman Capote...” (p.141). He was given a two-page colour spread in *Life* magazine. David Mann recalled that “Terrified of rejection, he was really sweating it out.” (p.141). “He was supersensitive about his taste.” (p.154).

Warhol shifted his energy away from commercial art toward the world of fine art because contemporary events were “compelling enough to encourage him to try his hand.” (Castleman,1990,p.27). However, an observer said that Warhol was essentially apologizing to himself for having been involved in advertising. Commercial art, “essentially towering blandness” was not a confrontation of images “which cause you distress in order to relieve the distress.” (Bockris,1990,p.156). Warhol needed to make an art which was a means of “getting the anxiety out, which is what much art is

about.” (p.156). Indeed, religion attempts to alleviate anxiety in that its essential theme is “redemption from the powers that prevent man from communing” with the sacred. (Schoeps,1954,p.3). Communing with the sacred; apotheosis through art is, for Steiner, “a wager on transcendence.” (Steiner,1989,p.4). Quoting Joyce's “‘epiphany’” and Walter Benjamin's “‘aura’” , Steiner describes “the unspeakable...visitations of the freedom and mystery of being” or “transcendental intuitions” which may be communicated “to us in privileged moments” through art. (p.112). However, “‘aura’” according to Benjamin, would only be ascribed to an original work and never to the “ubiquity” of mechanical reproduction which “has grown with the application to the enterprise of culture of modern technologies of dissemination”. (p.65). This “issue bristles with paradox and demands careful statement” (p.65), especially, it would seem, with regard to Warhol, who said:

“Business art is the step that comes after Art. I started as a commercial artist and I want to finish as a business artist. After I did the thing called ‘art’ or whatever it’s called, I went into business art, I wanted to be an Art Businessman or a Business Artist. Being good in business is the most fascinating kind of art. During the hippie era people put down the idea of business - they’d say ‘Money is bad’ and ‘Working is bad,’ but making money is art and working is art and good business is the best art.” (Warhol,1975,p.92).

Despite careful statement, however, Steiner does qualify works “produced *solely* for monetary...ends” as “only trash, only *kitsch* and artefacts...”. (Steiner,1989,p.145). Such works “do indeed, transcend (transgress) morality. Theirs is the pornography of insignificance.” (p.145).

In the early sixties, according to Robert Hughes, Warhol’s work was insignificant, merely “a baleful mimicry of advertising, without the gloss.” (Hughes,1991,p.348).

“Advertising flatters people that they have something in common with artists; the consumer is rare, discriminating, a connoisseur of sensation. If Warhol was once subversive - and in the early sixties he was - it was because he inverted the process on which successful advertising depends, becoming a famous artist who loved nothing but banality and sameness.” (p.348).

In other words the *avant-garde* was consigned to the social parody of the established art world. In one fell swoop, “nothing would be left in the sphere of art except its use as a container for celebrity.” (p.348). “Fame was the reward for manifest deeds. It stood for a social agreement about what was worth doing...The artist who understood this best and became best known for understanding it was Andy Warhol.” (p.346). He “...devoted so much time and skill to the cultivation of publicity.” (p.346) He projected “an ironic affectless cool, which let everything be itself” and “became a well-known artist by silently proclaiming that Art could not change life.” (p.346).

Warhol later wrote:

“To be successful as an artist, you have to have your work shown in a good gallery, for the same reason that, say, Dior never sold his originals from a counter in Woolworth’s.” (Castleman,1990,p.28)

Berger says that “interests of cultural prestige have obscured” the “direct continuity” of traditional oil painting in the “language of publicity”. (Berger,1972,p.134). In his opinion, works of art suggest a “cultural authority...” and “oil painting, before it was anything else, was a celebration of private property. As an art-form it derived from the principle that *you are what you have.*” (p.139). However, he says it would be “a

mistake to think of publicity supplanting the visual art of post-Renaissance Europe; it is the moribund form of that art.” (p.139).

If an oil painting can satisfy, the purpose of publicity is the opposite. (p.142). “Publicity is never a celebration of a pleasure- in- itself” and is always about “the future buyer.” (p.132). Here, fallen imagination or “the human impulse to transcend what exists in the direction of what might exist” (Kearney,1991,p.42) is further debased through imagery contrived to make the future buyer “envious of himself as he might be”, i.e. “the envy of others.” (Berger,1972,p.132). (cf. Chapter Four).

Berger goes on to say that while “oil painting was addressed to those who made money out of the market”, publicity addresses those who constitute the market...from whom profits are made twice over - as worker and then as buyer. (p.142). It is important to note that “all publicity works upon anxiety. The sum of everything is money, to get money is to overcome anxiety. Alternatively the anxiety on which publicity plays is the fear that having nothing you will be nothing.” (p.143).

### CHAPTER THREE

“The artist with no audience may enjoy himself, but until his work occupies a meaningful place in other people’s environment, it has no place in culture and, by my definition, it is thus no work of art.”  
(Brothwell,1976,p.113)

Before looking at some of Warhol’s work, the present writer would like to reiterate the notion that a work of art cannot be self-referential. The creative process has been described in various ways. Henry Miller said understanding is “not a piercing of the mystery, but an acceptance of it.” (Ghiselin,1952,p.181). Creativity is a metaphysical adventure: it is a “way of approaching life indirectly, an acquiring of a total rather than a partial view of the universe.” (p.178). The artist “lives between the upper and lower worlds : he takes the path in order eventually to become that path himself.” (p.178). In other words, the artist endeavours to conceive, comprehend and convey a holistic world which is beyond linear or tangible reality where anything and everything is possible. His message embodies change. He takes the path to engage and experience life. Life is more important than art, but the artist can only assess his life as art through the act of making art. Paradoxically, it is through his life and because of his life that he can create, although life is not lived for the sake of art. The artist chooses activity over passivity by making a life “in accord with the deep-centred rhythm of the cosmos.” (p.180).

According to Miller, the artist, through his creation, ritualistically participates in his cosmology in an endeavour to affirm it. In his opinion, the alienating dialectic of

fallen imagination is atoned through artistic creation, i.e. “so being” becomes the intended “shall be.” (Kearney,1991,p.41).

Miller believes that:

“Once art is really accepted, it will cease to be. It is only a substitute, a symbol language, for something which can be seized directly, but for that to become possible man must become thoroughly religious, not a believer, but a prime mover, a god in fact and deed. He will become that inevitably. And of all the detours along this path art is the most glorious, the most fecund, the most instructive. The artist who becomes thoroughly aware consequently ceases to be one. And the trend is towards awareness, towards that blinding consciousness in which no present form of life can possibly flourish, not even art.” (Ghiselin,1952,p.182).

Thus, what Miller is saying is that the artist’s creation, although only a fiction, is of the highest value. Miller supposes that the ultimate aim, or concern, of the artist is to “get nearer to the heart of truth...in the measure that he abandons the will.” (p.181). Through the creation itself, because in its metaphysical quality it is beyond time and space, the artist is integrated with the whole cosmic process. Kearney calls this process “the *poetics of the possible*.” (1991,p.32).

In the modern context, however, ultimate concerns can be subjective and multifarious. Perhaps a distinction can be made here between a cosmology and a cosmology. Le Milieu Divin - The Phenomenon of Man, written by a Christian theologian, says that because life “has a term” it “imposes a particular direction...towards the highest possible spiritualisation by means of the greatest possible effort.” (de Chardin,1957,p.102). He says the earth can “swell me with her life...take me back into her dust...deck herself...with every charm,...every horror,...every mystery” but can no longer “harm” in the guise of “him who is and of him who is coming.” (p.155). In this

he finds his consolation and defence against anomie, but he stresses that faith, like the creative act, can never be passive without being futile:

“To create, or organise, material energy, or truth, or beauty, brings with it an inner torment which prevents those who face its hazards from sinking into the quiet and closed-in life wherein grows the vice of self regard and attachment (in the technical sense). An honest workman not only surrenders his calm and peace once and for all, but must learn continually to jettison the form which his labour or art or thought first took, and go in search of new forms. To pause, so as to bask in or possess results, would be a betrayal of action. Over and over again he must go beyond himself, tear himself away from himself, leaving behind him his most cherished beginnings...each reality attained and left behind gives us access to the discovery and pursuit of an ideal of higher spiritual content...The more nobly a man wills and acts, the more avid he becomes for great and sublime aims to pursue. He will no longer be content with family, country and the remunerative aspect of his work. He will want wider organisations to create, new paths to blaze, causes to uphold, truths to discover, an ideal to cherish and defend. So, gradually, the worker no longer belongs to himself. Little by little the great breath of the universe has insinuated itself into him through the fissure of his humble but faithful action, has broadened him, raised him up, borne him on.” (de Chardin,1965,p.71).

Fuller mentions that “Kleinians,\* have associated the desire to create with the need for making amends, for ‘reparation’, or the restoration of a harmonious internal world, which the artist feels himself to have lost through the raging of his own aggression.” (Fuller,1985,p.53). This approach is not necessarily reductive, in that it “emphasises the way in which the artist carries out his ‘reparation’, through the external handling of forms and materials” as decisive. (p.53). Thus a “sentimental artist is one who too easily reconstitutes his lost object in the world, denying his own aggression and evading any ‘working through’ of it.” (p.53).

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\* “Melanie Klein (1882-1960), British psychoanalyst, b. Austria, who developed therapy for young children...believed play was a symbolic way of controlling anxiety and analysed it to gain insight into the psychological processes of early life. Basically Freudian in approach, she emphasized such concepts as the ego, superego and the Oedipus complex in the mental development of children. ” (Mitchell,1978,p.425).

Art is the “most effective weapon against the flux of nature” (Paglia, 1995,p.42) in all its daemonic ugliness: “a festering hornet’s nest of aggression and overkill” (p.41), “the seething excess of being”. (p.42) It attempts to make order out of chaos and is not “necessarily just, kind or beautiful.” (p.42). It is a “temenos, a sacred place” or a “threshing floor”. (p.43). It can be described as sacrificial in that it turns its “inherent aggression against both artist and representation...” (p.43). She quotes Nietzsche: “Almost everything we call ‘higher culture’ is based on the spiritualization of *cruelty*”. (p.43). “The artist makes art not to save humankind but to save himself.” (p.43). “The ritual of art is the cruel law of pain made pleasure.” (p.43) “Art is form struggling to wake from the nightmare of nature.” (p.57). Religious art before the enlightenment was ceremonial and hieratic. Subsequently, “art had to create its own world, in which a new ritual of artistic formalism replaced religious universals.” (p.42). Michel Leiris describes an image as a point of anchorage for the human eye: it is a “civilized site” which holds chaos and wilderness at bay. (Leiris,1983,p12). Artists make their own statements in a “sea of chaos”. (p.12). The main outline of Warhol’s life has shown the basis of his cosmology. Although life is not lived only for the sake of art, it has been said that the artist affirms his cosmology through his work. What light does this throw on what Warhol’s art refers to, or is about?

In 1959, Warhol met Emile de Antonio, who “acted as John’s and Rauschenberg’s agent when they needed money, finding them work decorating store windows” under the pseudonym of Manson Jones. (Castleman,1990,p.27). When Warhol showed Antonio, whose encouragement was very important to him, two six foot paintings of

Coke bottles, Antonio rejected the one with a “lot of abstract expressionist marks on it”, but of the “pristine black and white” version, he said:

“The...one is remarkable - it’s our society, it’s who we are, it’s absolutely beautiful and naked...” (Bockris,1990,p.157).

“In aesthetically healthy societies a continuity between the responses of sense and fully aesthetic responses can be assumed.” (Fuller, 1985,p.29). “The rupturing of this continuity” is, for Fuller, “one of the most conspicuous symptoms of this crisis of taste in our time.” (p.29). Kant disputes that “a man cannot call a thing beautiful just because it pleases him.” (p.28). To say that each man “has his own particular taste” would be to say “that there is no taste whatsoever, i.e. no aesthetical judgement which can make a rightful claim upon everyone’s assent.” (p.28). Kant “regarded such a position as...simply a logical *reductio ad absurdum*” but Fuller says that “judgements about sense experience imply an underlying consensus of qualitative assumptions.” (p.29). This consensus is controlled and only “reached through culturally and socially determined habits”. (p.29). Fuller concedes that in “matters of taste and aesthetics...the greatest achievements...along with some of the worst, were effected under conditions” where such habits or controls applied. (p.29). However, in the absence of such controls, he says, “the market and advancing technology, are having unmitigatedly detrimental effects on the aesthetic life of society.” (p.29). It would seem necessary to bear these comments in mind as we endeavour to exemplify the valid in Warhol’s work.

For the first six months of 1962, Warhol “worked on his commercial art...and spent the rest of his time gazing at TV or magazines and blasting rock singles as he

mechanically produced pictures of soup cans and dollar bills. From the first Campbell's soup can onwards Warhol was at his purest as a conceptual artist. His talent was to recognise the right idea at the right time and know how to give it the right design." (Bockris,1990,p.167). In Bockris's opinion, this is why "he was both heavily criticised and instantly recognised." (p.167). His paintings "broke all traditions" and were considered by "most people on the scene not to be art." (p.167). "But the choice of subjects, his timeliness and his talent for design and painting overrode the decisions of the traditional critics and made his work acceptable" as well as accessible to a "mass public." (p.167).

Warhol said:

" 'I am a mass communicator...just ordinary people like my paintings. It took intelligent people years to appreciate the abstract-expressionist school and I suppose it's hard for intellectuals to think of me as art. I've never been touched by a painting, I don't want to think ...' "

(p.167).

In July 1962, Warhol had his first one-man exhibition at the Ferus Gallery, Los Angeles. Blum, the owner of the gallery, and Warhol had agreed to charge \$100 for each painting. This was the same price Warhol had charged for a painting during his junior year at Carnegie Tech, and one tenth of what he was getting for a commercial drawing. (p.167). Prior to the exhibition, "the reaction to Warhol's soup-can paintings was what he had hoped for - outrage and publicity." (p.171). On the 11 May 1962, *Time* magazine, in the first mass-media article on pop art, reported that Warhol was " 'currently occupied with a series of "portraits" of Campbell's soup cans in living colour.' " (p.172). " 'I just paint things I always thought were beautiful, things you use



Marilyn Monroe Diptych 1962

Oil on Canvas, in two panels (201 x 290 cm)

every day and never think about,' Warhol told *Time's* readers. 'I'm working on soup and I've been doing some paintings of money. I just do it because I like it.' " (p.172). People who came to the exhibition were "extremely mystified." (p.172). Artists in California, although provoked and sometimes amused by these paintings, "tended to shrug" and not really to condemn. (p.172). In the near vicinity, a dealer exhibited dozens of Campbell's soup cans saying "'Buy them cheaper here - 60c for three cans.' That was publicized. So there was a lot of hilarity concerning them. *Not* a great deal of serious interest." (p.172).

Marilyn Monroe died on the 4 August 1962. Warhol said " 'I wouldn't have stopped Monroe from killing herself. I think everyone should do whatever they want to do and if that made her happier, then that is what she should have done.' " (p.175). Immediately, on hearing the news of Marilyn's death, Warhol, using a "publicity photograph by Gene Korman taken for the 1953 film *Niagara*," created a series of portraits. (p.175). There were twenty three, "ranging from 'Gold Marilyn' - a small, single image silkscreened onto an expansive Byzantine gold field - to the famous Marilyn diptych, one hundred repetitions of the same face across 12 feet of canvas." (p.176).

Eleanor Ward, director of the Stable Gallery decided to exhibit his paintings which, by the time of her November 1962 show, included the screened canvases of Marilyn Monroe, some of the Disasters and several multiplied images such as Coca-Colas and Handle with Care - Glass - Thank You. (Castleman,1990,p.28). Eleanor Ward, a legend of the era was, in the opinion of her assistant Alan Grog, " 'a composite of all

the movie stars of the thirties and forties, Joan Crawford and Bette Davis rolled into one. She was always beautifully dressed, had tremendous presence and charisma and the gallery was her life.’ ” (Bockris,1990,p.173).

On the night of the exhibition, Warhol arrived fashionably late “accompanied by a group of handsome young hustlers...to find out that a prominent collector, the architect Philip Johnson, had already bought the ‘Gold Marilyn’ for \$800.” (p.181). The exhibition was an unprecedented success. He was “thrilled...his work was accepted instantly with wild enthusiasm...However, for the rest of the evening Warhol seemed withdrawn in public...standing...with a blank expression on his face. ‘His eyes were’ those of a ‘fragile night creature who discovered itself living in the blaze of an alien but fascinating world.’ Many people were struck by his behaviour, including Philip Johnson, who later said it was the only thing he really liked about the whole crazy show.” (p.181).

Of the images of Marilyn, critic Peter Schjeldahl wrote; “ ‘...It was impossible to say where the mask ended and the real woman began...The effect was like Moby-Dick retold, to resounding success, in street slang, with a sexy actress standing in for the fearsome white whale.’ ” (p.176). Barbara Rose, another critic, referred to Warhol in conversation as an “ ‘idiot savant’ ...on hearing this later from Henry Geldzahler, Andy asked: ‘What’s an idiot *souvent*?’ ” (p.181).

That Warhol was often thought of as a fool, an innocent, a wise fool, or an outright genius, was both puzzling and a matter of great concern to the art world. Much has

been said and written about Warhol. However, Adorno claims that everything that is said, “each piece of news, each thought has been preformed by the centres of the culture industry” and the “truth that opposes these pressures” while appearing improbable, remains “too feeble to make any headway in competition with their highly concentrated machinery of dissemination.” (1978,p.108). Perhaps this explains why the meaning of Warhol’s work still remains a mystery.

“ ‘I want to be a machine’ Warhol announced, in memorable contrast to Jackson Pollock, who...declared that he wanted to be nature: a mediumistic force, unpredictable, various...” (Hughes,1991,p.348). Jackson Pollock was “concerned with the mythic....His late works, although violently executed, result in a lace work of coloured and silver lines of extraordinary delicacy.” (Read,1994,p.286). Pollock, relying on chance and accident, developed automatic techniques to a more instinctive, personal form. (p.286). Warhol, in contrast, “loved the peculiarly inert sameness of the mass product: an infinite series of identical objects - soup cans, Coke bottles, dollar bills, Mona Lisas, or the same head of Marilyn Monroe, silkscreened over and over again.” (Hughes,1991,p.348). He wanted, through repetition, “to bring forth novelties...” (p.348). This, according to Hughes, “was the most cunning sort of dandyism...when applied to his...calculated grungy view of reality.” (p.348).

Photographic silkscreening, a sophisticated stencil process, enabled Warhol to complete works in a matter of minutes. “Hence the significance of Warhol’s brazen boast that if Picasso, the modernist master *par excellence*, could produce four thousand works in a lifetime, he could produce as many in a day.” (Kearney,1991,p.3).

Warhol, the “Pope of pop art”, according to Kearney, rejected the accredited idea of the art work as an “original creation in a unique time and space.” (p.3). He proclaimed “the postmodern message that the image has now become a mechanically reproducible commodity - part of the new ‘total communications package’ where globally conceived and transmissible styles can be picked up in every place at the same moment and beamed back and forth from continent to continent.” (p.4).

Furthermore, Kearney, like Benjamin, laments that, finally, “at the level of artistic culture there is a growing awareness that images have now displaced the ‘original’ realities they were traditionally meant to reflect. The real and the imaginary have become almost impossible to distinguish.” (p.2). Kearney says that the postmodern artist “does not claim to express anything because he does not claim to have anything to express” (p.5).

According to Ultra Violet, however, in the “popular materialistic culture of America, Warhol had correctly located the centre of worship: not Christ on the cross, but Marilyn Monroe on the screen. Marilyn, little Mary, little Mother of God, Marilyn Magnificat, My soul does magnify the Marilyn...” (Violet,1989,p.4). She describes Warhol as:

“...the high priest, lifting the ciborium, holds up to the congregation the blow up of the American icon, and they bow their heads in worship of the non-virgin Madonna. With the same gesture, clothed in the iconic chasuble, image-maker Warhol uplifts himself in front of the populous, which hails him with instant recognition. Industrious, day and night, he burnished his icon image. The primary creation of Warhol was Andy Warhol himself.” (p.9).

“‘Tell me your sins and I will absolve them’ he said. ‘You don’t absolve, you incite.’ replied Ultra Violet. ‘Mmmm...’” mused Warhol. (p.7). Warhol intimated to Ultra Violet that he didn’t have any imagination and if people worshipped money then he would paint dollars. What he really wanted was instant recognition by the world. (p.6).

In Ultra Violet’s view, Warhol was “the biggest magician of all.” (p.7). As a growing child he was a Byzantine Catholic and as an adult, Warhol “worshipped the church’s magic.” (p.7). As a child, he wore a magical gem, a Czech Urim\*, sewn by Julia into a secret pocket in his underwear. “He sought the power of divination, He sought all power.. When Andy put his Warhol on, with a mere glance from his nearly blind eyes, things flashed and moved around the room.” (p.7). Whenever Warhol, as “Disney’s Snow White, donned his pale, wheat-coloured wig, the factory dwarfs, headed by Gerard Malanga, poet and number one ‘helper’, (at \$1.25 an hour), got to work....heigh-ho, heigh-ho...and away we went. Andy was our dwarf star...right out of the enchanting world of Disney, where instant zap transformed ugly duckling into a charismatic magician. The reality and the myth were confounded into one.” (p.7).

Therefore, in Warhol’s case, the “typically postmodern image...which displays its own artificiality, its own pseudostatus, its own representational depthlessness”, needs closer examination. (Kearney,1991,p.4). Was Warhol’s work, made by the use of

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\*“Urim and Thum’ mim, (Heb. *urim;tummim*.) certain unidentified objects mentioned in the Old Testament as being worn in the breastplate of the high priest and apparently serving as a device for determining the will of God: Ex xxviii.30.” (Webster,1979,p.2011).

“techniques and materials of the popular consumer culture”, a mere “replay of quotations of the past” and “no longer a leap into the future.”? (p.24). Is it true that, although “mimesis has returned with a vengeance”, images no longer represent some “transcendent reality, as tradition had it”? (p.5). Do they merely mirror the postmodern paradigm which “reflects neither the outer world of nature nor the inner world of subjectivity”, but “reflects only itself - a mirror within a mirror...” ? (p.5).

Ultra Violet postulates that Warhol’s world was a “microcosm of the chaotic American macrocosm.” (Violet,1989,p.3). Like a “black hole in space”, a “vortex that engulfed all”, or a “still epicentre” of a “psychological storm”, Warhol “wound the key to the motor of the merry-go-round ”. (p.3.). Young people “on the outside spun faster and faster and, no longer able to hang on, flew off into space.” (Violet,1989,p.3). This “shy, near blind, bald, gay albino from an ethnic ghetto who dominated the art world for two decades, hobnobbed with world leaders, amassed an estate of \$100,000,000.” (p.2). He “streaked across the sky, a dazzling media meteor who, in another time or place, could have been a Napoleon or a Hitler.” (p.2). Warhol was the “sun at midnight...a black sun...courted by capitalist patrons of the arts who sought to confirm their social status as the Who’s Who of the World.” (p.4).

From Ultra Violet’s viewpoint, “he had to have been more than a shadow or a charlatan.” (p.9).

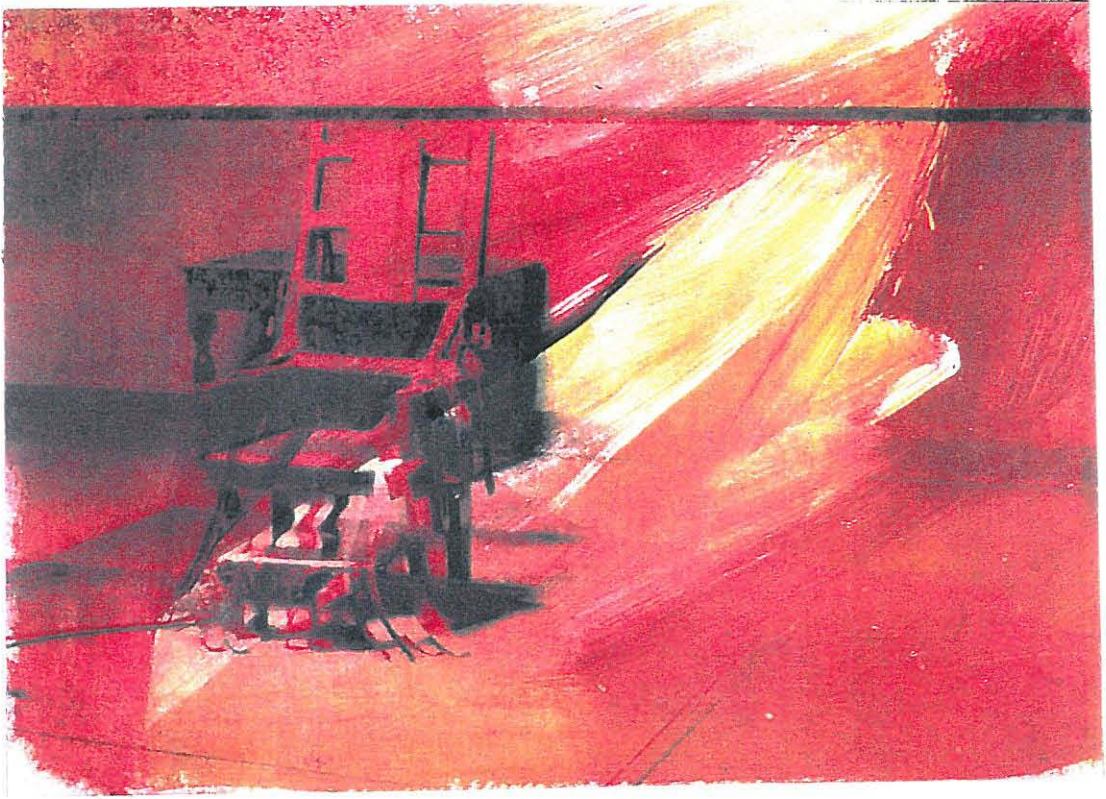
Peter Gidal wrote his book Andy Warhol in an endeavour to immerse himself as deeply as possible in “the work and in the individual process of response to the work.”

(Gidal,1971,p.17). He aspired to “translate his experience into a *subjective* impulse towards a more personal responsive mechanism in dealing with the work.” He aimed to “avoid the deadly influence of ‘peak-experience’ orientation (goal-seeking its rationale).” (p.17). He cautions that positive statements about “Warhol’s genius as an artist” are not intended to “conjure idolatry,” but endeavour to “open space for shared experience.” (p.17). He says that “ultimate insight into experience is always personal” and stresses that his book is “not an attempt to mitigate” that. (Gidal,1971,p17).

Ultra Violet knew Warhol personally, and declares that:

“For 25 years, (1962 -1987), not just fifteen minutes, Andy Warhol was famous. More than famous, he was both an acclaimed artist and a potent social force. He changed the way we look at art, the way we look at the world, arguably the way we look at ourselves. Yet his art seemed to camouflage the man. One could never know Warhol by listening to him, for he rarely spoke; by reading his books, for he did not write them; by seeing his movies, for he rarely made them himself; by watching him, for he was watching the watchers; by touching him, for he hated being touched. This was a man who believed in nothing and had emotional involvements with no one, who was driven to find his identity in the mirror of the press, then came to believe that reality existed only in what was recorded, photographed, or transcribed. Yet to some, Warhol was only a brilliant con artist who concocted whatever fantasies people needed, a genius of hype and illusion, the ultimate voyeur, who exploited our young people. To others, he was a genuine talent, a genius of the first rank, who held an objective mirror to our plastic society, took America’s faltering pulse, and illuminated the foibles and fixations of our times.” (p.9).

When asked “...why the Campbell’s soup?” Warhol said “ ‘I want to paint nothing. I was looking for something that was the essence of nothing, and that was it.’ ” (Bockris,1990,p.178). Whether the essence of nothing refers to Warhol's life or to his ultimate concerns is questionable. However, according to Zizek, “in simple negation,

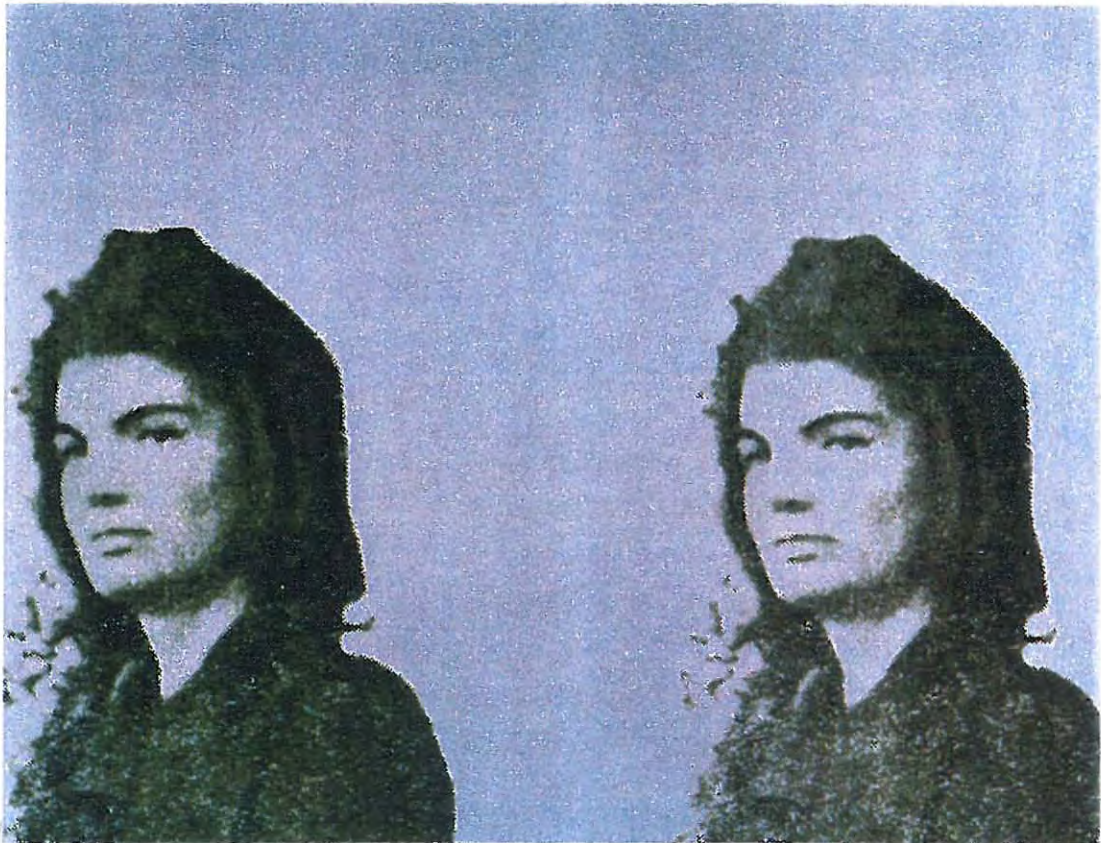


Electric Chair 1971

Screenprint (90.2 x 121.9 cm)

that Warhol's use of repetition is "no longer a compulsive neurosis, obsessive as it may be, but rather a search, subtle and intense, a probe...At the same time, the anti-art statement implied in the gesture of a repeated image is not to be underrated: he's not asking for precision of vision, he's saying 'you'd better look a lot closer, or else.'" (Gidal,1971,p38).

In 1963, canvases of the Death and Disaster Series, Electric Chairs, Race Riots, Most Wanted Men and Jackies were exhibited. (Castleman,1990,p.113). According to Gidal, the Jackies show a fragmentation of time in order to reveal the "passage of feeling from one point in life to another, admittedly during a traumatic situation." (p.43). The "work serves to break any illusion of his half-heartedness in attitude." (p.43). The Jackies show Warhol's need to force "the viewer to make up his own truth from the images, with more than the integration of separate elements into a totality based on a time conception we are not used to." (p.43). Warhol's concern is "with the minute differential of details." (p.43). It is arguable whether these gruesome images of violence, lynchings, suicides, and accidents seen "over and over again", have any "real effect." (1971,p.28). Freud said that you "cannot repress something for ever." (Walter,1979,p.21). Death, "banished from society's respectable parlour," has re-entered via "the cultural backdoor" in what Geoffrey Gorer, quoted by Walter, has called the "pornography of death - the portrayal of violence in the mass media, accompanied by both manifest enjoyment by the viewer and self-righteous condemnation by the guardians of morality." (p.21). However, Gidal questions Warhol's intention and wonders whether he is giving us "the total process, from involvement to non-involvement, thus presenting the emotional equivalent of the



Jackie II 1965

Screenprint (61 x 76.2 cm)

actual experience of twentieth century awareness.” (Gidal,1971,p.28). Through repetition, we are made to experience the “evolution or devolution from initial shock and intensity of feeling to an alienated separatedness, a distancing.” (p.28).

Steiner perceives “a nearness out of reach”, a “‘thereness ’” which alludes to the density of an absent sacred, as a distancing. (p.230). Unable to locate “ ‘the Promise’, ...the...challenging and consoling experience of the unfulfilled” (p.19), within this absence, says Steiner, quoting German, we “ ‘fence against mirrors.’ ” (p.229).

Van den Berg’s “metabletic phenomenology indicates that the mirror relation between humanity and reality is one of *participation*.” (Romanyshyn,1978,p.88). Here, Coleridge’s allusion to the “despotism of the eye” refers to “distant vision”. (p.107). The eye of “distant vision”, by increasing the “spatial range of movement” eclipses the “sensuous contact” between “embodied eyes and the world within which they move”. (p.98). The eye of Blake’s “ ‘single vision and Newton’s sleep’ ” (p.92) fathered by Brunelleschi who developed the “use of linear perspective” (p.89) makes “Galileo, Descartes, Copernicus, Vesalius, Harvey, Newton” and perhaps even Warhol, “inevitable”. (p.93). “Distant vision”, withdrawn from the world, is “a window through which the see-er could see the world with a detached eye”. (p.99). The notion that more distance equals more knowledge has undermined our experience of “a metaphorical reality”. (p.101). Metabletic phenomenology claims that “the given appearance of things” is “mutable”. (p.87). “What reality is, is...inseparable from *how* humanity imagines or envisions it” and paintings of an era mirror “the way in which that age dreams its dreams and understands its reasons.” (p.88). Distant vision places

us outside of our responsibility “for what we have made”. (p.106). Metabletic phenomenology “as an ethical psychology” invites us, even coerces us, not only “to acknowledge that the cultural world of technology from which we seem so alienated is our story” but also that “we, as humanity, are responsible for what we see...what we say...what we imagine, dream, envision...” (p.105). Steiner sees this “responding responsibility” or our “answerability” as the key to an “authentic experience of understanding.” (Steiner,1989,p.8).

Yet Adorno says that the culture industry “not so much adapts to the reactions of its customers” but “drills them in their attitudes”, and “piously claims to be guided by its customers and to supply them with what they ask for.” (Adorno,1978,p.200). By “assiduously dismissing any thought of its own autonomy” and “proclaiming its victims its judges, it outdoes, in its veiled autocracy, all the excesses of autonomous art.” (p.200). Would Adorno be suggesting that Warhol’s work, if ultimately accepted by the culture industry, cannot be autonomous?

In 1964, at a one-man exhibition at the Ileana Sonnabend Gallery in Paris, the death-and-disaster paintings were shown and “have since become recognised as among Warhol’s greatest and fetch prices upwards of a million dollars a piece”. (Bockris,1990,p.201). “The focal point of the show was ‘Blue Electric Chair’ ” and these paintings were “soon to make him famous in Europe”. (p.201). The German art dealer Heiner Bastian recalled them “ ‘as the greatest things we had ever seen’.” (p.201). “They were met with rapturous praise. ‘Their subjective quality is neither sadness nor melancholy, nor regret nor even bitterness,’ the art critic Alain Jouffroy

wrote. 'The traditional feelings attached to death are banished. In front of these pictures we are cleansed. The paintings become the holy scenes of a godless world.' ” (p.201).

In 1964 Warhol made canvases of Flowers. “In November 1966 a lawsuit was levelled against Andy by Patricia Caulfield, whose photograph he had used to make his flower painting.” (Bockris,1990,p.310). On hearing that Warhol was wealthy, Caulfield was “prompted to sue him”. (p.310). After a protracted court case Warhol “ultimately agreed to give her several paintings and a percentage of all profits resulting from any future reproductions of the paintings as prints.” (p.310). During 1970, he repeated these motifs. They were exhibited at the Pasadena Art Museum in California. (Castleman,1990, p.114). “ ‘The flower paintings are very beautiful,’ ” and the “ ‘artist is a mechanical Renaissance man, a genius,’ wrote David Bourdon in the *Village Voice*.”(Bockris,1990,p.248). All the paintings sold. Warhol said: “ ‘Fame makes life liveable’ ” and this was the beginning of international recognition. (Gablik,1984,p.84). If a justification of Warhol's *raison d'etre*, we can assume that fame was a validation of his place in the scheme of things.

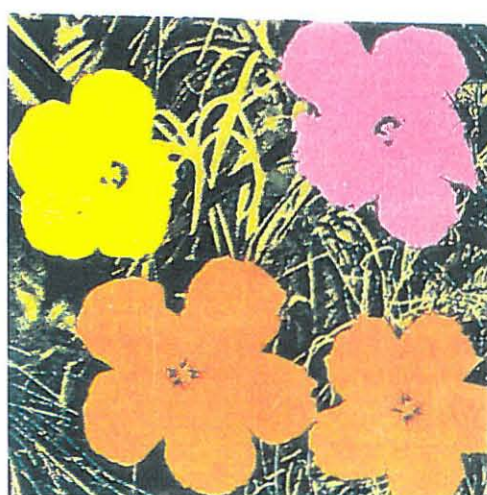
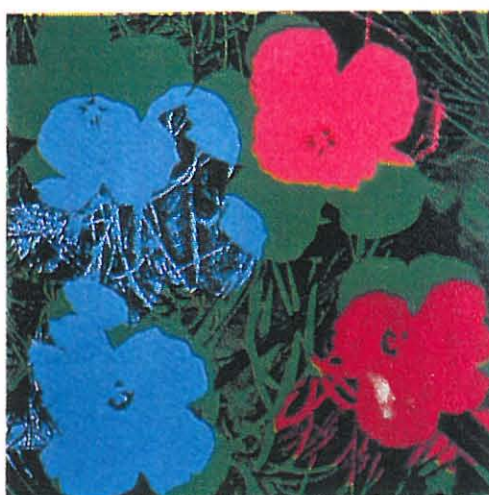
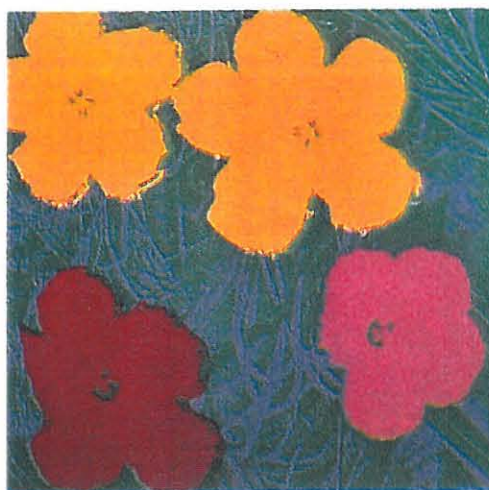
It is hoped that it has been established that ultimate concerns arise out of incapacity or defencelessness in the face of perilous, unruly and perplexing forces outside and within ourselves. Rupp explicitly states that responses to questions about the nature or character of ultimate concerns or the “self's ultimate environment” are not simply “intellectual or theoretical answers.” (Rupp,1979,p.36). The disparity in responses would lie in their “distinguishable approaches to the question of transcendence.”

(p.36). Responses are also “inseparable from the individual’s personal development” and are conditioned by the “social communities and cultural traditions” in which an individual participates. (p.36).

Was fame, for Warhol, the only source of absolute meaning? What else provided him with a validated place in the scheme of things? His work seems to be known as the most popular instance of our contemporary culture of parody and pastiche. Through the mechanical gesture of reproducing media images he represents the dissolution of the personality of the artist. He said:

“ ‘I’m so empty I can’t think of anything to say...If you want to know all about Andy Warhol, just look at the surface of my films and paintings and me, there I am. There’s nothing behind it.’ ”  
(Gidal,1971,p.9).

He admitted to just wanting to give people what they want, no matter what it was that they wanted. If an artist participates in his cosmology through his work in order to affirm it, did Warhol have concerns besides these? It has been said that the artist endeavours to make order in a sea of chaos. Paglia says “emotion is chaos” (Paglia1995,p.26) yet Warhol said that people had forgotten what emotions were supposed to be. In his opinion, after having seen emotions from a certain perspective one could “never think of them as real again.” (Warhol,1975,p.27). He said that making art was “just another job” (p.178). For him the most exciting thing was “not-doing-it” (p.41) and wanting to be like something meant that you loved it. “I love plastic idols”, he said. (p.53). He felt that paintings were too difficult and wanted to be a machine “because machines have less problems”. (Bockris,1990,p.190). He refused



Flowers 1970

Screenprints, each: (91.5 x 91.5cm)

to comment on the subject of death “because he was not prepared for it.” (Warhol,1975,p.121).

One day, on Monday 3 June 1968, at his factory, Andy Warhol was shot by Valerie Solanas. She fired five shots. One missed, but Warhol, having sustained severe trauma, was clinically dead for one and a half minutes. He wrote later “ ‘they brought me back from the dead’. ” (Bockris,1990,p.365). Solanas justified her violent act by saying that Warhol “had too much control” of her life.(Bockris,1990,p.365). Gretchen Berg said that Solanas had shot Warhol “out of love” and empathised with her action. (p.367). “ ‘It was an intense reaction: you had a great emotion about Andy...but couldn’t get close to him.’ ” (p.367). Warhol’s recovery was protracted. He said:

“Before I was shot, I always thought that I was more half-there than all-there - I always suspected that I was watching TV instead of living life. People sometimes say that the way things happen in the movies is unreal, but actually it’s the way things happen to you in life that’s unreal. The movies make emotions look so strong and real, whereas when things really do happen to you, it’s like watching television. I heard fantasy words about thousands of people being in St Patrick’s Cathedral praying and carrying on, and then I heard the word “Kennedy” and that brought me back to the television world again because then I realized, well here I was, in pain.” (Warhol,1975,p.91).

For the present writer, this is yet another affirmation that Warhol, like his work, was distanced from his life. We know that he enjoyed the role of a voyeur, but even when his mother died, on 22 November 1972, Warhol seemed unperturbed and didn’t attend her funeral. He said, “ ‘I just thought that things were magic and that it would never happen.’ ” (Bockris,1990,p.424). In June 1983, *New York* magazine commented that Warhol, “ ‘looking like death’s ventriloquist...has become his own macabre mascot...He uses Death, Death uses him.’ ” (p.595). When asked what was to become

of his art after his death Warhol replied, “ ‘I’m dead already.’ ” (p.595). When told of his status as a living legend, he insisted, “ ‘I don’t think that’s so.’ ” (p.595).

On Sunday, the 22 February, 1987, at 6.31a.m. “the artist was pronounced dead.” (p.599). The reasons for his death remain uncertain, for the “chances of dying from complications of routine gallbladder surgery are thousands to one.” (p.599). It has been said that he died of everything. When the appraisers opened the doors of Warhol’s townhouse, they were confronted by “a larger-than-life bust of Napoleon” and “so much sheer *stuff* - that they could not penetrate farther.” (p.608). “Opulent as these rooms were, they were ...not the rooms of a collector who liked to gaze on his treasures with the eye of a connoisseur” but the rooms of “a shopper, an accumulator, a pack rat with all the money in the world.” (p.608). The mourners who attended Warhol’s wake were “mainly relatives and their friends from Pittsburgh, among them Joseph Fitzpatrick”, some of whom “were confused and disappointed by the lack of celebrities.” (p.605). Warhol had once intimated that he “wanted his own tombstone to be blank or inscribed with the word ‘figment’.” (p.606). A “small marble slab”, without an epitaph, “carved only with his name and the dates of his birth and death, marks the spot.” (p.606). On 1 April 1987, two thousand mourners attended his memorial service. (p.610). Questions proliferated. “Who *was* Andy Warhol?... Was he a ...huckster of hype... a modern Mephistopheles...a ‘saint’...or a *yurodstvo* - one of those saintly simpletons who haunt Russian fiction and Slavic villages?” (p.610). However, “six thousand people” arrived at Sotheby’s auction house, more than a year later, “hoping to buy one of the *yurodstvo*’s relics.” (p.611). The auction yielded \$25,3 million. (p.611).

Was Warhol ultimately without an object of devotion? We know that for Warhol money had “a certain kind of amnesty”. (Warhol,1975,p.137). However, if producing reflexive images was a compulsive empty ritual merely to give others what they want, it is necessary to look beyond the action, even the motive, to discover Warhol’s ultimate concerns. It seems certain that his imagery evolved out of a personal symbolic order, but the mechanical reproduction of this imagery perhaps refutes creative processes as described or experienced by Miller or Pollock. Ironically, his work is a reaction to the abstract expressionism of painters like Jackson Pollock whose mandate implicitly expounded the view of the artist as a shaman endeavouring to tap into the spiritual energies of the cosmos. In comparison, works by an artist “whose most famous work of art was himself”, paradoxically, seem empty. (Bockris,1990,p.610). Nevertheless, in order to transcend his perception of reality, formed during impressionable years, one way was surely in the belief that the remuneration accrued by his work would afford “the self’s ultimate environment”. (Rupp,1979,p.35). Moreover, Rainer Werner Fassbinder saw in Warhol’s face “the horrifying price” he had to pay to “exist as a shell”... “destroyed” by his “own work”. (Bockris,1990,p.587). We know that this remuneration was in the order of \$100,000,000 which implies a shared symbolic order. Cudden defines Eliot’s “objective correlative” as “an exquisite balance between, and coalescence of, form and matter”: a phenomenon whereby a work of art becomes a “formula” of a “particular emotion”. (Cudden,1979,p.457). Thus, “when the external facts...are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.” (p.457). When people view Warhol’s work, what sort of shared emotions are evoked? Perhaps we can ascertain this if we find out what Warhol’s work means, or what it refers to.

## CHAPTER FOUR:

“Artists do not sublimate. That they neither satisfy nor repress their desires, but transform them into socially desirable achievements, their works, is a psycho-analytical illusion; incidentally, legitimate works of art are today without exception socially undesired.”

(Adorno,1978,p.213).

Roszak quotes Barfield’s definition of an idol as “a representation which is collectively mistaken for an ultimate...and idolatry as... the effective tendency to abstract the sense-content from the whole representation and seek that for its own sake, transmuting the admired image into a desired object.” (Roszak,1989,p.134).

It has been disputed that “the Old Testament ban on ‘graven images’ is connected not only with a fear of idolatry but with the more universal fear of encroaching on the creator’s prerogatives.” (Gombrich,1960,p.112). The “allusive interplay between the terms used to describe God’s creation of the world and the First Man’s transgressive capacity (i.e. the Yetser) to imitate this divine act is highly significant. When God ‘created (yatsar) Adam in his own image (tselem) and likeness (demuth)’ (Gen. 2:8), He risked allowing man to emulate Him, to set himself up as His rival, to supplant Him in the order of creation”. (Kearney,1991,p.39). Thus fallen imagination is the awareness of “ ‘opposites implicit in all being within the world’ ” which engulfs man in an “alienating dialectic” i.e. the “splitting up of the pre-lapsarian unity of Paradise into the antithetical orders of divine eternity and human mortality.” (p.40). Imagination, or a “longing for godliness” enables man to recognise his “ ‘ so - being in its oppositional nature and as an intended shall-be.’ ” (p.41). Within this context, finding himself able to “project a future order of human creation (i.e. the sin of

presumption and pride) and to recall the events of the past (i.e. guilt and remorse)” man’s imagination also becomes “subject to evil in that it falls victim to its own idolatrous creations.” (p.43). As already stated, the tendency to condemn so called idolatrous drives of imagination has become, over time, a renunciation of our instincts. These concepts are relevant to my hypothesis in that this essay endeavours to understand the implications of idolatry in modern consciousness. If human transcendent energies have been denatured and the artist’s vision subverted, along with the role of art, Freud suggests that the Judeo-Christian crusade against idolatry would be a contributing factor as transcendent energies, by necessity, would rely on processes of the imagination. Kearney likens Adam’s fallen imagination to the Promethean legend and reminds us that Hermes, chosen by Zeus, brought supplementary gifts. Inventor of signs and symbols, “messenger between the gods and the living...patron...of the resistance of meaning to mortality”, Hermes fashioned a musical instrument out of an empty shell. Kearney infers that a method of interpretation, a “ ‘hermeneutics’ ” could “breathe new life into an ostensibly dying imagination.” (p.392). Romantic imagination and ideas of the sublime, as outlined by Kant and Burke, is concerned with an “experience of Nature or Transcendence (i.e. as powers incommensurable with human consciousness and inducing feelings in us of awe or terror).” (Kearney,1991,p.378). The postmodern sublime, in Kearney’s opinion, “exposes the aesthetic inadequacy of ‘imagination and sensibility’ ” and is a symptom of the “ ‘cultural dominant’ of our present technological world system”.(p.377). Marcuse, as quoted by Kearney, “suggests...that some refuge may be found if we can save art from anti-art and rediscover its ‘aesthetic dimension’ of formal distance and transcendence...but declines...to indicate how this retrieval...could

be translated into a project of ethical or social practice.” (p.377). Quixotic as it may be, this thesis attempts to know what Warhol’s art refers to without presuming to translate its meaning into social reform.

Warhol’s life and art “mirror the ‘me’-oriented society that issued from the moral battles of World War II and the Cold War confrontation between the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union.” (Castleman,1990,p.36). Although a living legend, an “art hero” (Bockris,1990,p.589), it was within weeks of his death that the Museum of Modern Art prepared its most “ambitious recognition of an artist’s work since the Picasso blockbuster of 1980.” (p.612). The opening of this exhibition - *Andy Warhol: A Retrospective* - took the form of a party “that might have exceeded even Andy’s wildest dreams.” (p.612). “Culled by the curator Kynaston McShine from...public and private collections in nine countries”, the works revealed Warhol’s “astonishing output” and were a “replay of more than three decades of American cultural, social and political taste and turbulence.” (p.612). “Early pop paintings and objects had taken on the presence of totems: the infamous painted cartons with their brand names of Brillo,...Campbell’s...now seemed less banal than eerie - old household ghosts.” (p.612). “Marilyn Monroe...Jackie Kennedy...and others were more disturbing and moving than ever - icons burnished by the rubbing of so many eyes”. (p.612). His last work shows Neil Armstrong planting the American flag on the moon. Across the hero’s face, which “had been made to look like a television screen” were “scrawled like a flash of lightning the initials A.W.” (p.613). At last the “premier museum of the twentieth-century art world” gave its stamp of approval, and in the process “thousands of celebrants” became “members of a new race: Warhol People.” (p.613).

From this account, it can be said that Warhol's work certainly participated within a shared symbolic order. It has not, however, as yet been ascertained what was worthwhile or valid in Warhol's work.

Kearney says that it is not because "an image is *mimetic* - (*Christ the Pantocrator*), *productive* - (*Van Gogh's auto- portrait*) or *parodic* - (*Warhol's Marilyn*) that it is good or bad." (1991,p.390). Ethical status of a work of art is not derived from its being "sacramentalized by the icon maker, humanized by the romantic artist or technologized by the media producer". (p.390). As already stated, in his opinion, ethical validity lies in interpretation, i.e .in the "primary sense of a pre-reflexive praxis, a way of reading the demand of the other by responding to it". (p.390) "We 'interpret' images in this respect in the same manner as an actor 'interprets' a role (i.e. as a mode of relating to others)." (p.390). Yet he believes that, bereft of a "critical hermeneutics", we are incapable of "identifying the interests which motivate the interpretation of images in a given context." (p.390). A critical hermeneutic would help us discriminate between "a liberating and incarcerating use of images, between those that dis-close and those that close off our relation to the other, those that democratize culture and those that mystify it, those that communicate and those that manipulate...", yet Kearney, although stressing the need for an ethical imagination, does not provide a methodology. (p.390). Fuller tries to outline some sort of methodology, but does not suggest what belief systems are appropriate for modern art. Though an atheist, he feels that "those of us who do not believe are compelled to fall back on a kind of cultural conservatism which draws on the achievements of those

who *were* believers”, (Fuller,1985, xii) because religion, as a sociological function, provided a “shared symbolic order”. (p.10).

In his opinion, an artist holding views lying outside the “espousal of contemporaneous philosophical, psychological or political beliefs” but within its “soteriology and christology (i.e. in its teaching about repentance, salvation, redemption, resurrection and eternal life, made possible through the person and work of a Christ or god-man, who intervened in history)” is far more likely to create “vigorous, living, ‘spiritual’ art than those who,” like Warhol, “have lost all their redeeming illusions and are thrashing around in an all too human and depressingly material world.” (p.193). He further claims that for the successful transmuting of sensations into values, there is a need for “consoling illusions”. (p.129). The worthwhile, therefore, within this shared symbolic order, would be found in its consoling or redeeming illusions.

The problem here is whether, or even how, religious values and thinking have anything to contribute towards defining the actual condition of modern man. Semantically, the sacred is that which is bound to those things which are of or from God. Its opposite is the profane. The sacred is hidden from us, deep but very important. It is conceived as a shaping force, a creative power, a redemptive agency, as the meaning of life. If anything is valuable (or of ultimate concern) it is so because it reflects, reveals, or is obviously sanctioned by the sacred. What happens to our idea of the sacred if we no longer believe in God as the creator of the universe? The answer, perhaps, is that we cannot say clearly why we think human life is valuable because the ground has shifted. We can still talk about what people want from art -

something that speaks to them, touches them at levels beyond the obvious. All this would lead to a discussion of what it is like to live in an alienated age.

The “dialectic between beauty and truth toughens” says Gidal “as the immediacy” of Warhol’s images “hit the centre of a communal nerve”, the nerve of this alienated age. (Gidal,1971,p.37). Warhol has been called an empty shell and Adorno says “ ‘the music does the listening for the listener’ ” (Adorno,1978,p.201). To find validity in Warhol’s work, it is necessary look beyond institutionalised or manufactured consent.

Paglia maintains that a “ ‘mere image’ ” is non-existent because “perceptual relations” are the basis of Western culture. (Paglia,1995,p.49). She assails the linchpin of the Judeo-Christian iconoclasm of non-institutionalised imagery by saying “every God is an idol, literally an ‘image’ ” i.e. the image implies visibility of the sacred. (p.49). She imputes that art history, having attained only “a fraction of the conceptual sophistication of literary criticism”, has failed to see the “electrifying sign language of images.” (p.49). The present writer therefore seeks right of asylum in Hirsch’s methodology.

Hirsch’s book, Validity in Interpretation, was conceived as a contribution to general hermeneutic theory with special emphasis on the problem of validity. He presents a theory called “autonomism” - i.e. meaning belongs to “a distinct ontological realm independent of authorial will.” (1971,p.viii). The only compelling “normative principle” that could lend validity to an interpretation was to banish the producer as the “determiner of meaning” because if the meaning of something is not the

producer's, then "no interpretation can possibly correspond to *the* meaning" of the work. (p.5). In other words, a work has to be "faithfully and closely examined" in order to "ferret out its independent meaning" instead of its supposed significance to the producer's life. (p.2).

Hirsch says that the "theoretical aim of a genuine discipline, scientific or humanistic, is the attainment of truth, and its practical aim is agreement that truth has probably been achieved. Thus the practical goal of every genuine discipline is consensus - the winning of firmly grounded agreement that one set of conclusions is more probable than others - and this is precisely the goal of valid interpretation. It must not be dismissed as a futile goal simply because the subject matter of interpretation is often ambiguous and its conclusions uncertain. Certainty is not the same thing as validity, and knowledge of ambiguity is not necessarily ambiguous knowledge." (p.ix). He attests that while the significance of a work may change, its meaning will remain the same, and if the work "means what it says, then it means nothing in particular." (p.13). Hirsch stresses that if there is a single moral to his analysis, it is that "meaning is an affair of consciousness and not of physical signs or things." (p.23).

Bearing in mind what he says about consensus, Hirsch asks, if public meaning exists, "why is it that we, who are the public, disagree?" (p.13). "Is there one group of us that constitutes the true public, while the rest are heretics and outsiders?" (p.13). The idea of a public meaning sponsored not by the producer's intention but by "a public consensus is based upon a fundamental error of observation and logic. It is an empirical fact that the consensus does not exist, and it is a logical error to erect a

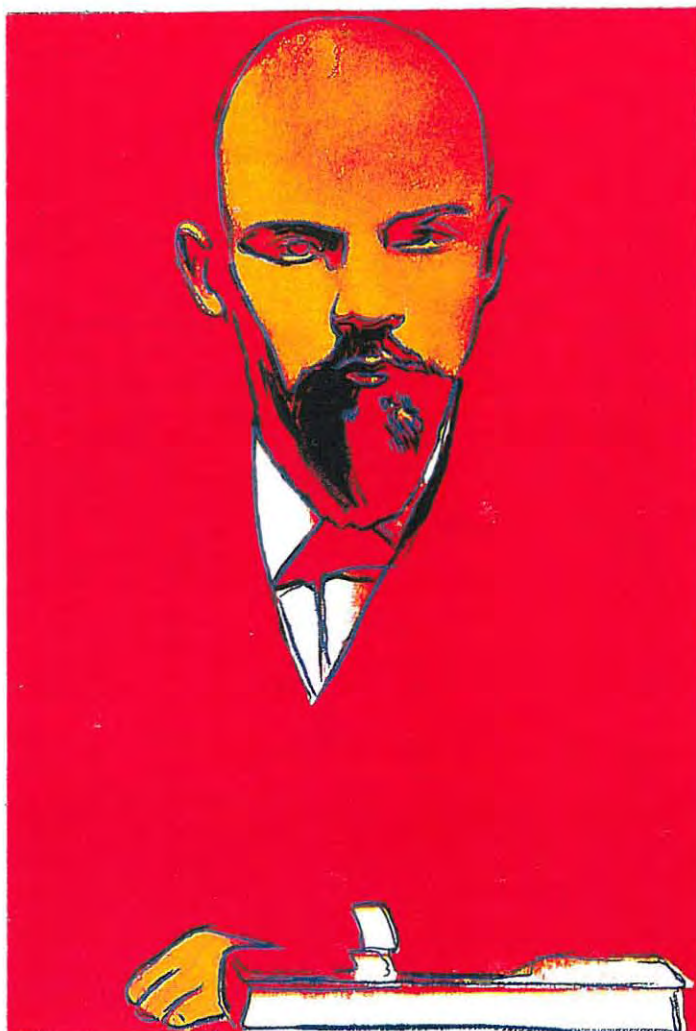
stable normative concept (i.e. *the* public meaning) out of an unstable descriptive one.” (p.13). The public meaning of a work is “nothing more or less than those meanings which the public happens to construe from the text. Any meaning which two or more members of the public construe is *ipso facto* within the public norms that govern language and its interpretation. Vox populi: vox populi.” (p.13).

Hirsch elaborates on the notion of “intentionality” (p.38) by saying that a work can mean what the producer “is not conscious of meaning.” (p.22). He calls this “symptomatic” meaning which, nevertheless, is still “a proper and legitimate concern of criticism.” (p.56). The distinction between intentional meaning and symptomatic meaning would be found in the “implication”. (p51-67). It is important to note that the “principle for generating implications is, ultimately and in the broadest sense, a learned convention.” (p.66). Bearing this in mind, the meaning of Warhol’s work becomes clearer. It is, however, helpful to remember Gidal’s caution that anything positive that could be said about Warhol’s genius should be taken “not as intended to conjure idolatry, but as open space for shared experience.” (Gidal,1971p.170).

Many conflicting statements have been made about Warhol and the validity of his work. For Fuller, prerequisites for validity are consoling or redeeming illusions within a shared symbolic order. So far, it is hoped that it is certain that Warhol’s symbolic order, having evolved out of his personal cosmology, is nevertheless, shared. As already stated, signs are self-referential and art is autonomous. If Warhol’s symbols are shared, it would seem that they signify more than they purport. It is necessary, therefore, to look at the implication. Jung says that those “who do not realize the

special feeling tone of an archetype end with nothing more than a jumble of mythological concepts, which can be strung together to show that everything means anything - or nothing at all." (Jung,1979,p.96).

Within the framework of his methodology, Hirsch would refute the psycho-analytical approach that cultural symbols must be "explained in the manner indicated by the whole life-situation of the particular individual to whom it relates" i.e. in a particular context. (p.96). Nevertheless, he affirms that symbols or archetypes only "come to life when one patiently tries to discover why and in what fashion they are meaningful to a living individual." (p.96). Jung laments the fact that the rationalism of modern man has "destroyed his capacities to respond to numinous symbols and ideas" rendering him helpless - "at the mercy of the psychic 'underworld' ". (p.94). Having freed himself from " 'superstition'...his moral and spiritual tradition has disintegrated, and he is now paying the price for this break-up in world wide disorientation and dissociation." (p.94). Transmutation or participation, whereby the non self-referential image, object or symbol becomes the medium of an epiphany, would refer to processes of the imagination. However, according to Jung, in ceasing to believe ourselves as being solely at the disposition of the gods, symbolic explanations of sacred power have been discredited. However, many examples have been given to show that the sacred persists. Ultimate concerns integrate life, console and help us to find meaning in our mortal existence. Hirsch's method is ancillary to knowing what Warhol's symbols mean.



Red Lenin 1987

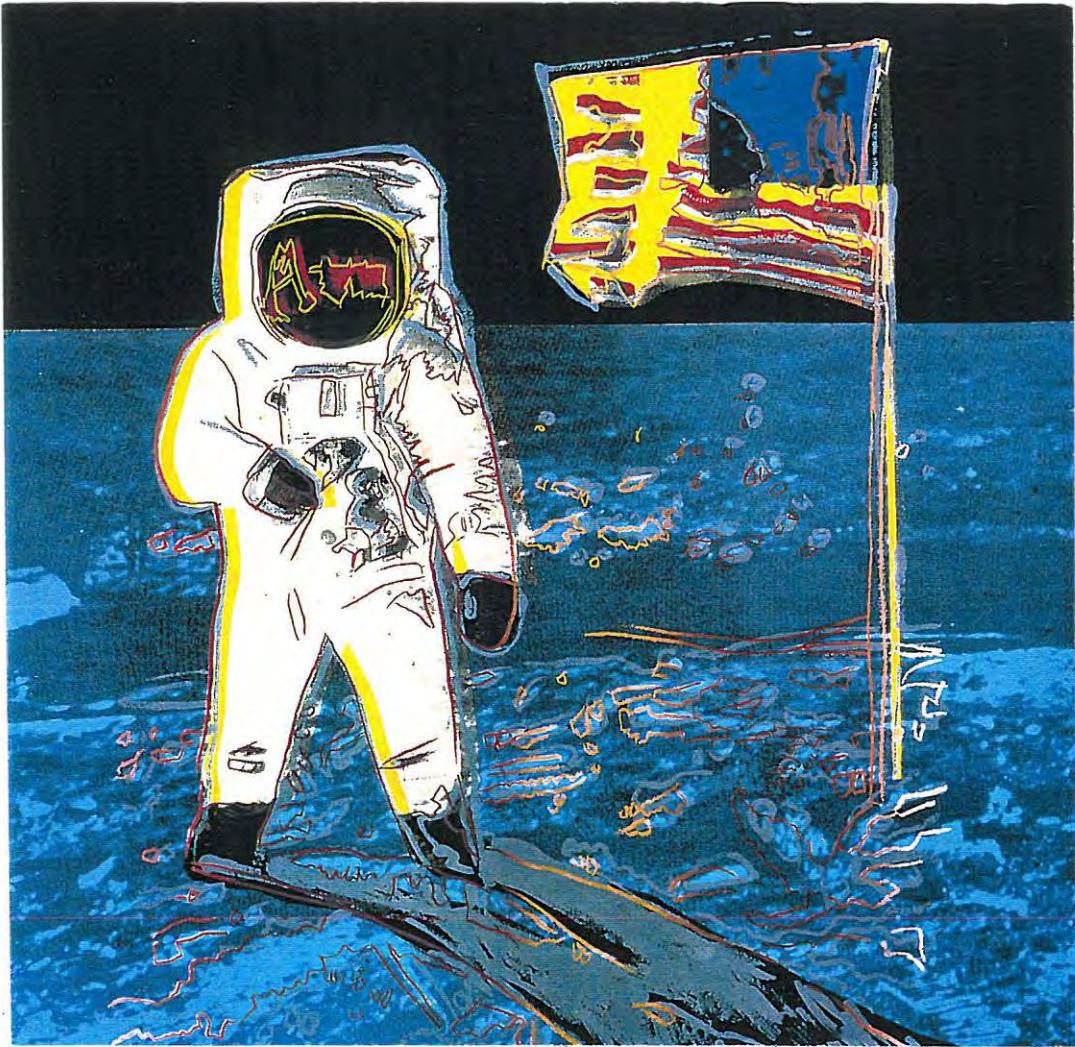
Screenprint (100 x 75 cm)

**CONCLUSION:**

“You have to treat the nothing as if it were something.”  
(Warhol,1975,p.183).

Thus we have returned to the questions with which this essay began: What does art refer to if it is not self-referential? What sort of art criticism or interpretation can be construed as meaningful or legitimate? If we consider Eliot’s notion of an objective correlative and deploy Hirsch’s distinction between intentional meaning and symptomatic meaning, we can avoid falling into some of the more obvious traps of evaluation (cf. Chapter Three). Hirsch’s distinction allows us to regard Warhol’s work as an open space for shared experience, for it is clear that even if we listen to what Warhol himself said about his work we cannot, with any certainty, declare what his intention was. When we confront his work, we find parodic, mass produced images of already famous people, scenes of horror or iconic representations of commodities. Though his work earned him in the order of \$100,000,000, the media has often expressed a deep-seated hatred for Warhol the man and for all he seemed to stand for. Yet nobody has really managed to say just what it is he does stand for. This pushes the situation to the edge of absurdity.

This essay has endeavoured to show that Warhol’s images are a reflection not only of his ultimate concerns within his private ( and for him, sacred) cosmology, but also bear testimony to a shared symbolic order. i.e. that in spite of the inability of critics to reach consensus about the intention of his paintings, his works are not self-referential but tap into a shared pool of experience, murky though the waters may be.



Moonwalk 1987

Screenprint (96.5 x 96.5 cm)

It is possible, therefore, to gauge Warhol's meaning as symptomatic. What then is implied by this symptomatic meaning?

At least one issue is evident, that religion, art and science are attempts to assuage, contain or penetrate the supreme mystery of human existence and the power of Nature. (cf. Chapter One). Each in its way is an imaginative, consoling amendment to sustain or re-create us as we confront that which overwhelms us or that which can neither be fathomed nor manipulated: Judeo-Christianity in its idea of placable nature and a forbearing God; art through reparation and vicarious restoration; and science through its attempts to dissect nature's intricate structures. Some notion of the sacred presides within all these constructs. Seen in this light, the implied meaning of Warhol's images is that they are worthwhile and consoling illusions in the context of our technocratic, urban-industrial society. A man-made soup can, as a manifestation and containment of the sacred which seduces as it beguiles, is coercive. Here the sacred becomes familiar, affordable and disposable. Woman as the sacred (Venus, Astarte, Eve, Lillith, Cybele, Mary) in the guise of the non-virgin Marilyn transmogrified into a commodity, becomes distanced, replaceable, exchangeable and disposable. Death and misfortune, timeless anxieties represented by media photographs repeated over and over, become only something that happens to other people. The electric chair, a man-made instrument of death, gives man supremacy over mortality and the divine prerogative of purging the world of all evil. The transitory delicacy of a flower, mechanically frozen, lives in an eternal man-made season. Jackie's suffering, for all *her* compulsive shopping, and in spite of her grace, beauty, class, wealth and power, is conspicuous, public and commonplace. The communist threat, personified by a

disembodied Lenin in a field of red, is contained within a format 100 by 75 cm. Neil Armstrong on the moon shows man, master not only of matter, but also of space. The seeming non-presence of nature and these mass-produced images deify the machine and embolden man in the notion of a homageable sacred. However, Warhol's thaumaturgics, seen in the context of his private, or for him sacred, cosmology, reveal that nature, for all her chthonian menace has been usurped, augmented, by another terror - one which we can no longer manipulate or fathom - the artificial environment. In this sense, Warhol's work fulfils the prerequisites of the worthwhile in art as defined by Fuller even though, according to John Hospers, we cannot articulate the "necessary" and "sufficient" conditions for something to be a work of art. (Hospers,1954,p.243).

Adorno decries the fact that people "no longer take umbrage at works that are radical, but fall back on the shamelessly modest assertion that they do not understand". (1978,p.216). By eliminating any opposition, they forfeit "their last negative relationship to truth." (p.216). By being non-committal, people amplify the "*vox inhumana populi*, the judging power of the petrified *Zeitgeist*." (p.217). He laments the "decay of giving" echoed by a "hardness towards receiving". (p.217). The reproach, therefore, that Warhol's work gives us nothing is unjust, unless our relationship to art has grown sterile. If we can only appreciate Warhol's work in its effect, validity lies in a revelation of our reality in the form of a paradox: bereft of our transcendent energies, we prefer to see the emperor clothed.

For the present writer, Warhol's consoling illusions within a "shared symbolic order" reinforce the truth of Roszak's perspicacity in seeing that the "centuries-long Judeo-Christian crusade against idolatry has in reality not been a struggle against real evil in the world but a guilty anticipation of the strange destiny which the consciousness of western man was to realize in our own time." (Roszak,1972,p.111).

Erich Fromm asks:

"Are we still concerned with the problem of idolatry?...We forget that the essence of idolatry ...is a specifically human attitude...Words can become idols, and machines can become idols;...and God has become an idol for many... Inasmuch as we are concerned with the essence and not with the shell, with the experience and not with the word,...we can unite in firm negation of idolatry and find perhaps more of a common faith than in any affirmative statements about God..." (Fromm,1963,p.118).

If Warhol's life and work confirm a shift, this ratification is, for the present writer, reminiscent of Odysseus trapped in the cave of Polyphemus. Here the hero in all his splendour who, alone, can string the great bow, finding himself in a dark place and denying his humanity, reverts to craft. For the present writer, a shift, even if indiscrete, by necessity reminds that "the indiscretion of serious art...is total." (Steiner,1989,p.142). In questioning "the last privacies of our existence", ...serious art is no "abstract dialectic" for this "seeking out of being" purposes operative change. (p.143). Enhancement, authenticity and awareness are incipient with action.

The greater reality, therefore, is found in more than the eye of the beholder. For if we see what we're looking for or look for what we can see with a responsive, rather than a despotic, recidivous eye, we find ourselves on the brink of fresh experience.

“Now I a fourfold vision see,  
And a fourfold vision is given to me;  
'Tis fourfold in my supreme delight  
And threefold in soft Beulah's night  
And twofold Always. May God us keep  
From Single vision & Newton's Sleep!”

William Blake

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**CHRONOLOGY OF WARHOL'S MAJOR WORKS:**

(Castleman,1990,p.113-4 and Gidal,1971,p.6-7)

- 1948 - 49 The Broad Gave Me My Face, But I Can Pick My Own Nose. First commercial art commission published in Glamour Magazine.
- 1950 - 59 Freelance commercial artwork.
- 1960 Paints first canvases with popular motifs from comic strips and advertisements using an abstract expressionist style. (i.e. Superman, Coca-Cola bottles, labels, dancestep diagrams, soup cans.)
- 1962 Campbell's Soup Cans, Marylins, Cooking Pot and Disasters and Dollar Bills. Early heads of Elvis, Liz, Texan - (early version of Rauchenberg narrative painting.
- 1963 Death and Disaster series, Electric Chairs, Car Crashes, Lynchings, Suicides etc. Most Wanted Men, Race Riots and Jackies.
- 1964 Boxes, Flowers, Birmingham Race Riot, Kellogg's Cornflakes cartons, Elvis, and Marilyn.
- 1965 Jackie and 11 Pop Artists.
- 1966 Silver Clouds, Cow Wallpaper, Stamped Indelibly (a book), Self-portraits from Rudolph Burkhardt's photograph, Exploding Plastic Inevitable.
- 1967 Andy Warhol's Index (a book) and Screen Tests (a Diary).
- 1968 Set of ten silkscreens of Marilyn, Campbell's Soup Can and Flash November 22, 1963 (a book showing Kennedy's assassination), Silver Clouds and Rain Forest.
- 1967-71 Flowers and Electric Chair.
- 1972 Several hundred prints of Sunset for hotel in Minneapolis, Vote McGovern.
- 1974 Hand coloured flowers and Merce Cunningham 1.
- 1975 Ladies & Gentlemen and Mick Jagger.
- 1976-77 Skulls and Hammer and Sickles.
- 1978-79 Oxidations, Shadows and Andy Warhols Exposures (a book).
- 1980 Ten portraits of Jews of the Twentieth Century, Joseph Beuys, Diamond Dust Shoes.
- 1981-83 Dollar Signs, Myths, Jane Fonda and Endangered Species.
- 1984-85 Renaissance Paintings, Reigning Queens, Ads and Vesuvius.
- 1986 Camouflage canvases and prints.
- 1987 Beethoven, Lenin, The History of American TV, Moonwalk and Last Supper.

“Furthermore,  
we have not even to risk the adventure alone,  
for the heroes of all time have gone before us.  
The labyrinth is thoroughly known.  
We have only to follow the thread of the hero path,  
and where we had thought to find an abomination,  
we shall find a god.  
And where we had thought to slay another,  
we shall slay ourselves.  
Where we had thought to travel outward,  
we will come to the centre of our own existence.  
And where we had thought to be alone,  
we will be with all the world.”

Joseph Campbell, 1988, p. 123