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Paper Cuts: Life, Death and "Drags" in Andy Warhol's America

Tammer El-Sheikh

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ABSTRACT

Paper Cuts: Life, Death and "Drags" in Andy Warhol's America

Tammer El-Sheikh

This study aims to situate Andy Warhol's work from the 1960s in its cultural, material and critical context. The first chapter follows Hal Foster's influential "traumatic realist" interpretation of Warhol to identify its strengths and limits. Foster's engagement with both the cultural theory of trauma and aspects of the work of Roland Barthes and Jacques Lacan are considered. In light of this assessment a case is made for the *cultural studies* approach to Warhol's work advocated by Douglas Crimp.

The second chapter explores how Warhol's manipulation of images from Life's archive engages the artist's work in a public discourse - *structured by the photographic codes of the illustrated press* - on the issues of his day. In the framework of Allan Sekula's "archival paradigm" a measure of political agency for Warhol in the context of a public visual domain emerges. This understanding of Warhol's intervention is supported by Barthes's analyses of signifying practices in the cultural sphere and Walter Benjamin's description of the reproductive imaging technologies, on which such practices depend.

The third chapter focuses on the philosophical status of Warhol's work, as discussed by Arthur Danto and his critics. Warhol's artistic *description* seems to issue a *prescription* as well, to intervene in the public sphere by means of its own communicative resources. The political stakes of this prescriptive aspect of Warhol's work are examined in the context of the artist's involvement in the gay underworld of the 1960s and its representation in the popular press.

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Introduction: Andy Warhol in Con(text)

In the catalogue for Douglas Fogle's exhibition Andy Warhol/Supernova: Stars, Deaths and Disasters (1962-1964) (2006) the artist's work produced between 1962 and 1964 is submitted to a number of different interpretations, from the strictly art historical, to the political. The conflict between text and context, which has both plagued and animated art historical scholarship for decades, is reproduced in Warhol scholarship especially, it seems. Despite the formal and thematic coherence of Warhol's work, and especially that of the early 1960s, a consensus reading has not yet emerged. Douglas Crimp's essay on this proliferation of readings strikes an appropriate note of relativism in its very title: "Getting the Warhol We Deserve."[1]

Efforts have nevertheless been made to synthesize the various interpretations of Warhol and his work, most elegantly perhaps by the art historian Hal Foster in his essay "Death in America."[2] The first move toward such a synthesis is suggested by the theme of "death" announced in the title. Foster takes a close (albeit selective) look at Warhol's so-called "disaster series," its harrowing images of car crashes and suicides in particular, and constructs an interpretation around a notion of "traumatic realism" the work is said to illustrate.[3] The argument of Foster's essay will be covered in the first part of this study in order to clarify the stakes, benefits and weaknesses of an art historical reading of Warhol's work from this period as traumatic. The discourse of trauma, to which Foster's essay is a key contribution, will be considered in order to separate out its various concepts (psychoanalytic, semiotic, social/historical) and assess their applicability to the work of Warhol. In the second section of the study, I will move from the interpretation of Warhol's "disaster series" to its sources in the popular press of the 1960s. This move will

both extend and critique the traumatic realist reading advanced by Foster. In particular, I aim to open Foster's art historical and often formal reading to the particular effects (traumatic and otherwise) that are discernable at the level of Warhol's source imagery *before its manipulation and appropriation.* Finally, this analysis of Warhol's photographic image bank, and the mass cultural environment it reflects will be taken up into a discussion about the social and political value of the work.

In Paul Mattick's "The Andy Warhol of Philosophy and the Philosophy of Andy Warhol"[4] an emphatic call is made to restore the contextual, social and very personal aspects of Warhol's work to an art historical conversation that all too often sidesteps such considerations in the interest of illustrating theory with Warhol's art.[5] Warhol's work and the debate that surrounds it are of particular interest for writers concerned with theorizing the "artworld" and its evaluative machinations, as argued by Arthur Danto in his essay "The Artworld".[6] But this ideal context must be squared with the very real world of the 1960s, which is everywhere present in Warhol's work as a trace, but also as its (historical and material) condition of possibility. It is this rich set of conditions - social, historical, technological and psychological, and their appearance in Warhol's work of the 1960s that will emerge in what follows.

In the first chapter of the project, **Andy Warhol and the Culture of Trauma**, I will closely examine an interpretation of the work and person of Andy Warhol as set forth by Hal Foster in his essay "Death in America." Foster's reading attempts to reconcile two divergent interpretations of Warhol: the *simulacral* (which he attributes to Roland Barthes, Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault) and the *referential* ("most intelligently articulated" according to Foster by Thomas Crow in his essay "Saturday Disasters").[7]

According to the first interpretation, Foster argues that Warhol's work is absorbed completely into the superficial environment of mass-mediated imagery, and the artist is reduced to an "affectless" transmitter of manipulative "commodity-signs." According to the second interpretation, Warhol is conceived as a kind of history painter whose imagery is taken out of the media environment precisely in order to expose its exploitative mechanisms. Foster argues persuasively that a notion of "traumatic realism" provides a middle road between these two interpretations, thereby positioning Warhol's work as both "referential and simulacral, connected and disconnected, affective and affectless, critical and complacent."[8]

Foster's interpretation is especially useful in emphasizing the psychological dimension of Warhol's work. But his emphasis on formal effects does not adequately take into account the work's iconographic range and the diversity of psychological responses such a range of material is capable of producing – *both in Warhol and in his audience.* Furthermore, in Foster's reading, Warhol is positioned as a kind of emblematic traumatized subject whose "divided subjectivity" is used to reflect a similarly divided "mass subject" constituted by the shock effects of the media environment. There are of course problems, both philosophical and ethical, with the universalizing tendency of Foster's inference of a "mass subject" from a single supposed case of traumatic experience (Warhol's), and an interpretation of that experience as it is registered and perceived in works of visual art.

I will begin by following Foster's lead in identifying some of the psychologically salient features in Warhol's oeuvre. But rather than conflating Warhol as an ideal psychological subject, with his work as an expression of authentic traumatic experience, I

will focus on the ways in which his imagery as such functions in producing psychological effects for the viewer – both traumatic and otherwise. Using Thierry de Duve's analysis of the psychological responses occasioned by structural elements of the "snapshot" and the studio portrait or what he calls the "time exposure,"[9] I will locate these effects in the source material Warhol selects from his mass media image bank. These photos constitute at least an aspect of the material reality of the media environment Foster indirectly describes by means of a "mass subject." Finally, I will anticipate a closer look at this mass media environment by establishing a set of provisional distinctions: 1) between the psychological reception of a so-called traumatic image and its signifying elements, and 2) between the psychological and unconscious aspects of this reception on the one hand, and the conscious editorial and artistic arrangement of signifiers in a given press photograph on the other. This analytic distinction between the psychological and structural elements at play in Warhol's work will be supported by a close look at Roland Barthes's discussion of the "rhetoric of the image."[10]

Having distinguished in the first chapter between the psychological elements of the reception of Warhol's finished work (emphasized by Foster) and the structural aspects of the mass media image bank out of which the work is produced, **Chapter Two: Raiding/Reading Andy Warhol's Archive** will take a closer look at the photographic nature of this raw visual material in technical and historical terms. This examination of the medium will open the art historical frame that supports a strictly psychological interpretation of Warhol's work onto a cultural and institutional horizon. The structured rhetoric of the press photograph as described by Barthes, will be rooted in an historical analysis of the medium's earliest institutional uses as a tool for social differentiation and

law enforcement. Traces of this history of photography are everywhere to be found in Warhol's image bank, and in his works such as Race Riot (1963) and Thirteen Most Wanted Men (1964). Against the background of this institutional use of photography, the psychological shock-effects of Warhol's appropriated press photographs emerge as only an aspect of the total epistemological framework that has structured the production and reception of photography since its inception.

Two main currents will guide the analysis in this second section of the study. First, a framework for the identification of institutional and ideological uses of photography will be developed out of Allan Sekula's essay "The Body and the Archive"[11] and Roland Barthes's structural accounts of the rhetoric of the press image. In Sekula's study, the medium is traced through its early history as a handmaiden to the process of legal and bureaucratic rationalization. This authoritative and *authoritarian* use of photography, Sekula notes, was validated by a "hermeneutic paradigm" for the interpretation of photographic portraiture on the one hand, and the photograph's indexical strength as a substitute for physical evidence and legal testimony on the other.[12] This instrumental use of photography in its early history may be seen to inform its use as a journalistic and artistic medium in the 1960s, the decade in which both Warhol's "disaster series" was produced, and Barthes's essay "The Rhetoric of the Image" was first published. The elements of the press photograph's system of signification identified in Barthes's analysis may be mapped onto Sekula's description of the instrumental uses of photography. The hermeneutic or interpretive paradigm establishes what Barthes calls a set of "connotative procedures" for generating photographic meaning. And the indexical strength of the photograph in its legal uses relates to what Barthes calls the "denotative

plane" which serves to "innocent" or naturalize the meaning generated in an image by means of connotative procedures.[13]

Having established this historical and structural framework for the analysis of photography in general, Warhol's appropriated press photographs may be approached in their own right as sophisticated, culturally embedded objects which are not simply reproduced in his silkscreens, but rather engaged in an active process of semiotic and material manipulation that challenges and alters their original meanings. The second line of argument in this section will thus turn on an analysis of Life magazine; an important source of imagery for Warhol during the early 1960s and an extension of the photographic culture discussed by Sekula and Barthes. As the most widely read news magazine in America at the time, Life's photographic archive serves as an iconographic and discursive key to a mass cultural analysis of Warhol's work. This historical and material dimension of the public sphere will serve to anchor and flesh out what remains a psychologized abstraction in Foster's account of the "mass subject."[14] I will look closely at both the specific images Warhol lifted from the magazine, as well as some of the recurrent themes and topics addressed therein, which provide a public discursive context for the artist's act of selection.

This element of selectivity in Warhol's oeuvre will broaden the narrow discussion of his fixation on the traumatic to include items of both *personal* and *political* import. The central problem that will guide the discussion in **Chapter Three: The Politics of Visuality/Andy Warhol's America**, turns on this distinction. While it is generally agreed that Warhol's work from this period *describes* a 1960s U.S. culture on the brink, wracked by violence and conspicuous consumption, it is not entirely clear how his work

might also *prescribe* a remedy to these problems or an alternative mode of citizenship. The problem: how does one argue from the "*is*" of Warhol's visual descriptions to an "*ought*" regarding a code of conduct in the world so described?

In the interval between a description of one's situation and an attempt to change it, surely a great deal will depend on the nature of that description and the manner of its employment. If it is a new kind of description, then, in a sense, some degree of change has already been affected. But if it is simply a reproduction of a previous description, then nothing has been added, and the existing order has rather been confirmed. This is at its root, a question of freedom and originality. But in Warhol scholarship, the question is focused on the nature of the artist's engagement with the mass media. If he is mimetically and compulsively reproducing what he sees in his environment, then no agency in his process is discernible. Foster's account of Warhol's divided subjectivity at once denies Warhol's subjectivity, and valorizes it in the critical description of his work as a reflection of mass subjectivity. The artist's work on this account stands in need of critical reflection and detached observation in order for it to function as a critique of the world it describes.

But it seems as though there is a way of locating in Warhol's engagement with the popular press, much more than a mere act of compulsive reproduction, redeemed by another's critical reflection. His process seems to have involved a great deal of volition and deliberation, intervening as it does in both the popular press's discursive architecture and its visual material. In the last chapter of the study, I will argue that Warhol's descriptive act necessarily issues its own prescriptive protocols at the material and discursive levels. Caroline A. Jones argues in her essay "The Modernist Paradigm: The

Artworld and Thomas Kuhn" that Warhol's work certainly provides a new kind of visual description in the context of the "artworld."[15] But the question remains as to whether his work is able to transcend this sphere. I will argue that it does. As Warhol describes the world around him, he also institutes a manner of intervening in its legal, economic and mass cultural machinations. It is interesting to note in this connection that Warhol's appropriations from this period were flagrant copyright violations that resulted in litigation.[16] This formal transgression will be examined along with Warhol's other more subtle acts of artistic impropriety.

In this analysis I will make use of some of the historical and aesthetic implications of the thought of Walter Benjamin as discussed by Susan Buck-Morss in her essays "Visual Studies and Global Imagination" and "Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered." To conclude, this interpretation of Warhol's work will draw out the significance of 1) his mode of production: the dissolution of his authorship in the context of collaborative projects, and his anachronistic response, by means of a simple silkscreen process, to Life magazine's photographic aping of an emerging T.V. aesthetic, and 2) the nature and extent of his political response to the times. It will be seen that his work explodes the narrow art historical conception of the *visual*, and its attendant value of aesthetic disinterestedness by absorbing the material of mass culture and its modes of production. Furthermore, this notion of a thoroughly public visuality is politicized in his work through an effort to secure for the marginalized subjects of the civil rights movement and the gay underworld in particular a crucial *visibility* in the political realm.

Chapter One: Andy Warhol and the Culture of Trauma

I. Where's Warhol:

Hal Foster begins his essay "Death in America" by citing a line from Andy Warhol's cheekily entitled The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again) (1975). In what Foster rightly calls an "idiosyncratic passage" on the subject of death, Warhol had this to say: "I don't believe in it because you're not around to know that it's happened. I can't say anything about it because I'm not prepared for it."[17] The passage sets up what Foster offers as a "third way"[18] into the work of Andy Warhol, and especially that produced in the early 1960s. But, as is suggested by this manner of beginning, Foster's argument will concern both the artist's work and person, or as much of Warhol's persona as is made available for analysis in his frequently cryptic and evasive remarks. Of course, the line between personhood and persona is difficult to discern in dealing with Warhol especially. This is an ambiguity that seems to find its way into any consideration of the artist's work for better or for worse. In Foster's essay, it corresponds with a supposed "break" in Warhol's subjectivity.[19] In an effort to trace this subjective fracture Foster's argument will move back and forth between the work and words of the artist, to fill in the inevitable gaps that result from the exclusive use of either system of representation.

But a second mediation is also at stake. Foster's "third way" is designed to synthesize two opposing trends in the interminable debate about the meaning and place of Warhol's work in and for art history. On the one hand, there is a "simulacral"[20] or post-structuralist reading of Warhol's work in particular and Pop art in general, which Foster attributes to Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault and Jean Baudrillard. In this reading, the

work is absorbed into a relay of superficial commodity-signs and its producer is stripped of the heroic intentionality associated with the figure of the artist in times past. As Foster notes, this line of interpretation leads either to an "end of subversion"[21] and the foreclosure of political possibilities for art, or in the direction of an avant-garde affront to the traditional conception of art and art history by opening up the field to a mass-mediated visual domain.[22] According to the "referential"[23] reading, which Foster attributes to Thomas Crow, the images in Warhol's work are to be related to the real world themes and concerns they expose to view such as, crucially for Crow, "the reality of suffering and death."[24] The artist emerges here, not simply to challenge art historical conventions, and certainly not as a numbed consumer in a late-capitalist maze of commodity-signs, but rather as a keen and empathetic social critic.[25] By means of a notion of "traumatic realism," Foster will argue that Warhol's images may be read as both "referential and simulacral, connected and disconnected, affected and affectless, critical and complacent."[26]

Before taking a closer look at Foster's proposed resolution of this critical controversy, an aspect of his criticism of these alternative positions should be considered. The theory of traumatic realism is offered by Foster as an antidote to what he calls the "projections" of critics such as Crow and Barthes who "create the Warhol they need."[27] Foster goes on to say that in some respect all interpretation of Warhol's art suffers this relativistic fate. But he falls short of an explicit qualification of the traumatic realist interpretation as only one of many, determined by its own interests and biases. In his essay "Getting the Warhol We Deserve," Douglas Crimp points out that Foster's art historical reading of Warhol involves its own projection which goes undeclared. In

particular, according to Crimp, Foster conceals his stake in advancing a dominant art historical interpretation that works to "foreclose the possibility of alternatives."[28] Crimp's own case for a cultural studies interpretation of Warhol represents one such alternative. And as he notes, it is an alternative, that Foster argues vehemently against in his essay "The Archive Without Museums," and elsewhere.[29] Crimp writes:

> When Foster argues that a shift from art history to visual culture - or what I insist on calling cultural studies - entails a loss of history, what he seems really to mean is the loss of *art* history, the historicity of artistic forms as they are understood through the deferred action of the avant-garde practices in the present.[30]

Foster traces this "deferred action" in his essay through the work of Warhol to the Surrealist interest in the unconscious and the "capitalist nihilism" of the Dadaists.[31] In what follows, I intend to show that, though Foster's art historical reading does provide a great deal of insight into Warhol's production, and especially its psychological dimension, it is an analysis that sidesteps a consideration of the work's broadly cultural context, and in particular the role of photography therein.

II. Traumatic Realism:

Foster develops his argument in two movements. While the first part of the paper is designed to articulate the notion of "traumatic realism" and map Warhol's practice and person onto it, the second section concerns the place of Warhol's work in the public sphere. If Foster does indeed provide a "third way" into the Warhol debate, it is by positioning Warhol, his work and the *experience* of his work between the private domain of psychological experience and its public channels and outlets in the mass media environment. The concept enlisted by Foster to bridge these private and public registers is that of *trauma*.[32]

In their introduction to the anthology Trauma and Visuality in Modernity (2006), Harold Rosenberg and Lisa Saltzman focus on a single aspect of the psychiatric definition of trauma to prepare the concept for application in the cultural field. Beginning with an etymological analysis, they argue that the concept of trauma, literally "wound," entered the psychiatric field in a translated form. The medical notion of a physical wound is conceived in psychiatry at the level of the subject as a "psychic wound or injury" resulting from an experience "so overwhelming that its understanding is ... deferred and its apprehension comes through symptomatic manifestations.[33] Therapies for trauma consistently involve techniques designed to engage the sufferer with his/her intrusive and repeated memory of the traumatic event by means of language or imagery.[34] It is this aspect of trauma especially, its relation to visual and verbal or linguistic representation that has motivated the concept's absorption as an analytic tool in the cultural field. As Saltzman and Rosenberg note:

> If the space of trauma is between the visual and the verbal, between what is seen and what is spoken, if trauma emerges from the attempt to navigate this space ... this being the very mandate of art history, the language of art historical inquiry might prove useful.[35]

This approach to both the understanding of trauma and its management in clinical practice is at the centre of Foster's analysis of Warhol's so called "disaster imagery." His argument is structured around an attempt to reconcile Warhol's verbal and visual expression of traumatic experience; an experience Foster attributes to both Warhol and his evocation of the American public of the 1960s by way of a "mass subject."[36]

Foster's elaboration of the notion of "traumatic realism" begins with an oft-cited statement from Warhol. The artist's professed desire to "be like a machine"[37] provides an

opening for Foster's analysis of the formal effects of Warhol's production as well as an implicit reference to the Surrealist experiments with automatic writing. In particular, Warhol's repetition of press imagery and the visual noise of the silkscreen process are of interest in this analysis. The first of two major theoretical frameworks are introduced by Foster to structure his argument at this point. Jacques Lacan's essay entitled "The Unconscious and Repetition" is mined for a key formula in Foster's understanding of trauma. With Lacan, Foster argues that traumatic "repetition [of an event in memory] is not reproduction."[38] The repetition Foster has in mind here is that of Warhol's signature silkscreen process. Such an understanding of repetition is intended to function as an objection to the two alternative interpretations of Warhol introduced above. For Foster, Warhol's technique of repetition does not simply reproduce the superficial relay of commodity signs that characterize the mass media environment, nor does it reproduce straight forward references to a depicted "reality of suffering and death" as Crow would have it.[39] Borrowing from Lacan, Foster argues that Warhol's repetition both presents and affects a traumatic experience of the "real." He writes:

> Repetition serves to screen the real understood as traumatic. But this very need points to the real and it is at this point that the real ruptures the screen of repetition. It is a rupture not in the world, but in the subject; or rather it is a rupture between perception and consciousness of a subject touched by an image.[40]

The "subject" Foster implicates here is double; both Warhol's and Foster's own. Warhol's traumatic experience is for Foster to be understood as transmitted through the work to its viewer in the act of reception. This subjective experience of the work, though somewhat opaque, is stated plainly by Foster: "the repetitions not only reproduce traumatic effects, they produce them as well (at least they do in me)."[41]

This screening of the traumatic real is for Foster most in evidence in Warhol's White Burning Crash III (1963) (The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh) (Fig. 1) and Ambulance Disaster (1962) (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie, Collection Marx, Berlin) (Fig. 2). In both cases Foster's analysis is primarily attuned to the formal effects of the silkscreen process. Although both works depict traumatic events at the level of content, for Foster what is especially "galling" about the imagery appears at the level of technique. He points out that in Ambulance Disaster it is not so much the image of the dead woman *per se* that is disturbing but rather the "obscene tear that effaces her head"; an effect of the silkscreen's slipped registration.[42] The same is true of White Burning Crash III for Foster in which the initially merely shocking detail produces a "second order" trauma only as a result of its repetition.[43] For Foster these effects are to be read as "visual equivalents of our missed encounters with the real."[44] Foster's description of traumatic experience here is intended, it seems, as an apt illustration of Lacan's difficult writings.

Some clarification of these Lacanian concepts is in order. In the beginning of Lacan's 1964 seminar The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis (1977), a case is made for the grounding of psychoanalytic *praxis* in an analysis of the "desire" of Sigmund Freud, its founder. In order for psychoanalysis to be founded as a science, Lacan argues, the four fundamental concepts introduced by Freud, namely the unconscious, repetition, transference and the drive, must themselves be analyzed in terms of Freud's desire.[45] Freud's encounter with his patients' dreams and the unconscious unavoidably involves an interpretive game; what Lacan compares with the "hermeneutic demand" found in the human and social sciences.[46] Since memories emerge and are

expressed by the analysand in a partial and often distorted form, a standard of truth is difficult for the analyst to determine. But for Lacan, the discipline's immersion in the material of dream and fantasy need not undermine its status as a science. As he notes, in Freud and in the discipline as a whole, "it is in relation to the real that fantasy functions."[47] The fantasy in question here is the material of the unconscious; of dreams and their symbolic expression in words and images. But this material is indistinguishable from what is true at the perceptual level. This creates a problem of certainty for psychoanalysis that Lacan resolves by reference to "the real."

His argument is developed out of the Cartesian concept of the *subject of doubt*, for whom the very activity of doubt finds its explanatory ground in the truth of thinking.[48] For Lacan, Freud's concept of the unconscious assigns a truth-value to the dreams and fantasies it produces by similarly grounding those deceptions in a source, the real. Lacan offers a classic formula from the Western philosophical heritage in support of his claim: "how could there not be truth about lying."[49] Freud's desire Lacan argues is thus ultimately grounded in this scientific will to truth. As he writes: "The real supports the fantasy, the fantasy protects the real."[50] And it is this "real" to which the psychoanalyst's investigation ought to be oriented.

This dynamic between the truth of the unconscious and its symbolic manifestation in dreams and fantasies is reproduced in Foster's own interpretive game. The "screening of the real" for Foster is just this kind of a fiction that must be defined in relation to a truth. But the screen of the real must be disrupted according to Foster in order for its ground to be exposed. Just as the Lacanian real emerges when the fantasy that "protects" it is penetrated, Foster argues that Warhol's work exposes the real by questioning the

truth-value of the screen. If the effects of the silkscreen are designated in Foster's argument as "visual equivalents of our missed encounter with the real" it is only in relation to the screened content that they are understood as such. That is to say, Foster's real to which our attention is directed by means of Warhol's formal effects is defined in opposition to something unreal or deceptive which could only be the screened mass-media imagery that such effects work to disrupt.

With this move, Foster's argument sets up an opposition between the mere shock effects of mass-media imagery and the traumatic realist disruption of that field by Warhol's art. Just as Freud's desire was an object of analysis for Lacan, Foster's art historical desire may be uncovered by reference to his assessment of the "real" in Warhol's work. The media imagery at the centre of Warhol's work is redeemed and validated only as a result of its manipulation. In place of the simulacral and referential accounts of Warhol's work, Foster sets up an opposition between a cultural studies approach to the artist that remains focused on the limited and deceptive field of mass-media effects, and an art historical approach attuned to the traumatic real, that emphasizes the autonomy and validity of the artwork *vis à vis* this sphere of mere effects.

Foster identifies his point of access to the traumatic real in the "touch" or "rupture" generated by Warhol's technique of repetition; "a rupture not in the world, but in the subject ... between perception and consciousness of a subject touched by an image." The image is described as at once advancing toward Foster's interpretive gaze and as proceeding from it. It is this "confusion" he writes, about the location of the rupture, *touché* ... between subject and world ... that is an aspect of trauma."[51] It is here where the "shocked subjectivity" of Warhol seems to be transmitted to Foster in the

process of viewing. And it is here where the vocabulary of trauma discourse is most clearly inscribed in his argument. But the argument will not move reflexively in the direction of an investigation of this subjective gap *in Foster* between "perception and consciousness" or between his relationship as a viewing "subject" with the "world" of which Warhol's images are both a representation and a part. Rather, an elaboration on this activation of the image is pursued by means of a modified version of Roland Barthes's notion of the *punctum*. This Barthesian concept then, constitutes Foster's second major theoretical borrowing. But whereas Lacan's terminology is for the most part directly applied to the analysis of Warhol's work, Barthes's concept is modified in Foster's use.

But the *punctum* is crucial for Foster in another respect as well. Foster makes his transition to a discussion of the public sphere and the mass media by way of the notion of the *punctum*; a term used by Barthes to designate the private element of a photograph that disturbs or "punctuates" its conventional or intended meaning in the act of reception.[52] Foster uses Barthes's concept to designate an area of confusion between the private and the public in the experience of trauma.[53] The *punctum* thus functions as a borderland concept between private and public registers in Foster's discussion. This collapse of the distance between the two registers corresponds for Foster to an actual state of affairs in the public realm. Foster is concerned to describe what he, following Mark Seltzer, calls a "pathological public sphere"[54] in terms of the experience of trauma both recorded and transmitted in Warhol's works. At this point, an argumentative leap is made from Foster's particular experience of a selection of Warhol's works to a shared experience of mass media that constitutes a public dimension. Once again, an all-important bit of textual

evidence is used to support Foster's case. As he rightly notes, Warhol described his process cryptically as concerned with "taking the outside and putting it on the inside ... or taking the inside and putting it on the outside."[55] If this statement illuminates Warhol's process for Foster then there is another that is taken to describe his motive: "I don't think art should be only for the select few... I think it should be for the mass of American people."[56] With this, Foster turns to an investigation of the ways in which Warhol succeeds in producing such an art. But the work that is described is taken not simply as intended "for the mass of American people," but also as an evocation of a mass subject.[57]

Out of Barthes's notion of the *punctum* then, Foster develops a considerable part of his argument. But he begins with a description of the traumatic effects of the silkscreen process in Warhol's production. The "slipping and streaking, blanking and blanching, repeating and colouring of the images"[58] are of special significance here. These effects are gathered by Foster, in a description that departs from Barthes's original usage in the analysis of straight photographic *detail* and its radically private reception. The effect of the *punctum* in Warhol, he writes, "lies less in details than in this repetitive *popping* of the image."[59] While the traumatic experience of the *punctum* is for Barthes an entirely personal one, and beyond articulation precisely because it marks an interior limit, Foster's *punctum* is referred to the plane of formal effects which are universally accessible and understood in the same manner by all. Judith Rodenbeck, in an essay on Warhol's Fluxus contemporaries, notes Foster's illegitimate appropriation of Barthes' "difficult" concept:

> What is lost then in Foster's otherwise extremely elegant reading ... is the radically personal and private aspect of Barthes' formulation ... as well as its essentially photographic aspect. For Barthes the operational linkage between photography and trauma is subjective ... Precisely because of the implicit

> generalizing or even universalizing of the punctual aspect of his argument (from the private to the public, from photography to image making), Foster's reading of Warhol slips from the register of the traumatic to that of the tragic.[60]

When Barthes does discuss the traumatic effects of a photograph, the trauma is entirely personal; delivered by the *punctum* or accidental detail that rises from the photograph and welds itself to a strictly interior site – and not by the *studium* or conventional meaning of the photo.[61] In Camera Lucida (1981) Barthes offers a moving example of the experience occasioned by the truly traumatic photograph. Concerning the "Winter Garden Photograph" of Barthes's mother found after her death, Barthes has this to say:

> I cannot transform my grief, I cannot let my gaze drift; no culture will help me utter this suffering which I experience entirely on the level of the image's finitude (this is why despite its codes I cannot read a photograph): The Photograph – my Photograph – is without culture, when it is painful, nothing in it can transform grief into mourning.[62]

Barthes concludes this lament with a statement about the futility of properly articulating the effect generated by a truly traumatic photograph: "I have no other resource than this irony: to speak of the "nothing to say."[63] This failure of language in the face of the traumatic is overcome in Foster's argument by a description of formal effects that are understood in common at the level of perception and then assigned a traumatic significance by means of the Lacanian framework and Warhol's quotation. Language, in Foster's argument, is not barred access to the traumatic but rather given through Warhol's statements, as a supposed means of access to it.

While Foster's description sidesteps a deep consideration of photographic detail , his focus on the effects of the silkscreen, which are universalized as "missed encounters

with the real," moves his argument in the direction of a conventional or shared meaning; toward what Barthes calls the field of the *studium*:

> To recognize the *studium* is inevitably to encounter the photographer's intentions, to enter into harmony with them, to approve or disapprove of them, but always to understand them, to argue them within myself, for culture (from which the *studium* derives) is a contract arrived at between creators and consumers.[64]

The visual language Foster identifies in Warhol's work is thoroughly understood; both in terms of the structures of traumatic experience, and in art historical terms as deferred expressions of the avant-garde Surrealist and Dadaist traditions. And this transmission of a deeply culturally encoded production in Foster's reading is in a sense authenticated by his own declared traumatic experience of the work. Furthermore, his interpretation of Warhol's words seems to impute an intention to the artist to express such an experience.

In Foster's analysis then, there is no sharp distinction made between Warhol's work and his words. It is also difficult to draw the line between the interpretation of Warhol's supposed traumatic experience and Foster's own subjective rupture. Barthes's notion of the *punctum* is used, albeit problematically, to describe this collapse of the artist, his work and its reception. But if the *punctum* is left aside for the moment, Barthes's notion of the *studium* or conventional meaning of the photo on the one hand, and his assertion of the limits of language in the description of a traumatic encounter with a photograph on the other, may provide clarification. A set of provisional distinctions at work in Barthes's structural analysis can be introduced. What renders the photograph entirely unique on Barthes's account is its structural distinctiveness or autonomy. Its denotative plane is not accessible to language, which is for Barthes another structurally autonomous domain that is "parasitic" on the image; paradigmatically in the case of the press photograph's caption. A pairing of these two systems of signification according to

Barthes, produces a collusion of two distinct messages; the *denoted message* of the photograph and the *connoted message* of language, such that "the connotation of language is innocented through the photograph's denotation."[65] Language in this instance shares in the photograph's apparent objectivity or referential force, and provides a means of *apparent* linguistic access to a plane of representation that is structurally resistant to language.

While this distinction is not drawn in Foster's analysis, it is helpful in clarifying his argument. Foster seems to use Warhol's words to direct the interpretation of his images. In this sense, the argument involves what Barthes calls a connotative procedure; the meaning of the image is suggested by its presentation through language. But while Foster makes a good case for the interpretation of Warhol's technical effects, he does not penetrate the structural matrix of the artist's photographic source material. What Barthes calls the photograph's denotative plane remains in the background for Foster. Furthermore, this untouched photographic material in the background of his analysis, is presented in the popular press by means of other connotative procedures that remain in the imagery in spite of Foster's emphasis on the overlaid formal effects of the silkscreen. This latent plane of meaning in Warhol's imagery will be the focus of the second chapter of this study. But for now, it seems useful to anticipate this move to a photographic reading of Warhol's works by distinguishing between the structural elements of Warhol's production and the psychological elements of Foster's interpretation. Before taking a look at the broadly psychological currents in Foster's reading, his use of the controversial category of trauma should be examined.

III. Trauma: Discourse and Rhetoric:

While Foster's account of the traumatic effects of Warhol's silkscreens does not follow without difficulty from the Barthesian concept, there are some interesting correspondences with the clinical understanding of trauma that do seem to support his claims. Warhol's colouring of the silkscreens in particular corresponds with a standard test for the evaluation of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) called the Stroop Test. Administered primarily to Vietnam Veterans in the early stages of PTSD research, the test was designed to gauge the sensitivity of veterans to stimuli designed to symbolize the traumatic event.[66] When shown a set of words printed in different colors, symptomatic veterans were slow in identifying the colours of words that were associated with the traumatic experiences of battle. The test confirmed the prevalence of "re-experiencing" the traumatic event in sufferers of PTSD. Warhol's images are also coloured in a way that may either dull the impact of the traumatic imagery for a viewer or intensify it. It is interesting to note that the pairing of images that carry traumatic significance, and colors that do not in clinical practice, may also be used to extend Foster's analysis of the illustration of traumatic repetition in Warhol's work.

In spite of such correspondences, Foster's use of the concept of trauma is not without problems. The concept is a difficult one, wrought with controversy concerning its definition and applicability both within and outside the field of psychiatry. Clinical definitions listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) (1994) have been through multiple modifications. A former definition deemed "too restrictive" specified that a traumatic event had to be "outside the range of human experience."[67] Unfortunately, a great many traumatic experiences occur with enough

frequency to challenge this definition. A revised definition thus had to be broadened to include such everyday tragedies as automobile accidents and the deaths of loved ones as possible causes[68]; incidentally two of the dominant themes in Warhol's oeuvre. But the revisions in question have redirected the diagnostic efforts of clinicians in other ways which are every bit as controversial. The DSM's expanded definition, as of 1995, seems to focus too much on an event's "objective characteristics rather than its subjective meaning."[69] There is a persistent difficulty then, in delineating the objective and subjective characteristics of trauma: it seems to be both and neither.

The problem at its root turns on a logical difficulty. As has been noted extensively, the etiology of trauma is distinct, and distinctly problematic. The problem is one of circular explanation: "the definition of PTSD includes part of its presumed etiology, namely a traumatic event."[70] The symptoms that are identified in the diagnosis of trauma all involve the representation of a traumatic experience in memory. The symptoms to be sure, are identifiable in particular cases: 1) re-experiencing the traumatic event, 2) avoidance of stimuli associated with the event or numbing of responsiveness, 3) increased arousal when faced with such stimuli.[71] However, they may be associated with any number of particular traumatic experiences or events. The difficulty is not only present in clinical practice it is a logical problem that attends the usage of the concept in the cultural field as well. The problem is stated concisely by Seltzer in his study of the "pathological public sphere." He writes: "If trauma is first, the wound, it is second a wounding in the absence of a wound: trauma is in effect an effect in search of a cause ... This reflex model substitutes ex post facto description for explanation ... in accounts of trauma or abuse as cause."[72]

This "pathological public sphere" described by Seltzer, and read through the figure and work of Warhol by Foster has a deeply historical dimension as well. In a paper by Mark Jarzombek, the cultural dimension of "trauma discourse" is given a genealogical characterization in the context of a "post-traumatic turn" in both science and society. Jarzombek notes that the list of "criteria" for the clinical assessment of traumatic experience was occasioned by a legal imperative to define the terrain for cases of liability and compensation. The most recent addition to the list of criteria is cryptically termed "the significance criterion."[73] The initially clinical and psychoanalytic category of trauma (described by intrusive memories, anxiety, hyper-arousal, and so forth) has been opened to the cultural field by way of the nebulous category of significance. This notion of significance overlaps conveniently with the semiotic treatment of trauma in cultural studies. But it also indicates the degree to which the concept has generated a kind of psychologized culture of victims and perpetrators. Trauma has been thoroughly democratized and the rights of victims are claimed universally. This legal formulation of the category for the purpose of litigation is essential for the rendering of judgement. But the line between the clinical dimension of the category and its many cultural uses and abuses is difficult to determine. This complexity, the many valences of the term and many instances of the phenomenon are not always considered in sub-specialist domains of trauma studies. As Jarzombek notes in his essay: "it is both science and séance, both trauma and tragedy."[74] In the domain of art, according to Jarzombek: "the avant-garde has the added obligation of working through that which is being worked through by culture itself."[75]

Such difficulties in defining the term create obvious problems for Foster. The definitional controversy that underlies and destabilizes trauma discourse finds its way into Foster's argument, especially in connection with his equivocation of the Barthesian *punctum*. He seems to oppose the strictly subjective meaning of trauma by affirming its illustration in formal effects that are experienced in common by all as missed encounters with the Lacanian *Real*. But he describes his own experience of Warhol's effects in a radically subjective way in terms of a rupture between his perception and consciousness; "*not in the world but in a subject* touched by an image." But if trauma as a catch-all explanatory tool is put aside for the moment, Foster's argument seems to lead in the direction of a focussed description of a great many *other* psychological effects at work in Warhol's production. Although the psychological currents in his interpretation are primarily addressed under the rubric of trauma, his descriptions of the work seem to implicate a range of perceptual experience. Furthermore, this broadly psychological emphasis, at times, approaches a mode of analysis that dovetails with trends in art psychology and its roots in more traditional art historical approaches to visual analysis. It is this current in Foster's writing that must be followed.

IV. From Traumatic Affect to Perceptual Effects:

What Foster describes as a "popping of the image" in Warhol's work can be related to an understanding in Gestalt psychology of visual perception. The psychologist Anne Treisman argues that the basic forms of visual perception are experimentally verifiable. In an effort to determine these "primitive features" essential to the Gestaltist belief in the integrity of visual forms, she observes that when asked to pick out

irregularities in a visual field, participants do not need to inspect each of the figures in turn to determine the relevant properties that define the irregularity.[76] For example when presented with an "O" embedded in a field of "V's" the odd shape is identified immediately regardless of its location in the field and the number of "V's" that surround it. (Fig. 3) On the basis of this test, Treisman argues that "a given attribute is a primitive visual feature if a difference in that attribute leads to an immediate discovery, so that the item that is different just 'pops out'."[77] This process of selection is an initial step in the organization of the visual field according to Gestalt psychologists, for whom a visual form is experienced as a whole, distinct from its parts.[78] There is an emphasis on the integrity of visual forms in this account of perceptual experience, which is echoed in traditional approaches to the formal analysis of art as well. In particular, the distinction between figure and ground in the visual arts is established on the basis of an understanding of the priority of integral forms. The operation of what is called "visual segregation" or "parsing" which selects the irregularities or primitive visual features in Treisman's experiment is also thought to organize the pictorial field in depth perception; positioning the figure in the foreground and the ground, indistinctly, in the back. The figure in this relationship is always thought to be more coherent and articulated than the ground.[79]

If we return to Foster's analysis, the "popping of the image" that guides his discussion (and experience) of the work is reconcilable with this Gestaltist understanding of perception. What "pops out" for Foster is prioritized in the same way a visual field is organized around a coherent and well-articulated figure. In Foster's analysis then, it

seems as though there is a kind of figure/ground dynamic that underlies the tension between the screen and the real.

Rudolf Arnheim the eminent 20th century art psychologist deals extensively with the concept of the figure/ground distinction in his Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye (1954). For Arnheim, the principle of selection or parsing that underlies the Gestaltist theory of perception is accorded an aesthetic significance. The economy and integrity of the selected form is determined according to Arnheim on the basis of a "principle of parsimony" or economy which is also found in the natural sciences as a standard of sound explanation. Just as in physics and chemistry, in the face of competing interpretations of a set of facts "the simplest one should be accepted," the artist too must "not go beyond what is needed for his purpose."[80] Arnheim writes:

> The great works of art are complex, but we also praise them for 'having simplicity', by which we mean that they organize a wealth of meaning and form in an overall structure that clearly defines the place and function of every detail in the whole.[81]

The perceptual field is for Arnheim mastered in a sense by the artist who correctly represents its structural principles. The figure/ground distinction on this analysis is a great subject in art history because it is a basic feature of perceptual experience.

In tracing the basis of the distinction, Arnheim uses a couple of examples that seem especially relevant to Foster's reading. The first type of illustration introduced by Arnheim is that of a night sky in which the stars may be either perceived as sparkling in front of the dark expanse, or as holes in a kind of velvety fabric.[82] In the first case, the stars are identified as figure and in the second as ground. This ambiguity is central to the experience of depth perception. And it is an ambiguity that is well illustrated in Surrealist experiments with a reversal of figure and ground such as Salvador Dali's The Trojan War

(Fig. 4). But for Arnheim, the ideal artist will arrange figure and ground in a composition to illustrate such an ambiguity and provide for its resolution by the sensitive viewer. Arnheim illustrates with a Dadaist woodcut by Jean Arp from Eleven Configurations (Fig. 5). In this work, Arnheim notes that there are both "economical" and more complex ways of resolving the form. According to the principle of economy, the simplest solution arranges the forms on a single plane.[83] Alternatively, the more complex "pyramid" arrangement, which organizes the composition into an elevated structure of planes sacrifices simplicity in its resolution of the pictured elements.[84] According to Arnheim, the work presents or constructs this ambiguity in a way that requires the viewer to resolve it and complete the form by selecting its elements and organizing them into a coherent perceptual experience.

Returning to Foster's reading of Warhol, several correspondences emerge. As noted, Foster is interested in a reading that will situate Warhol within the history of avant-garde production, from the Dadaists to the Surrealists. The figure/ground distinction is of course central to a particular understanding of these movements, namely one attuned to perceptual experience and formal characteristics. Furthermore, the visual incidents that are prioritized in Foster's reading, or taken as "equivalents of a missed encounter with the real," can be analyzed more simply, it seems, in terms of their role in establishing the relation between figure and ground. For example, in Foster's reading of Ambulance Disaster (see Fig. 2) what is of special interest is the silkscreen's streaking or marking of the dead woman's head - Foster calls it an "effacement." But these marks are also described as rising from the scene to "touch" the viewer. They occupy a special place in Foster's analysis as switch points between figure and ground. The silkscreen's

streaking and "popping" of the image therefore alternates between ground (rupture) and figure (touch). In Foster's terms, however, these visual incidents are the forms around which the work is organized according to the structures of traumatic experience; forms that distinguish such experience from the mere shock effects of mass-media imagery. This tension is given directly in Foster's experience of the work. And though he insists that his experience is located in the space of a traumatic rupture between perception and consciousness, a "parsimonious" explanation is available by means of the language of psychology of perception alone. There is no need, it seems, to posit the psychic event of a trauma in Foster's engagement with Warhol's work since it can be explained at the level of perception in terms of the figure and ground dynamic. Furthermore, the ambiguity in Foster's argument concerning the location of the rupture, when analysed as an ambiguity of figure and ground, accords with Arnheim's requirement for the most successful works of Surrealist and Dadaist art. This interpretation of Foster's reading thus corresponds with his historical project to trace the "deferred action of the avant-garde" as well.

The concept of trauma in Foster's analysis, it seems, is used to secure a kind of direct and authentic access to Warhol's work. The psychologically charged elements in Warhol's work are said to "touch" Foster and produce an interior "rupture" between his perception and his consciousness. Foster describes an experience of merging with the work, in which the "tears" and "ruptures" of the silkscreen are described as though they are interchangeable with a "rupture between perception and consciousness" in Foster's own psychic experience. But in Foster's essay, and elsewhere in the history of formalist art criticism, such accounts run the risk of obscuring more than they explain. Mark Jarzombek's considers the difficulties created by such accounts in his study of the

reception of psychology in Modernist art criticism and aesthetics. Commenting on a passage from Wassily Kandinsky's book Uber Das Geistige in der Kunst (1912), on the necessity for a criticism attuned to the "interior realities of this or that form"[85] Jarzombek notes that this ideal prepares a kind of unmediated experientialist foundation for the formalist criticism of Clement Greenberg and his ilk:

> [Kandinsky] demands that the critic's objectivity be made equivalent with the formal intentionality of the painting. It was a position later taken up by Clement Greenberg, who once said "Let nothing come between you and art, nothing, no ideas, nothing. The idea is to see enough: that's how you acquire taste."[86]

This approach to art criticism collapses the distance between the artist, the artwork and the viewer to produce a kind of psychologically mediated, essential experience of communion. As Jarzombek notes, the visual analysis or "description" that is produced by this kind of direct experience, "though seemingly open ended, as experiences are, [is] hermetically closed against criticism because [the] authors assume they have captured the essentials of an experience. More than just a subjective account of what has been seen these descriptions claim to be simultaneously an event in the author's own consciousness and a vicarious reliving that purposefully collapses not only the past and present, but also the minds of the viewer, the artist and the reader."[87]

It is this kind of connection, mediated by what is describable, at its root, in terms of pure perceptual experience, that seems to be at the centre of Foster's analysis as both a validating and obfuscating factor. The intense subjective experience of Warhol's work that Foster describes in his essay does not in itself create an obscurity. As has been seen, Barthes's notion of the *punctum* is clear and successful in designating a radically private experience of viewing. But Foster's universalization of the *punctum* to describe the traumatic experience of the public sphere seems to involve a kind of illegitimate

projection of the legitimate private experience designated by Barthes's term. The trauma transmitted from Warhol through the work to Foster is ultimately grounded in a private perceptual experience of the work that, though used to validate a reflection on the "pathological public sphere," remains mostly attuned to a vocabulary of visual incidents. This plane of effects though, seems to preoccupy Foster's analysis at the expense of a consideration of the photographic material *per se* so central to Warhol's production.

V. Behind the Screen: Structure and Experience in Warhol's Photographic Images:

Foster's analytical project extends beyond a consideration of the work in question and its experience. He is explicit about his intention to situate Warhol in a continuum of "post-war art based in photography."[88] His idea of traumatic realism is intended to structure this investigation. In anticipation of this wide-ranging art-historical project Foster designates a central place for the "subject-effects" occasioned by Warhol's work in a "genealogy of traumatic realism."[89] To be sure, there is a correspondence between the technology of photography and the understanding of trauma as a crisis in representation that suggests a promising framework for Foster's proposed genealogy. And this view is confirmed in the literature that Foster cites as well. For Seltzer, trauma is to be understood as a kind of "photography at the level of the subject."[90] Lacan too describes the traumatic experience of the Cartesian subject of certainty in the scopic field (as both a subject and object of representation) as a kind of virtual or pseudo photography at the level of the subject: "the gaze is the instrument through which ... in a fragmented form ... I am photo-graphed."[91] But this manner of describing a subjective experience of trauma remains metaphorical so long as the medium and technology of photography itself

is left unexamined. In what follows, Thierry de Duve's typology of photographs will provide a structural explanation of the medium to supplement the psychological analysis seen in Foster's treatment. While Foster locates the carriers of traumatic significance in the effects of the silkscreen, it will be seen that the photos themselves, *before their appropriation and manipulation*, illustrate a wealth of psychological experience that is difficult to ignore in considering Warhol's work.

Stressing the indexical nature of photography, de Duve makes a kind of artificial distinction between two types of photos that illustrate two different ways of "reading" any type of photograph. The "press photograph" or "snapshot" and the "time exposure" or "funerary portrait," exemplify the two possible or typical responses in a spectator's encounter with a photograph. [92] With this reading, de Duve wants to elaborate on Barthes's notion of spectatorial photographic experience as a "spatial immediacy and a temporal anteriority" or the experience of a photographed object's "having-been-there."[93] This space-time conjunction conditions the traumatic effect of the *punctum* for Barthes - should it "rise from the scene" and compel a reflection on the photograph's peculiar philosophical status. But for de Duve, this is one of two possibilities. Barthes's experience of the "here – formerly" or the illogical conjunction of spatial immediacy and temporal anteriority is, for de Duve, a typical effect of the press photograph or "snapshot." But the time exposure, or "funerary portrait," reverses this paradox according to de Duve such that the photograph generates a spectator's experience of temporal immediacy and spatial anteriority, or the "now-there."[94] de Duve's point is developed in terms of psychological responses to the photograph that can be traced back to the

structure of the image itself and its two co-incident and conflicting "series" - a superficial series and a referential series:

> The first series is image producing. It generates the photograph as a semiotic object abstracted from reality, the surface of the photograph so to speak. Let us call it the superficial series. The second series is reality-produced (one might even say reality producing insofar as the only reality to be taken into account is the one framed by the act of taking the photograph). It generates the photograph as a physical sign, linked with the world through optical causality. Let us call it the referential series.[95]

For de Duve these two series structurally condition the psychological response of a viewer to any photograph. When engaged with the "superficial series" of the snapshot (exemplified by the press photograph), the spectator encounters an image that is supposed to represent a lived moment in time. But the image-form is held in an impossible pose that does not correspond with the 'lived time' it claims to capture. At the intersection of the photograph's reference to a temporal sequence and its superficially suspended record of that sequence there is a perceptual impasse; an illogical conjunction of the here and the formerly.[96] This comes close to Barthes's formulation of the spectatorial consciousness. But de Duve adds the experience of the time exposure (exemplified by the funerary portrait) to this assessment:

> [The time exposure] reverses the paradox of the snapshot series to series. Whereas the snapshot refers to the fluency of time without conveying it, the time exposure petrifies the time of the referent and denotes it as departed. [The snapshot] freezes the superficial time of the image, [and the time exposure] releases it. [The time exposure] liberates an autonomous and recurrent temporality, which is the time of remembrance.[97]

This then is the second possibility that de Duve adds to Barthes' analysis. But de Duve's argument is designed primarily to translate Barthes's linguistic reading into corresponding psychological terms. De Duve translates Barthes's ironic "speech" about

"the nothing to say" into a clinically describable psychological trauma, and distinguishes such an experience from that of remembrance and melancholy – also describable in clinical terms. The snapshot confronts the spectator with an image that resists narration since, as an impossible pose or a "gestalt," it cannot be returned to its referential sequence. This response stifles language or sets up a boundary beyond which language cannot pass, namely at the "point" that is recorded and frozen in the photo. Any description of this point would be either "too early or too late" according to de Duve; on a temporal continuum that the image is conspicuously removed from.[98] This suspension of language coincides with the psychoanalytic description of trauma as an inassimilable or belatedly assimilated event. The time exposure on the other hand, generates an encounter wherein language is freed to operate, albeit in a melancholic narrative form since the departure of the photographed subject is implied, even predicted. The referent is designated in the photograph not as an impossible pose, but as a memory made available within the 'memorial' structure of the photo itself. For de Duve, the time exposure (exemplified by the funerary portrait) designates the referent as departed and thus liberates the subject of the photograph into a narrative of remembrance.[99]

While Foster's reading focuses primarily on 'anonymous disasters', there is another class of images concurrent in Warhol's work that seems at first very different in tone and theme. His portraits of celebrities, such as Marilyn Monroe (Fig. 6) and Jackie Kennedy, are culled from sources in the popular press, as are the so-called 'disasters'. They are figures that represent 'American tragedies' but they are not tragedies of the sort seen in Ambulance Disaster and White Burning Car III. They should be distinguished but how? Foster objects at first to Crow's interpretation of the images as memorial pieces,

noting that "they are not restorative ... they are not about a mastery of trauma."[100] Rather, he argues that they both reproduce traumatic effects by illustrating an "obsessive fixation in melancholy" and produce traumatic effects in Foster directly.[101] This production of trauma is referred to the Lacanian *Real* and the action of the *punctum* as Foster has defined it; that is, linked to the effects of the silkscreen. Later in his essay, Foster does propose another solution through the figure of "notoriety." Halfway between celebrity and anonymity, he finds Warhol's most successful evocations of the "mass subject."[102] In Warhol's own words, these are the everyday recipients of "15 minutes of fame." But de Duve's typology of photographs offers a less hierarchical, structural distinction between these two types of images in Warhol's production. Based on de Duve's reading we may relate the celebrity portraits to the 'funerary' type and associate them with a private process of mourning and its public facilitation by the press. Instead of marking only a slight deviation from the ideal of notoriety, the portraits in Warhol's series may find a place in his oeuvre as distinctive meditations on the melancholic operations of *photographic* spectatorship.

Taking de Duve's treatment of mourning further, we find it composed of two more extreme psychological states; mania and depression. This is a standard psychoanalytic account that plots the process of mourning and assimilating loss on a continuum marked by bouts of mania and depression; what Freud calls "the work of mourning."[103] Following Freud, de Duve explains this procedure as one in which the photograph functions as a consoling object for the de-cathexis and hypercathexis of libidinal affect:

> Libidinal affect must be withdrawn from the object to which it was attached (de-cathexis), awaiting to be refastened to a new object. Meanwhile, the loosened

> affect temporarily affixes itself to "each single one of the memories and expectations in which the libido is bound to the object." This process Freud calls hypercathexis.[104]

Having established this Freudian framework, de Duve's then maps these processes onto his structural typology of photographs to describe the psychological consequences of the photograph's indexicality:

> Within the semiotic structure of the photograph, the referential series acts as a "lost reality" while the superficial series acts as a "substitutive object." So what the diastolic look accomplishes when it summons the shape and inflates it, is the hypercathexis of the superficial series of the photograph; and what the systolic look accomplishes when it revokes the shape and kills it, is the de-cathexis of the referential series.[105]

Warhol's series of portraits provide powerful visual representations of this mourning process. In Turquoise Marilyn (1964) (Stephan T. Edlis Chicago) (see Fig. 6) Warhol overlays the movie star's iconic features with flat patches of vivid color in the manner of a kind of exaggerated or campy application of make-up. But this deliberate treatment of especially expressive features of Monroe's face suggests an almost fetishistic engagement with the subject. The space that these features occupy is expanded or inflated by means of Warhol's application of colour, which may be read as a kind of hypercathexis of the distinct elements of a visual memory. But the silkscreen also accomplishes a kind of erasure of the image both in its duplicative process and in Warhol's colouring over of specific parts of the portraits. This act of distancing or erasure accomplished by occluding or obscuring features of the original may be read as a movement within the image of de-cathexis. The reading may proceed beyond this single portrait as well. In Marilyn Monroe's Lips (1962) (Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.) (Fig. 7), we see Warhol again in a

kind of manic engagement with the lost object, or an aspect of its memory. This too may be read as a fixation on an element of the memory - both national and personal - and its inflation in a repeated series. But the movement of de-cathexis shows up as well, albeit as an exclusion, in the removal of the rest of Monroe's face.

Foster begins to explore this dimension of the portraits, their traces of Warhol's "obsessive fixation on the object in melancholy".[106] But as already demonstrated, his analysis is oriented beyond both the experience of melancholy and the photographic object in question toward a traumatic experience. Warhol's dialogue with this structural aspect of the portraits and their treatment in the silkscreened duplicates is thus anticipated but ultimately overlooked.

But in what sense may the snapshot or press photograph analysis of de Duve be read into Warhol's work of this time? Foster's prioritization of the anonymous disaster images seems to suggest a special interest in Warhol's treatment of photojournalism's many snapshots. Warhol's many silkscreens of car wrecks and their lifeless victims are taken from the illustrated news magazines' store of press photographs, and thus seem to qualify straightforwardly as "snapshots." But in the case of de Duve's "impossible gesture" - his examples are Eadweard Muybridge's Untitled, (Sequence photographs of the Trot and Gallop) (1878) (fig. 8) and Eddie Adams's General Loan Executing a Vietcong Suspect, February 1, 1968 (1968) (fig. 9) - there is a temporal sequence that is suspended in the space of the photo. In Warhol's car crash disasters at the center of Foster's discussion, the disaster itself marks the *termination* of a temporal series. The photos merely record a motion that has already come to an abrupt and fatal halt. In this respect, White Burning Crash III (see Fig. 1) and Ambulance Disaster (see Fig. 2)

function more as time exposures or funerary portraits, denoting the referent as "departed." This shifts the reading of these photos in the direction of the melancholic and away from Foster's zone of the traumatic.

As melancholic in de Duve's analysis, these pieces are wrested from the relays of traumatic repetition and given to narration in the form of memorialization or remembrance. The narrative work of mourning introduces the images into a symbolic stream; the stream of language. Far from suspending language, in-context sensational press photographs of anonymous and high profile disasters alike invite and compel commentary by various means. The original context for many of Warhol's images in the pages of Life attests to their susceptibility to a narrativized reading. But if Warhol was in fact staging this public ritual of mourning and tragic reportage, then his practice demands a serious look at these codes as they were employed in the press. Of course, the popular press was and still is replete with codes and means of ordering the visual information presented in pictures. As Barthes notes, these connotative procedures of photographic display in the press constitute an "institutional activity" which performs an "integrative" function in the public sphere. [107] This use of photography is very much in evidence in the press sources of Warhol's disaster imagery. In the next chapter of this study, it will be seen that an examination of these integrative procedures in the context of Warhol's sources serves to emphasize his work's transgressive potential.

Chapter Two: Raiding/Reading Andy Warhol's Archive

I. The Traumatic Photograph and the Myth of Nearness:

In Roland Barthes's seminal essay of 1961, "The Photographic Message,"[108] a proposition appears that has since been the seedbed for the emerging interdisciplinary field of trauma studies.[109] Barthes writes:

> The traumatic photograph (fires, shipwrecks, catastrophes, violent deaths, all captured 'from life as lived') is the photograph about which there is nothing to say.[110]

Today, Barthes's readers are witnesses to an ever-growing archive of such traumatic images, most recently, and for Westerners, perhaps most devastatingly after 11 September, 2001. But a precedent for this kind of imagery was set in the 1960s by illustrated weeklies such as Life in the United States with its often harrowing coverage of Vietnam from the field (Fig. 10) and regular anonymous tragedies. Closer to home for Barthes, Life's European counterparts, such as Paris Match, were covering the process of French/Algerian de-colonization in the 1960s, thereby providing a template for the current spectatorial fascination with violence. The battlefronts (military and civilian) have changed but the imagery is for the most part the same. The public appetite for such coverage is being targeted ever more intensively by means of new political/journalistic "collusions" such as "the embedded journalist".[111] That this convention frequently produces coverage of events such as Tim Horton's coffee breaks for Canadian troops in their Afghan barracks, as has been seen recently in a leading national newspaper, does not seem to raise eyebrows.[112] For we are sure to see the same troops fearlessly wade into enemy territory for a heroic firefight – perhaps after the coffee break – in a subsequent

feature. What has been lost in terms of journalistic objectivity is made up for by human-interest pieces in a highly readable narrative skin.

The implication however, seems to fly in the face of Barthes's proposition – there is, and has always been, a lot to say about the so-called "traumatic photograph(s)"[113] we encounter in the media. They are delivered in a narrative mode and consumed by everyday readers as heavily coded communications. Such imagery has also become a prime object of study for communications specialists, discourse analysts and visual/cultural studies scholars.[114] The "conversation" it seems, is interminable, and it has both popular and scholarly modes. The specialist conducts his/her analysis of the press's codes at a remove to ensure objective distance. But in art historical studies of appropriated traumatic imagery, another kind of remove is in evidence. If the "traumatic photograph" in context is already coded for public consumption, then, in the considerably more rarefied atmosphere of the art enterprise, these common codes are subordinated to a discourse of highly technical and often formal analysis. This has been the fate of much trauma discourse in its art historical mode. What was supposed to be an interdisciplinary endeavour has ultimately settled into a sub-specialist domain. While these readings frequently turn up novel and exciting interpretations of their objects, something is lost.

In Hal Foster's reading of Andy Warhol's work the first appearance of trauma, albeit a superficial appearance, consists in the content of the imagery. The *genuine* trauma is first registered in a suspension of language that is generated by the punctual effects of the silkscreen. But for Barthes, the matter of designating a limit of language is not so straightforward. If we return to Barthes's proposition, and look beyond the

unequivocal limit of language he seems to designate, a different view emerges. Immediately before the passage cited above, Barthes writes:

> Truly traumatic photographs are rare, for in photography the trauma remains wholly dependent on the certainty that the scene 'really' happened: *the photographer had to be there* (the mythical definition of denotation). Assuming this (which is in fact already a connotation), the traumatic photograph (fires, shipwrecks, catastrophes, violent deaths, all captured 'from life as lived) is the photograph about which there is nothing to say. [115]

This mythical notion of photographic testimony and its figure of the 'intrepid photo-journalist' in the popular press is precisely the connotative code that intervenes in the transmission of a given traumatic photograph. The trace in a photo of an actual experience of trauma "as lived,"[116] is compelling for the spectator not because the trauma itself is registered as a trauma, and not as Foster supposes because of the initial screening of a shock-effect, but because of a "myth of photographic naturalness" reinforced by the photograph's message of "having-been-there".[117] In the words of the prolific war photographer Robert Capa; "if your pictures aren't good enough, you're not close enough."[118] The measure of a "good picture" in this instance is none other than its power of proximity for the viewer.

In Barthes's study, this "myth" of nearness on which the effect of the so-called traumatic press photograph depends is clarified as a strategy of cultural coding. The most explicit cases of such coding are apparent in advertising images, which constitute the focus of Barthes's essay. But the presence of a code in the traumatic photograph, though not as conspicuous, is nevertheless decipherable. The truly traumatic photograph is only a theoretical possibility, or placeholder, for what Barthes calls the "this-side of language" or "pure denotation."[119] Strictly speaking, "this-side of language" is only theoretically or

logically possible since spectatorial experience begins with an irreducible "perceptive connotation" and its structures of language and categorization.[120] This act of framing that the photo necessarily accomplishes produces the photograph as a kind of epistemological threshold between a present spectatorial experience of a verifiable reality, and that reality's temporal and spatial distance from the spectator's certain gaze – what Barthes's calls an "illogical conjunction" which nevertheless produces a state of "spectatorial consciousness."[121] While Foster focuses tightly on what Warhol imposes on the screen of the shock image as a bridge to traumatic experience, Barthes suggests that the image itself prohibits genuine contact with the zone of the traumatic. Nevertheless, the press image employs a cultural code designed to mediate a quasi-traumatic experience through the mythical figure of the press photographer. This reading obliges us to look at the way in which the medium of photography and its use in the press function in relation to Warhol's practice.

Foster's understanding of traumatic experience does not account for the way in which a so-called "traumatic image" is read by a non-traumatized, photo-literate public, and coded for such consumption by the press itself. It is this "rhetoric of the image" and the way it emerges from both the photographic medium and the press's strategies of presentation that seems to underlie the discourse of "traumatic realism" even as it is excluded from such a discourse. When Barthes discusses the "rhetoric of the image" in his analysis of advertising photography, he clarifies the structural functions of such resources as they are suggested by the photograph. His interest is in exposing the means by which a rhetoric may be deployed to buffer the traumatic impact of a photograph for ideological purposes. These purposes must be brought into the discussion of Warhol's

engagement with the so-called traumatic photograph in order to examine the political dimension of his project – the way in which his appropriation is at once conscious and critical intervention.

> In the preface to his Mythologies (1973), Barthes states his own critical purpose:
>
> What remains, beside the essential enemy (the bourgeois norm), is the necessary conjunction of these two enterprises: no denunciation without an appropriate method of detailed analysis, no semiology which cannot, in the last analysis, be acknowledged as a semioclasm.[122]

For Barthes, the semiotic project, an analysis of sign systems, must in a sense undo itself if it is to remain socially useful. This strategy is suggested by the sign itself, which is constituted fundamentally as an "arbitrary" or "unmotivated" combination of signifier and signified.[123] Signs are employed (motivated) in press imagery to serve purposes, "the bourgeois norm" among them, and their functioning must be understood in order to challenge this norm. A *semioclasm* must be capable of diagnosing these uses of the sign, but without reinstating a sign system in service of an alternate "mythology." Toward the end of Mythologies Barthes analyzes a photograph from Paris Match, the illustrated weekly from his native France, which illustrates his aims. The photo, prominently featured on the cover of the magazine, is described by Barthes as depicting a black, French soldier saluting with eyes raised toward what Barthes supposes must be the French Tricolour. Barthes probes the photograph to expose it as an interested, nationalistic decoy designed to excuse France's colonial malevolence:

> I see very well what it signifies to me: That France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without any color discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro in serving his so-called oppressors. I am therefore again faced with a greater semiological system: there is a signifier, itself already formed with a previous system (a black soldier is giving the French salute); there is a

> signified (it is here a purposeful mixture of Frenchness and militariness); finally there is a presence of the signified through the signifier.[124]

Barthes wishes to separate this 'sign' of French unity into its constituent parts to de-nature it and reveal the semiological mechanism of its composition. Following Ferdinand de Saussure, Barthes's separation of this sign into signified and signifier reveals its contingency – the conditions of its production as a sign, or the way in which the raw visual material of the image is orchestrated in a signifying *practice* so as to appear to be necessary.[125] What makes this *visual* practice of signification so powerful, and so dangerous for Barthes, is the "presence" of a photographed subject which renders innocent a sophisticated expression of French national self-interest. This operation of de-coding for socially critical purposes, and redemptive ends, is for Barthes inseparable from the semiological project.

If Warhol's work is approached as a conscious manipulation of the press – his oeuvre regarded not as a simulacral image-screen, but as an archive with a decipherable institutional and material constitution – a different picture of his practice emerges. In this analysis, the images are allowed to circulate, not as detached signifiers but as explosive material realities with social consequences and critical potential; in Mark Seltzer's words, "literal technologies as letter bombs."[126] A close look at Life in the 1960s lends this metaphor disturbing credibility. (Fig.11) Furthermore, Warhol himself may be freed from the mimetic relays of Foster's "traumatic realism" into a more transgressive position. In this reading, elements of the "traumatic realist" analysis may be recuperated, but the sense of "realism" that emerges is of a radically different kind. As Seltzer notes, the materialities of communication, and their peculiar logics are not addressed in Foster's

reading because his Lacanian brand of "realism" produces "an endless turning from bodies to signs, the endless return of the body from the time of the sign."[127] This "toggling" as Seltzer calls it, moves from shock-effect to a hijacked and formalized version of the punctual encounter without stopping on the photographic medium and considering its complicity in this relay. As Rodenbeck has noted, Foster's adaptation of Barthes's *punctum* overlooks the "operational linkage between trauma and photography" that Barthes intended. In what follows, this peculiarity of the medium will be taken up, but also distinguished from the press archive's less psychological and more instrumental inscription of photography. It will be seen that Warhol's intervention of the popular press, conceived on the model of the archive, subverts the *optical* realism or positivism of the print media's tacit archival logic. Exposing this logic lends Warhol's practice a critical valence that is left out of Foster's "traumatic realist" account.

II. The Institutional Emergence of Photography and Warhol's Archive:

Photography has been a key medium for cultural theorists of trauma. In what has been seen so far in this study, the technology of photography is used metaphorically to describe the split subjectivity of traumatic experience (i.e. Seltzer's "photography at the level of the subject"), or else as a kind of philosophical tool that occasions a spectator's introverted confrontation with the cycle of life and death and the passage of time (i.e. Barthes's spectatorial consciousness). But in both cases the medium's materiality is highlighted. For Barthes, the photograph performs its philosophical function at the site (temporal and material) of the picture itself, or in the "Spectator's"[128] reception of the picture-taking moment. As Barthes writes the "*neome*" or essence of photography

consists in the spectator's consciousness of a "That-Has-Been," which "was possible only on the day when a scientific circumstance (the discovery that silver halogens were sensitive to light) made it possible to recover and print directly the luminous rays emitted by a variously lighted object."[129] The photograph's surface, when disrupted by the action of the *punctum* operates as a "skin" that is shared with the referent, or an "umbilical cord" linking a spectral "emanation of the referent" with the gaze of the viewer.[130] These biological and cybernetic metaphors are not just fanciful. The photograph is a product of a technological revolution that was developed out of the impetus of a positivistic culture.

To be sure, the striking feature of the photograph in the context of such a culture is its "indexicality" as explicated by Charles Sanders Pierce. According to Pierce, the photograph belongs to a class of "indexical" signs since it is causally related to its referent[131], whereas language and all spoken utterances belong to a class of "symbolic" signs since their reference is determined by other "symbols" which are related not causally but differentially according to conventions of usage.[132] Pierce does grant that photographs are also "iconic" signs, or signs which signify by virtue of their resemblance with an object[133], in as much as they exhibit a similarity with their referents. And as Thierry de Duve notes, a photograph may also be "symbolic" since the camera is used as a codifying device.[134] But the conventional or symbolic meaning a photo prescribes and its relationship of correspondence with a referent are of a peculiar kind according to Pierce. The distinctive feature of this correspondence in the case of the photograph is the circumstance of its production under which it is "physically forced to correspond point-by-point to nature."[135] This powerful relation of optical causality between the photograph and the site of its production is dealt with in different ways by different authors. We have

seen that, for de Duve the photograph's indexicality is referred to its referential structure, which activates a particular psychological response when related to the photograph's superficial structure. This is primarily an account of the psychological dynamics of photographic reception. In what follows, artist, writer and critic Allan Sekula's alternative treatment of the institutional and ideological uses of the photographic archive will be considered. The feature of indexicality in Sekula's research emerges as an institutional and specifically legal tool, enlisted in the state's task of law enforcement and social control. Against this background, a return to Warhol's work and the manner of his engagement with sources in the popular press will be pursued.

Three dominant themes addressed in Sekula's study will order this discussion of Warhol's work from the early to mid 1960s in relation to the press archive: a) evidence, b) countenance/physiognomy, and c) the logic of the archive. It will be shown that consideration of these themes generates a view of Warhol's practice as highly critical and deeply socially engaged, thus freeing it from the relays of "traumatic realism" to engage in a critique of the appearance of optical realism and its positivist, ideological suppositions in the press codes of the 1960s.

Warhol's most sustained engagement with Life's photographic material in the early 1960s came late in the magazine's history; past the point when circulation was at its height. Life's single most successful year had been 1956.[136] The magazine was then established as a major force in the field of popular news journalism. Delivered to over 50% of the country's adult population, it was arguably the United States' single most important printed organ of mainstream journalism.[137] Warhol's treatment of this archive of photographic material then, constitutes an intervention into a popular visual and

discursive matrix. His work's dialogue with a system of ideas both represented visually and fixed by means of captions, framing and other "connotative procedures" will be at the center of the discussion to follow. Far from simply reproducing a simulacral repertoire of popular press imagery, Warhol's work stages and interrogates a dialogue in which the entire country was engaged.

a) *Evidence:*

Sekula introduces his subject by outlining the deeply embedded cultural functionality of the medium of photography at the dawn of its invention. Far from providing simply a new means of image production for aesthetic purposes, the camera was quickly enlisted as a legal tool. In an almost self-congratulatory tone, one of photography's earliest practitioners William Henry Fox Talbot remarks in his notes on the utility of a plate in his book The Pencil of Nature (1844) called Articles of China (1844) (Fig. 12): "Should a thief afterwards purloin the treasures – if the mute testimony of the picture were to be produced against him in court – it would certainly be evidence of a novel kind."[138] According to Sekula, Talbot lays claim to a new "legalistic truth of an indexical rather than textual inventory."[139] With this we have a kind of institutional re-statement of the peculiar semiotic status of the photo or its "indexical sign-type." This aspect of the technology is taken up into a system of legal rationality. We might say, following Jurgen Habermas that the tool had a particular use as an instrument of verification in the process of "moral-practical rationalization."[140] The requirements and techniques of verification specific to this rationalized sphere would be served by the indexical strength of the photograph.

The function of the "witness" and "evidence" are central means of verification in the judicial sphere, and in both cases the camera could provide a new measure of accuracy. As Fox Talbot notes, the picture's "mute testimony" is compelling. The semiotic index does not find its place here in an abstract system of signs but rather in the institutional framework of a moral-legal enterprise. Indeed C.S. Pierce describes the peculiar connection between the photograph and the factual material world in no uncertain terms: "Photographs are very instructive ... having been physically forced to correspond point by point to Nature ... they belong to the second class of signs, those by physical connection."[141] For Pierce the photograph belongs to a class of indexical signs because it is in a very real sense dependent on the object that produces it; "directing attention to objects by blind compulsion."[142]

It is interesting in these remarks that metaphors of infirmity are enlisted in the description of this new technological power; "blind compulsion" and "mute testimony." The suggestion of course, is that human functions are being replaced or rather improved upon and rendered obsolete. The camera emerges as a kind of cognitive prosthesis. In this connection Sekula notes that the technology carried with it both a note of promise of "mastery over nature," but also a "threat of an incendiary leveling of the existing cultural order."[143] This penetration of the technology into an established cultural order seemed to suggest an imminent outmoding of human sensory functions. But of course this epochal shift has been absorbed. In the cultural theory of trauma, what Seltzer has called the "burgeoning materialities of communication" do seem to collapse the distance between human and mechanical imaging functions, but this basic intimacy is both pathological and highly, or consciously routinized. The technology has entered the economic sphere

and behaved as a commodity, just as it has entered the legal sphere and operated on the basis of legal norms and procedures as witness and evidence. The anesthetic age is upon us as Walter Benjamin noted in his famous essay on the "age of mechanical reproduction,"[144] but our autopilots are highly coordinated.

If we turn to the sources of Warhol's work from the early 1960s, the degree to which the visual world had been ordered according to these new principles of evidentiary force and its testimonial functions is overwhelming. (Fig. 13) In Life's coverage of the tragic murder of Southern civil rights activist Medgar Evers in the 1960s, Pierce's two paradigmatic cases of the indexical sign are combined in a dramatic photograph of a bullet hole in a kitchen window. Add to this the trail of blood from the scene of the crime and a complete set of quasi-legal exhibits is assembled for public consumption. Another recurrent motif in the magazine from this period is the natural disaster story. (Fig. 14) These features repeat a standard format wherein a photographed witness is inserted into the enveloping two-paged spread of a catastrophe. The witness's portrait is frequently set up in a kind of dialogue with the surrounding catastrophe such that the viewer can easily read a reaction. The figure of the witness however is invariably framed in a separate portrait from the beginning of the coverage, and followed in subsequent pages organized around the first-person narrative point of view. The testimonial function of the earliest instrumental uses of the camera, it seems, is inscribed in this journalistic mode of sensational photography. But the question arises; to what extent are these conventions of journalistic photography interrogated in the more or less direct appropriations of Warhol's from this period?

If we turn to Warhol's suicides in the disaster series, exemplified by Suicide (Silver Jumping Man) (1963) (Daros Collection, Switzerland) (Fig. 15), we see that the functions of testimonial photography are almost dramatized. In de Duve's typology the notion of the "impossible pose or gesture" is taken up as a part of the snapshot idiom. But this was also an aspect of more strictly artistic photographic practices as well. Henri Cartier-Bresson's notion of the "decisive moment," its striking visual poetics (Fig. 16), stands in an odd relation with de Duve's account of the snapshot. Warhol's Suicide (Silver Jumping Man) is a classic, if disturbing example of both an impossible pose and a decisive moment. Unlike the car crash disasters, these suicides in a frozen but repeated frame seem to exemplify the snapshot's characteristic of freezing natural movement or producing what de Duve calls "a petrified analogue of it."[145] But of course it is not the same kind of aesthetisized treatment of natural movement that we see in the photographic Modernism of Cartier-Bresson. The medium's uncanny ability to remove a moment from its lived durational flow and translate it into a syntagmatic architecture, is a starting point for the analysis of the snapshot paradigm. But de Duve's account of the psychological trauma that this structural feature of the photograph effects is only mapped onto Cartier-Bresson's poetics as a kind of contrivance. It seems there are divergent approaches to this capability of the camera; both aesthetic, such that the viewer is able to sustain an observational distance and retreat to a position of contemplative disinterestedness, and traumatic, as in the case of the press photograph de Duve uses as an example, as well as Warhol's appropriations of suicide shots.

But in all these cases the photograph's power of persuasion is traceable to the testimonial function, or witness function of the camera noted in Sekula's study. De Duve

describes the "unconscious conditions" of our psychological responses, and Cartier-Bresson describes visually the way in which a moment may announce itself at once as both unique and absolutely singular, and yet conditioned by a universal durational experience. But Sekula's evidentiary function seems to articulate the very material conditions of the possibility of either of these readings. The photograph had to prove itself initially as an instrument of verification before it could evolve its visual poetics and support a semiotic reading as an indexical sign-type capable of affecting trauma at the structural level. In this connection Sekula insists on a reading of the history of photographic Modernism in relation to the epistemological character of the medium that has accompanied it since its inception. The work of Cartier-Bresson then, might be read against the evidentiary force of the testimonial photograph as an instance of "poetic transcendence."[146] And de Duve's indexical sign-type and the paradox of the impossible pose, are referred back to Barthes's "mythical definition of denotation" introduced earlier. The "being-in-the-world" of the photograph that de Duve analyzes along structural and psychoanalytic lines is first a "being-in-the-world" of the phenomenon of photographic witness.

Against this background, Warhol's suicides seem like disturbing test cases of the camera's power of optical verification. Why did he pick just these photographs? If we refer again to Warhol's image bank in the 1960s a wealth of examples of this photographic exhibitionism present themselves. Life's "Pictures of the Week" section is a popular venue for photos of this sort. They are, however, dramatized instances of the "decisive moment" in the vein of the absurd and the macabre.(Fig. 17) A dog is caught only a few meters from the ground in a fatal parachute experiment gone awry; a man is

caught jumping to safety from a burning building in Brazil, but comes up short; a circus high wire walker is presented in a sequence falling to his death after a slight but fatal misstep. The photographic motif of the falling figure in the popular press was a commonplace. A public fascination (not altogether outmoded) with the recording capability of the camera to stop action seems primary, and all its most sensational applications were mined in the illustrated press of this period. While Warhol's work on this subject matter is usually referred to the theme of the tragic or traumatic repetition, it might just as easily be referred to this journalistic fetish for photographic novelty. In this context, Warhol's repeated frames of unhappily decisive moments serve to dramatize the pattern of this technological fetish, and satirize the extent to which the popular press was governed by an imperative to showcase a photographic capability.

This of course is the most trivial or idiosyncratic use of the mechanism of photographic witness at work in both the mainstream press, and in Warhol's oeuvre. The function of witness or testimony served a noble social cause in the pages of Life that Warhol engages as well. The narrative function of a pictured witness in the natural disaster testimonials is occasionally displaced onto the photographers themselves when more serious content is at stake. The photographer-witness is a heroic-type, as has been seen in Barthes's discussion, and this mythology too it seems, is sustained in the pages of Life. An illustrated story by Life's Don Uhrbrock serves as a good example of the myth's currency in the press of Warhol's time. (Fig. 18) Uhrbrock is shown with a companion, after a run-in with a so-called anti-civil rights "tough." The photographer was assaulted after capturing a sequence of compelling photographs of the 'tough's' attack on a black

civil rights worker. The story recalls Capa's directive to aspiring photojournalists: in this case Life's photographers, clearly, were both good and close enough.

In Loudon Wainwright's history of Life, the magazine's investment in the mythic figure of the photographer-witness comes across clearly in a chapter on the loss of Vietnam correspondent Larry Burrows (see Fig. 10). So integral to the functioning and spirit of the magazine was this figure that Wainwright argues Burrows's death on the job in Laos in 1972 marked the magazine's loss of no less than a crucial "part of itself"; a loss which foretold the magazine's imminent collapse in the same year.[147] Wainwright's moving memorial chapter describes the photographer in terms that recall Barthes's structural description of the folkloric hero. The inventory of characterial traits that define biblical and folkloric heroes equally for Barthes (i.e. the seeker's solitude and distinguishing physical characteristics)[148] emerge in Wainwright's description of a "shy, intense,"[149] teenaged Burrows: "A gawky London kid with bad eyesight and a stutter, came to the magazine as a sixteen year old in 1942." [150]

One might add to this list of mythic characteristics Burrows's time spent working as a film developer at Life's London offices for none other than Robert Capa himself; the prototypical hero-photographer.[151] But if these heroic "marks" of greatness were not enough, Burrows death, like Capa's on assignment in a war zone would certainly seal his tragic but prestigious place in the annals of photographic history.

While Warhol did not appropriate any of Burrows's work in particular, he takes up Life's pervasive mythology of the witness-photographer in a complex way in much of his production from the same era. His Race Riot (1964) (Daros Collection, Switzerland) (Fig. 19) works highlight the potential for press images in affecting and documenting

processes of social change. But in context, Warhol's source images are given an extremely heavily coded presentation that seems to compromise this potential. In her essay "Warhol Paints History, or Race in America," Anne M. Wagner points out a troubling connotation in this source material that should be brought to bear on the reading of Warhol's appropriation. She notes that the article's title "They Fight a Fire That Won't Go Out," printed above a photograph of a group of demonstrators gathered in the stream of a fireman's hose, coupled with a subsequent photograph of a wet, black man whose "face of rage" is emphasized in yet another bit of leading text, implies a kind of stereotyping of the black demonstrators. As Wagner notes: "Put these two images together ... and that fire takes on a face and a meaning: what burns, we are meant to understand, is the "hatred"... of the young, black male."[152]

Warhol engages this bias necessarily with his intervention by removing the captions and thus a powerful connotative frame for the photos. And there are other connotations in the article that he seems to take up as well. The article in the magazine, photographed for Life by correspondent Charles Moore, presents the recorded demonstration almost as a production of the testimonial function of photography. Several of the captions are highly reflexive and point to an intense awareness of the force of the press photograph's capacity as "witness" in the movement of history, and as a catalyst for social change. The headline above the images Warhol lifts from this article reads "The Dog's attack is the Negroes Reward."(Fig. 20) Warhol removes this caption and repeats the image in a loose grid and a more staggered and chaotic array of frames. What is the implication? It seems conceivable that this intervention were designed to explode the images out of their editorial, narrative presentation into a more inclusive visual space in

which the demonstrator's fight for 'visibility' is intended to operate.[153] So long as the witness-photographer acts as a mediator in this context, the social presence of the demonstrators is produced as a kind of remote battlefront from which Moore, the intrepid photographer has returned with evidentiary booty. Wagner makes a compelling case for a narrative interpretation of Warhol's source imagery that extends this reading. The narrative in question for Wagner culminates in a final frame that implicates the photographer directly. She notes that photo-essay's sequence closes with a frame that shows a police dog approaching the camera "with some fight left in him ... ready to take on Moore."[154] While this frame does appear in Warhol's work, stripped of the directive caption, the photographer's role is somewhat diminished or at least de-prioritized. In the absence of this heroizing presentation of the photographer-witness, the responsibility implicit in the position of the witness is transferred to Warhol's audience. Even the caption's designation of the "Negroes" victory seems to set up a distance between the magazine's audience and the site of the struggle which Warhol's manipulation begins to collapse.

The technology of photography, as Sekula notes, has been a key instrument in the administration and enforcement of law for the legal enterprise. Warhol's appropriation of photographic documents of a clash between demonstrators and law enforcement officers implicates itself in this history of the medium to be sure. But his "appropriative" act *per se* in the case of the Race Riot series is also of significance in this connection. Like Burrows, Moore was a major photographer for Life and for the history of photojournalism generally, and that of civil rights photography in particular. Warhol's appropriation of this particular award-winning photographer's work seems especially

bold. Not surprisingly, Moore pressed charges against Warhol after learning about the artist's use of his work from a newspaper review.[155] But when given the chance to resolve the conflict before Moore pressed charges, Warhol took the opportunity to deal the photographer another sleight. Warhol offered to settle by giving Moore a work from his Flowers (1965) series that was itself produced in violation of copyright regulations having been taken from a *Burpee* seed catalogue.[156] It seems then, that the artist was determined to operate as an agitator outside the law. For all his popular appeal, Warhol was engaged in a dialogue with the legal establishment, both through the content of his work and its subversive manner of production, which served in a very real way to frustrate the legal sphere's operations. Corresponding with the institution of "photographic witness," there is a legal definition of authorship, which Warhol seems to have been equally interested in challenging. In this sense then, Warhol's appropriative act wrested Moore's images of a civil rights demonstration from legal custody, and returned them to the extra-legal context in which they were generated and without which they would lose an aspect of their critical power. With his illegal appropriation of Moore's photographs, Warhol establishes a discursive position outside the framework of copyright regulations to address an issue of public concern. As a result, the press's monopolistic control over the representation of the civil rights conflict is challenged.

The subversive dimension of Warhol's appropriation of Moore's photographs would have been especially conspicuous in the 1960s during Life's constant but conflicted effort to represent the civil rights demonstrations. The discourse of the "Negro" for Life's white middle-class readership was a recurrent form of address in the publication at this time. In Gordon Parks, Life seems to have found a means of gaining

privileged access to the otherwise isolated "Negro" population. But the burden of this responsibility for one man to represent an entire social movement was unsustainable, as is always the case with initiatives of ethnic tokenism. The very title of one of Parks's feature exposés on the black underclass makes this painfully clear: "How it Feels to be Black."[157] In spite of the countless progressive voices in Life's star editorial roster, a bias is identifiable in the one voice that, according to Wainwright, consistently mattered most: that of Henry Luce, the publisher.[158] Recalling the publisher's frequent luncheon speeches of the 1960s to Time Inc.'s executives, Wainwright notes that Luce routinely tabled the same set of concerns; one of which was the question of "Negro responsibility."[159] The implication in this phrasing of course, is that the civil rights conflict was for Luce a question primarily of "*Negro*" responsibility and not white privilege, or worse – racism. And this tacit set of assumptions made its way into the magazine's coverage of the civil rights conflict as well. The bias in the editorial presentation of Moore's photographs has been noted already. But the treatment of Moore's Birmingham coverage was not at all exceptional. An investigative piece by Theodore White of 1963 entitled "Negro Demands: Are They Realistic?" focused, as indicated, on the problem of "black power and militancy"[160] rather than the legitimate claims of the militants in question.

The journalistic representation of race then, was a difficult business during Warhol's work on the Race Riot series. But the associated problems of *representation* taken up in his work have a deeply historical dimension. The earliest institutional uses of photographic representations of race may provide a helpful context for the analysis so far.

It is to these earliest institutional representations of race, and especially criminality in Sekula's analysis that we now turn.

b) ***Physiognomy/ Countenance:***

The intimate relationship between photography and the representation of race that Warhol's work seems to take up, may be referred to the physiognomic logic of the medium's early institutional uses. Sekula's study reveals the way in which the technology's institutional emergence was accompanied by a problem and subsequently resolved in paradigmatic terms by an interpretive strategy that the technology itself enabled. To begin with, the photographic archive in its formative stages was primarily concerned with portraiture, both criminal and bourgeois. Sekula notes that this dual use recast the status of painted bourgeois portraiture in the context of an inclusive archive that traversed social strata, while nevertheless reinforcing social inequalities:

> A system of representation capable of functioning both honorifically and repressively ... Photography subverted the privileges inherent in portraiture, but without any more extensive leveling of social relationships, these privileges could be reconstructed on a new basis ... photography came to establish and delimit the terrain of the other, to define both the generalized look – the typology - and the contingent instance of deviance and social pathology. [161]

This photographic rendering of the entire social body instituted what Sekula calls a "shadow archive" in which "the private moment of sentimental individuation ... was shadowed by two other more public looks: a look up at one's betters and a look down at one's inferiors."[162] But the evidentiary force of the photo enabled a means of confirming the direction in which one ought to cast these "looks"; the photograph would be integrated into the existing class order as a technology of social differentiation. In

principle, the archive could enable an exhaustive assessment of the social body in hierarchical or class terms. But such a massive calculation would require a solid basis for judgment. To this end, Sekula notes that a "hermeneutic paradigm" or interpretive methodology was instituted: "The paradigm has two tightly entwined branches, physiognomy and phrenology. Both shared the belief that the surface of the body, especially the face and head bore the outward signs of inner character."[163]

A conventional belief in this power of photography to interpret an outward physiognomic language for keys to inner character had found its way into the journalistic profession by the 1930s. In a pamphlet called "The Pictures of Time", Life's would-be third managing editor Joseph Thorndike articulates the belief in a kind of journalistic mission statement:

> As Time goes behind the statement, so Time's cameraman must go behind the pose ... If the subject has a hook nose, a double chin, a cauliflower ear, the picture should show it. But it should go beyond physical characteristics, reveal what manner of man the subject is.[164]

Life's inaugural issue in 1936 was, in part, a result of an appetite to more fully exploit this interpretive power of pictures than Time's traditional "specialist" format would allow.[165]

The camera's "mute testimony" then, was premised on an optical realism that was nourished in the nineteenth-century legal enterprise before it emerged as a journalistic truism in the popular press. If we return to Warhol's Race Riot (see Fig. 19) series and consider the way in which this notion of photographic realism might have been taken up or interrogated by him, some interesting insights emerge. To begin with, the repressive and honorific functions of photography are implicated in what has been seen of Warhol's

work so far. Wagner points out that, in Warhol's work and Moore's photography equally, race is given its "historical form."[166] Wagner argues that the camera's effect of fixing and embodying the black male as a victim, made ready for the gaze of a largely white-middle-class readership, sets up a dynamic in which the demonstrators are doubly oppressed: first physically by the police, and then by the authoritative "gaze" of the magazine's readership.[167]

But beyond this relatively straightforward photographic framing (and re-framing) of race, there is perhaps a more insidious way in which Warhol takes up the issue; and especially its discursive context in the popular press. During the time of the Birmingham "race riot" coverage in Life, a multi-issue series on the body was run as well, in which the vocabulary of optical realism was disseminated to illustrate developments in biology and medical science. At the time, the behaviorist psychiatric model of B.F. Skinner was a virtual orthodoxy in the U.S. scientific community. The correspondence between the behaviorist premise and the physiognomic principles at play in nineteenth-century photographic realism are plain to see. Just as outward signs of inner character were thought to announce themselves on the surface of the photograph, the behaviorist model in psychological research insisted that psychological phenomena could be ordered according to a typology of outwardly visible behavioral modes.

These positivist trends in social science were encouraged by staggering advancements in medical science. Coverage of the "biological revolution" in Life magazine at the time of Warhol's work on the Race Riot series was ubiquitous. One feature seems especially relevant in this context. Developments in cosmetic and reconstructive, plastic surgical procedure were reported in an issue of the magazine

during the time of Warhol's work with the Race Riot imagery, which recasts the question of "race" and its representation in the series in disturbing but socially engaged terms. After an article in the magazine on various 'state of the art' transplant procedures, a small piece on a new skin-grafting technology appears.(Fig. 21) If we read the Race Riot series through this emphasis in the magazine on the "biological revolution" in general, and the skin-grafting breakthrough in particular, a new valence for the work emerges. In one of the frames a police dog rips at a black demonstrator's pant leg tearing it away to reveal the man's vulnerable flesh. This intervention into the social body by an unchecked disciplinary apparatus seems to parallel the new surgical interventions announced in the same pages of the magazine both structurally and ideologically. Human tissue is cast at once as an instrument of social change, as the demonstrators' fight for 'visibility' attests, and a mastered medium in medical science.

Indeed, the figure of the surgeon was a mainstay in Life's pantheon of photogenic subjects. Life's very first editorial photograph released in 1936 showed a surgical-masked doctor triumphantly holding up a newborn baby he had delivered only moments earlier. The title and caption etched the magazine's self-definition in stone: "Life begins ... The camera records the most vital moment in any life: Its beginning."[168] In Walter Benjamin's famous essay on "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," the cameraman is associated with the surgeon. In both cases an intentional operation is conducted on a field of newly available 'matter':

> The magician and the surgeon compare to the painter and the cameraman. The painter maintains in his work a natural distance from reality, the cameraman penetrates deeply into its web. There is a tremendous difference between the pictures they obtain. That of the painter is a total one, that of the cameraman consists of multiple fragments which are assembled under a new law.[169]

In the same way, Warhol's work may be regarded as an attempt to penetrate deeply into the phantasmagoric web of imagery presented in the mass-media in a heavily coded form, in order to manipulate and subvert those very codes. Where Barthes advises that a semiology must generate a semioclasm to retain critical value, Warhol seems to recommend more of a *semectomy*. In the process, the visual 'skin' that presents itself to Warhol's instruments proves to be a highly constructed object - both social and scientific. Warhol's practice against this background appears as a conscious effort to resolve the social body into its constituent parts and reassemble it in such a way that the "reality" constituted by the apparatus of the camera appears as highly contingent, that is, determined by equally contingent, and thus changeable social and cultural forces. It is interesting to note in this connection, that Warhol's Race Riot series is coloured over in only three colors – red, white and blue. (Fig. 22) There is a kind of collision then of the political iconography registered by this patriotic skin, and the dark tones of the demonstrators's faces that remain impervious to the colour scheme. This gesture of Warhol's returns us to Barthes's analysis of the Paris Match cover photo of the black French soldier: Warhol hauls in a comparable American mythology to render it as yet another skin, and one in which the demonstrators cannot find comfort and their sought after *visibility* - a necessary condition for the efficacy of any political struggle.

The structural echoes between Warhol's practice and the surgical breakthroughs of the day may of course be regarded as merely metaphorical. But Warhol's metaphors seem to be directed at socially redemptive ends. By invading the domain of a kind of popular, but authoritative, social-scientific journalism with a principle of metaphoric conversion, Warhol makes a powerful claim for the imagination, and instantiates its

transformative potential in his practice. Warhol's silkscreen process bears an uncanny resemblance to the procedures of the newly developed skin-graft. The sheet of transplanted skin is passed through a press, which makes of an integrated plane of tissue a kind of net with a regular pattern or grid of small spaces. It is these spaces, which allow the transplanted skin to adhere to the body in a new location, just as the silkscreen process passes inks through a net to register a finished image. In this respect Warhol renders the 'skin' of the demonstrators in his Race Riot as a kind of moveable screen. One wonders whether Life's editors felt the same compatibility – it's not out of the question.

Whereas Foster emphasizes the Lacanian "screening of the *Real*," in this reading the "real" is conceived as a social and scientific project - carried out by instruments with both "honorific and repressive functions." Indeed this surgical valence might equally be found in the celebrity portraits mentioned above. The controlled, sterile environment of the operating theatre is revealed as but one instance of an expansive cosmetic procedure conducted on the wider social body with instruments of visual reproduction employed to ideological and cultural ends. In this reading, the 1960s reality with which Warhol was concerned is exposed as a highly coded and ultimately interpretive *construction*: not strictly *a* reality, but rather a multiplicity of *realities* naturalized by the press's sophisticated signifying practices and the technologies that underlie them.

But as Sekula notes, the discourse of "realism" even in the relatively stable positivistic culture of the nineteenth-century scientific community was by no means "monolithic."[170] The problem that the photographic archive generated is described by Sekula in terms of "the messy contingency of the photograph" and the "sheer quantity of

images."[171] The task of solving these problems was most urgent in the field of criminology, and thus the criminal "mug-shot" became a prime object of investigation. This would require procedures of standardization developed famously along two divergent lines by Alphonse Bertillon in France and Francis Galton in Britain. These projects, while methodologically distinct as Sekula points out, were both: "committed to technologies of demographic regulation; to quarantine permanently a class of habitual criminals, and to intervene in human reproduction by means of public policy encouraging the propagation of 'the fit' and the elimination of 'the unfit'."[172]

The photographic archive in the hands of the French police led by Bertillon would be organized into a massive statistical databank from which the "contingent instance" could be retrieved for purposes of comparison and verification. Galton's eugenic aspirations would mine and manipulate the archive for its latent, but empirically verifiable "biotypes"; "the Jew", "the criminal", "the genius", and so forth. Bertillon's procedures would involve what Sekula calls "a massive campaign of inscription ... and transformation of the body's signs into a text that pared verbal descriptions down to a denotative shorthand linked to a numerical series."[173] This system of classification was designed for retrieval and identification rather than to produce an ideal typology. In Bertillon's system, photos were filed according to an "anthropometrical signalment" developed on the basis of eleven standard measurements, a written description of distinguishing marks, and the "mug shot" showing both front and side views.[174](Fig. 23) Galton's procedure was of a different kind. The "composite method," regarded by him as an "epistemological tool," was designed to produce a kind of "real generalization" out of a process of successive registration of photographed types.[175] The composite photos

Galton produced would render the sought after "type" as a distinctive set of 'strong' physiognomic characteristics registered clearly on a single photographic print in which 'weaker' characteristics would also appear, but indistinctly in a blur. (Fig. 24) Sekula points out that these two approaches were based on two different solutions to the problem of verification presented by the archive's sheer volume and "messy contingency." While Bertillon's solution proposed a system of individuation with strict measures of case-by-case identification and "inscription," Galton's composite system was designed to produce a genuine abstraction from visual data. While Galton made a strong "realist" claim for the optical testimony of the camera as a means of describing identifiable types, Bertillion's system was premised on a "nominalist" conviction that such "types" were ultimately constructed abstractions.

In spite of their differences, in both cases a kind of tautological reasoning and general belief in the evidentiary power of the photograph was employed. As Sekula notes, Galton's belief in hereditary types was reducible to a circular claim that "a reputation for intelligence begets intelligence."[176] Similarly, Bertillon's system of identification was based on a comparative operation in which an arrested criminal body was identified as such on the basis of its point-by-point visual correspondence with a photographed body "that had already been defined as criminal."[177] Beyond this tautological justification for the optical realism of the camera, the two approaches shared another important feature. In both cases, organization and differentiation required that an "average man" be determined against which "standard deviations" could be measured. In Galton's case, this average would be used to position biotypes hierarchically, and in Bertillon's system speedy retrieval of individual files was facilitated by a tri-level, hierarchical classification of low,

medium and above average physiognomic types. Foundational work for both Bertillon and Galton in this respect was conducted in France by Adolphe Quetelet. The "average man" would emerge from a binomial distribution of aggregated social data thereby confirming the vision of a rigorous statistical social science. Interestingly, this quantitative procedure of social description took as its key indicator "criminal statistics." As Sekula notes, "moral-statistics provided the lynchpin for [Quetelet's] social physics" since "quantitative description took criminal statistics as a starting point for a description of urban living as a whole."[178] The "look up at one's betters" and "down at one's inferiors" was ultimately to be determined by a statistical 'look' at the criminal element.

Against this background Warhol's Thirteen Most Wanted Men (1964)(fig. 25), produced contemporaneously with the disaster imagery and the Race Riot series seems to re-cast the figure of "notoriety" taken up in Foster's reading of the work. To begin with, the mug-shots reproduce Bertillon's system of standardization in their front and side views. The clinical organization of these photos in their original state seems to have captivated Warhol. As is well known, the series was controversially intended for display at the World's Fair in New York. It is possible that this amounted to a kind of satirical nod to the international success of the Bertillon system. But this connection is deepened in another respect. One distinctive feature of the mug-shots in Warhol's production of this period is their relative neutrality. That is, they are less manipulated or transformed than any of the other works. While most all of the work in the disaster series is at least doubled, if not repeated in an array or on a grid, and coloured, the Thirteen Most Wanted Men are transferred directly without manipulation into the silkscreened form. To develop the surgical metaphor – Warhol's procedures were relatively 'non-invasive' here. To

begin with, the images are bi-sected into a frontal view and a side view, which may have satisfied Warhol's taste for this gridded form. But another possibility presents itself in light of Sekula's research. It was seen that the binomial distribution of Quetelet developed its "social physics" on the basis of criminal statistics. In this connection, it seems as though the neutrality of the mug-shot works in Warhol's production of this period might have been intended to represent the criminal as a kind of unit of social measurement against which both the anonymous disaster victims and the celebrities can be measured as relative 'photographic' types. The system of individual inscription upon which Bertillon's system was based can thus be read into Warhol's entire production from this period. Foster's figure of "notoriety' in this reading is recast in individualistic terms as are the celebrities. In all cases, the silkscreens may be read as efforts to individuate the instances of the social body deemed noteworthy by the illustrated press.

Further correspondences turn up if we consider the celebrity portraits and the Elvis (1963) (fig. 26) series. Also, Warhol's Marilyn Monroe's Lips taken up earlier (see Fig. 7) in connection with de Duve's movement of de-cathexis and hypercathexis may be given a less melancholic interpretation in this context. Bertillon was said by Sekula to have "tamed the contingency of the photograph" in two directions; both internally and externally. The binomial distribution was designed to organize the photographed instance in a universal, hierarchical scheme. But Bertillon also developed a system of "morphological" classification based on studies of parts of the criminal portrait; a sort of "comparative anatomy" designed to produce a "strictly denotative vocabulary."[179] These studies were responsible for physiognomic inventions such as "the criminal ear." (Fig. 27) If we compare Warhol's Marilyn Monroe's Lips to this aspect of Bertillon's system

the melancholic fixation is converted into a satirical, positivistic investigation of the sensual countenance favored by Hollywood casting agents. In this reading, a contemporary instance of Bertillon's "speaking likeness" is extracted by Warhol from the visual fodder of the entertainment industry, an industry that is clearly still committed to notions of both "the average man," as well as standard deviants in the form of 'usual suspects.' This last is perhaps best exemplified by the Elvis series. Elvis is cast in this role as a self-destructive "Half Breed" in the movie Flaming Star (Don Siegel, 1960). Galton's composite strategy comes to mind here as a distant echo. The overlapped forehead sections of the prints form a kind of heavy, primitive brow that speaks to the racial stereotyping the film takes as its theme. Of course, with his gun drawn, Elvis's character appears at the same time as an ethnic type and a criminal type. As Sekula notes, such equivalences were standard in Galton's results; as in his composites of the poor and the criminal deemed to be physiognomically indistinguishable.

Warhol's resonance with Galton's virtually axiomatic procedure may be best illustrated, however, by Natalie (1962) (The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh) (Fig. 28). The movement of the composite process is rendered with a kind of necessity as the array converges toward the bottom of the print. Galton's contrived logical inference is herein given a clumsy pictorial expression. From the philosophical quandary of de Duve's space-time conjunctions, we have moved to a nearly geometric model of a pictorial manifold in which contradictions are forcibly resolved, if they are considered at all, in an archival space-time and its movable parts.

c) *Logic of the Archive*

Finally the "logic" of this photographic archive in Sekula's study is described as one in which play, substitution and opticality are the key terms:

> The paradigm of the archive forms a discourse governed by relatively weak narrative arrangements and dominated by a principle of play, substitution and voracious optical encyclopoedism.[180]

We have seen the way in which this logic was set to work in the case of Bertillon and Galton's respective projects of demographic control. As is the case with all Modernist realisms, a principle of equivalence or identity is central to the functioning of such a project. Bertillon's system of inscription was designed to "arrest the referent" by a straight, if tautological comparison, of two photographs of the offender taken at the time of his first and subsequent arrests – an equivalence which confirmed the criminal identity of the suspect. For Galton, an equivalence was sought through the process of successive registration and realized in the composite image of a "biotype." If we consider the way in which this principle of equivalence and its operations of substitution and play appear in Warhol's production of the period in question correspondences appear instantly. Warhol's pattern of repetition is, for Foster, a clear visual statement of the discursive description of trauma as repetition. It is meant to indicate a kind of visual hiccup that is repeated in a futile effort to assimilate the shock of a suicide, a car crash or a lost screen idol. But if we consider the logic of repetition in the archival paradigm, Warhol's technique of repetition may be read as a dramatization of the principle of equivalence for the purpose of identification. If we compare his treatment of the images with their original treatment in the illustrated press as well, Warhol's repetition seems to expose the contrivance of the archival logic by imposing it on the narrative habits of sensational

reportage. Again, the Barthesian project of a *semioclasm* is underscored in this gesture. Freed from the structure of the illustrated press's closed narrative system, Warhol's images are plunged into another structure that enlists the power of visual identification in its archival function, as an equivalent though less seductive means of systemic closure.

This brings us to one last example of Warhol's work from the 1960s: Twelve Electric Chairs (1964-5) (The Stephanie and Peter Brant Foundation, Greenwich, Connecticut) (Fig. 29). In the pages of Life in the 1960s, the chair is a clearly over-determined theme. In Foster's "traumatic realist" reading, the electric chairs may serve as a clear cut expression of the theme of shock – the first, conventional shock of the press photograph generated in a culture of the spectacle, which is followed by a second, "traumatic" blow delivered in the repetition and screening of the initial shock. But the chair is a multivalent sign, to be sure, in the illustrated press of the 1960s. After John F. Kennedy's assassination, in the Nov. 29, 1963 issue of Life an editorial/eulogy was run along with a disturbing photograph of the vacated car seat in which the President was shot.(Fig. 30) The electric chair itself appears in several articles on the practice of capital punishment during this time to represent a current (and ongoing) debate. A kind of typology of chairs had already grown up around the President's iconic 'rocker' during the honeymoon phase of his love affair with the American press and their readers.(Fig. 31) The image of the chair carries all of these valences in this most conspicuous press outlet of Warhol's time, and should thus be brought to bear on the reading of his series.

Foster's interpretation of Warhol, and its Lacanian description of a compulsive, repetitive screening of the *Real* loses sight of this rich network of meanings. The structure of trauma in Foster's reading (repetition, intrusion, compulsion) is abstracted from the

experience of trauma coded in the popular press. The experience of trauma in Foster's reading is formalized and thus emptied of its specificity and its power to represent – not as a mere sign but as a signifier that is worked through by a culture and history to signify in different and interested ways. These conditions of the production of the sign appear more fully in the model of the archive as an inventory of both signs and signifying practices of which "trauma discourse" is only one. The critical potential of Warhol's work seems to depend on the prospect of including as many valences as possible in his mosaic of troubled and unstable signs. If we are to learn from his example, then Warhol's practice must be conceived not as a mimetic-compulsive processing of an imposed media environment, but as a conscious and 'surgical' manipulation of that environment. It is not a question of the choice between a "referential" or a "simulacral" Warhol since in both cases it is his *work* that is the ultimate 'subject.' And if his work is to recuperate its critical potential, and claim its value as a promise of transgressive possibilities in the sphere of art practices, then Warhol as an ideal psychological subject of trauma ought to be banished from the work to let it stand for whomever and whatever it can.

As discussed earlier, in Sekula's study, the archive is described as both a threat and a promise; a threat of "conflagration and anarchy" and a "promise of mastery over nature". It seems as though the interpretation of Warhol's work (and his person) along the lines of "traumatic realist" discourse delivers just this kind of 'promise' in its diagnostic procedures – subduing his productive threat in the process. But in what has been seen, if we remove Warhol from the position of 'patient' and instead give him the agency that his deft mode of anarchic doctoring seems to demonstrate, the work exposes the mechanisms by which a promise of mastery over nature in fact constitutes its own formidable threat.

The threat of what Eugène Atget famously called a "photographic editing of society"[181] is ever present in our current environment of ubiquitous surveillance and legislated profiling. The skin of Sekula's nineteenth-century archive has hardened, it seems, and normalized its "logic." But as the system of bureaucratic rationalization is moved along by its ever improving technologies of identification and its Orwellian threat of social control increases proportionally, artists working in Warhol's long shadow to manipulate and frustrate these machinations need his work as a precedent. Not a precedent of "shocked subjectivity", but one of well-directed, jarring social criticism.

Chapter Three: The Politics of Visuality/Andy Warhol's America

I. From the 'Is' of Artistic Identification to the 'Ought' of Political Representation:

In 1989 the analytic philosopher and art critic Arthur Danto, writing in The Nation, declared that Andy Warhol was "the nearest thing to a philosophical genius the history of art"[182] had ever produced. Although the statement was made for a mainstream press readership, it was a conclusion that the distinguished American philosopher had reached after twenty-five years of careful reflection on the logical status of Warhol's artistic propositions. Danto's considerable contribution to the critical reception of Warhol, and indeed the practice of art criticism generally, began in 1964 with the publication in The Journal of Philosophy of the groundbreaking essay "The Artworld."[183] In this essay Danto argued that: "in the end, what makes the difference between a *Brillo Box* and a work of art consisting of a *Brillo Box* is a certain theory of art ... the theory that takes it up into the world of art, and keeps it from collapsing into the real object which it is."[184]

Danto's argument rests on a basic distinction between what he calls the "is of artistic identification" and the copula's standard use in predicative or existential statements.[185] The problem that this distinction is intended to resolve is illustrated in Warhol's oeuvre for Danto, but also in the work of his contemporaries' Robert Rauschenberg, Roy Lichtenstein and Jasper Johns.[186] In all of these cases, but paradigmatically in the case of Warhol's Brillo Boxes (1964) (Collection Karl Stroher, Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstaedt) (Fig. 32), predicative and existential uses of the copula cannot ground a distinction between the work of art and the objects it resembles. For Danto the 'is' of artistic identification allows a speaker to consistently say that Brillo

Boxes *'is'* a work of art, and that its name-sake *'is not'* even though they are perceptually "indiscernible."[187] If an object is identified meaningfully as a work of art for Danto, it is because the speaker that has identified it as such declares it to be something that exceeds its perceptual characteristics; namely an object whose ground of explanation and possibility consists in the vocabulary, history and aesthetic criteria of the "artworld." That is, for Danto "the role of artistic theories ... as always [is] to make the artworld and art possible."[188]

But the "artworld" for Danto is not a simple, that is, a fixed ground of explanation for a given work of art. Rather, once an artwork is taken up into the "artworld", and its properties are deemed "artistically relevant," the entire "artworld" is profoundly changed. He writes: "The greater the variety of artistically relevant predicates, the more complex the individual members of the artworld become; and the more one knows of the entire population of the artworld, the richer one's experience with any of its members."[189] What is particularly revolutionary about Warhol's work in Danto's reading is that its artistically relevant predicates are predicates that can also be sensibly applied to objects outside the artworld. Given the case of Warhol's work, Danto suggests that anything at all can be taken up into the artworld's institutions and discourses and made meaningful for art history.[190] As David Carrier notes in his essay "Danto and his Critics: After the End of Art and Art History," this is more than a claim about the "institutional" apparatus of the artworld, it is a "metaphysical claim" about nothing less than how the world is given in language and transformed by it.[191] So it is that the insights developed out of the argument in "The Artworld" are expanded into a sweeping ontological theory of art in Danto's The Transfiguration of the Commonplace (1981).

Since Danto's articulations of his artworld thesis in the 1960s, a great many art historians, critics and theorists have debated its merits and shortcomings. Notably, Paul Mattick has translated Danto's argument about the logical status of indiscernibles into semiotic terms. For Mattick the "real object" that Warhol's work "collapses back into" is constituted by sign systems rather than perceptual qualities. Mattick criticizes Danto for "enrolling Warhol in a philosophical cause"[192] by analyzing his work, and the status of artworld discourse, in the terms of analytic philosophy, or strictly with an eye to establishing linguistic and logical meaning. While he grants that it is difficult to discern Warhol's objects from their real-world templates given perceptual qualities alone, Mattick argues that the point of the Brillo Boxes "is not so much the difference [between the store bought product and Warhol's facsimile] as the more than visual similarity between the two which the differences set off."[193] While Danto wishes to establish a linguistic rule for distinguishing artworks from everyday objects, Mattick is concerned to show that it is precisely the collapse of this distinction in a semiotic field that Warhol's work serves to highlight. Mattick writes: "the Warhol brand ... makes possible the detachment of the *Brillo* (or other) logo from its original connection with a different product to demonstrate the centrality of such signs to our visual lives."[194]

What is crucial for Mattick is that the visual sign in Warhol's hands is revealed as a sign precisely by submitting to different uses without changing its superficial appearance or structure as a sign. As discussed in **Chapter Two**, Warhol's treatment of Life's photographic archive accomplishes its disruptive work by enlisting the magazine's photographic signs *in a different signifying practice*. Warhol's appropriation reveals that a given sign is "unmotivated" (de Saussure), and without a necessary connection to any

particular signified, until it is taken up in a signifying practice and made to look as though its meaning were necessary (Barthes). By taking visual material out of its context in the popular press, Warhol both re-motivates that visual material in his own signifying practice and de-naturalizes the popular press's original presentation. Having looked closely in **Chapter Two** at how Warhol's work provides an occasion for a reflection on the illustrated press's use of ideologically loaded photographic codes, I would like to consider the way in which Warhol's own signifying practice constitutes a counter-discourse that nevertheless remains within the sphere of popular visual culture and its elaborate system of signs.

If signs are only ever "motivated" by those who use them in signifying practices, then what might Warhol's motives have been? Furthermore, if Warhol does not fundamentally change the signs he uses, then just what constitutes their new use in his artwork? This last question is related to Danto's interest in identifying artistically relevant predicates. But while Warhol's value for art historians is more or less assured, one might still ask what kind of value, artistic or otherwise, might the work have had for him. While these questions might seem to reinvigorate the status of the author, or problems of intentionality, these are not their stopping-points; rather they aim to uncover the function or agency of authorship at a point in history where we might situate Warhol and within a set of understandings that we might reasonably ascribe to him.

For the purpose of the present chapter, what is especially valuable about Danto's thesis is his treatment of the logical status of "indiscernibles" or perceptually indistinguishable objects found both within and without the discourses of art and art history. While Danto focuses on Warhol's Brillo Boxes in his thought experiment, the

artist's treatment of the photographic archive in the popular press of the 1960s brings up the same issues. To be sure, photography occupies a crucial place in Danto's argument as well, marking as it does an epochal shift from the artworld's preoccupation with mimesis and imitation to a more inclusive concern with representation and reality.[195] In **Chapter Two**, the question of representation, and photographic representation in particular, was seen to be central in a consideration of Warhol's relation to the popular press. The "indiscernibles" considered in **Chapter Two**, were, on the one hand, Warhol's silk-screened representation of the public sphere in 1960s America, and on the other hand, Life's *photo-storied* representation of the same sphere. Perceptually, the description of race, celebrity and violence that Warhol makes available in his work is indistinguishable from Life's photographic description of the same phenomena. But by removing the image from Life's pages, Warhol encourages the viewer to consider the interpretational structures of such material – both within the artworld and in the ideological context of the popular press.

In what follows, it will be seen that Warhol's silkscreens provide more than just a description of the archival structure of Life's photographic material. First, his work seems to offer a more broadly historical description of the rapidly changing nature of representation in the popular press in an era whose journalistic market was preoccupied with emerging technologies of visual reproduction. In this connection, the relationship between Warhol's use of silkscreens and film on the one hand and Life's TV aesthetic on the other will be considered. To the photographic and institutional analysis in **Chapter Two** will thus be added an analysis of what seems to be a description in both Warhol's work and in the popular press of a transition from a photographic to a televised mode of

visuality. Second, Warhol's appropriation of elements and technologies from this expanded visual sphere seems to suggest that there is more than a mere descriptive impetus behind his work. In the second section of this chapter, it will be seen that in addition to the '*is*' of Warhol's description of the visual world, we might add an '*ought*' concerning how best to counteract the market forces and ideological regimes that structure such a field. In this connection Warhol's political agency in the context of the gay underground and its representation in the press will be examined. The analysis of these two aspects of Warhol's practice then, will develop out of a consideration of the context in which the artist worked, and the technological and social/ideological characteristics of his "artworld".

In "The Modernist Paradigm: The Artworld and Thomas Kuhn" Caroline Jones's essay on Danto's concept of the "artworld," the point is made that once a revolution in art (as in science) is absorbed in the discipline's institutions and discourses, the new description of the world that is thereby made available entails a prescription as well: to operate within the framework of the world so described.[196] In art, for example, the discovery of single point perspective served at once as a *description* of the world and a *prescription* for artists to operate within the epistemological framework of the Renaissance by respecting the established rules of perspective.[197] And in science, Einstein's discovery of the theory of general and special relativity forced subsequent theorists and practitioners to operate self-consciously from within their "relative-frames of reference."[198] In what follows I would like to explore the ways in which Warhol both describes a visual world, and operates prescriptively within it on the basis of his description by identifying and exploiting the political potential of the visual field. In

determining the technological and ideological means by which things become visible in this field, it will be seen that Warhol also marks a limit; namely the limit of what is deemed worthy of such public visibility. In identifying this limit, and bringing into view normally unseen aspects of life in New York in the 1960s, Warhol transforms the visual space he describes into a field of potential political action and implicates himself in this field as a representative political agent.

II. The Epoch of the Television: Benjamin and McLuhan:

In **Chapter Two**, the photographic element in Warhol's production from the 1960s was examined in an effort to open up Hal Foster's traumatic realist interpretation to a less psychological and more structural description of the mass media environment as it appears in the artist's silkscreens. Warhol's appropriation of photographic imagery from the illustrated press of his time seems to demand this kind of consideration. But by focusing on the photographic material in question, one risks reducing the analysis of Warhol's complex representation of the media environment to a medium-specific analysis of that environment's photographic constitution which excludes other factors. As Foster notes in his discussion, a range of particular imaging technologies used in the mass media are taken up in the artist's work. He writes:

> Warhol elaborates on our optical unconscious, a term introduced by Walter Benjamin to describe the subliminal effects of modern technologies of the image. Benjamin developed this notion in the early 1930s, in response to photography and film; Warhol updates it thirty years later, in response to the post-war society of the spectacle, of mass media and commodity-signs. In these early images we see what it looks like to dream in the age of television, Life and Time; or rather, what it looks like to nightmare as shock victims.[199]

In this passage Foster suggests a reading of Warhol that takes up the entire media environment, and by implication the peculiarities of the specific media involved therein. But as has been seen, his analysis of this mass-mediated image bank is limited to a discussion of its supposed shock effects. Benjamin is invoked in this passage to frame the discussion of the mass media in psychological terms; in terms of the unconscious and its role in the production of trauma. This use of Benjamin, it seems, is intended to justify the psychoanalytic, and specifically Lacanian framework discussed in **Chapter One** by linking the unconscious aspect of shock and trauma to the visual mechanisms of the popular press. But as discussed in **Chapter Two**, the visual is not an undifferentiated domain in the mass media, but rather a structurally analyzable construction in which, following Barthes, the visual may be resolved into autonomous but coordinated textual and photographic elements. And these elements are not necessarily generative of traumatic effects since, in most cases, they are presented in a narrative, ideological and thus integrative form.[200] Foster's focus notwithstanding, Benjamin seems to be interested in more than mass media's production of traumatic experience.

In **Chapter Two**, Benjamin's figures of the cameraman and the surgeon were used to analyze Warhol's manipulation of Life's photographic archive. In his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Benjamin situates these figures in the context of a broad historical analysis of the evolution of technologies of reproduction beginning with the Greeks. Although Foster's emphasis on the notion of the optical unconscious is trained on the *reception* of Warhol's work and its psychological dimension, Benjamin's historical materialist framework, if it is to be used sensitively, seems to demand a consideration of the conditions of the work's *production*, as well.[201]

By means of Benjamin's analysis, the photographic interpretation of Warhol's work seen in **Chapter Two** may be referred to a context in which photography was only one of several technologies competing in the emerging mass media market of the 1960s.

Photography and film are set in an historical context by Benjamin in order to trace the decline of the "aura" in art; a loss that results from the substitution of a "plurality of copies for a unique existence."[202] The gradual loss of the artwork's quality of "presence" is traced in stages for Benjamin, beginning with the Greeks' technologies of stamping and founding, followed by the woodcut, engraving and etching in the Middle Ages, and crucially, lithography at the beginning of the nineteenth century.[203] With this last technique, Benjamin writes, "reproductive technology had reached an essentially new stage" since, like the printed word, it could respond to an emerging market demand for the immediate "illustration of daily life."[204] When photography and then film followed, technologies of mechanical reproduction had, according to Benjamin, achieved a means of transmitting information that could "keep pace with speech."[205] This epochal shift is echoed in the thought of Barthes as well. As was seen in the preceding chapter, the relationship between text and image in his analysis of the press photograph is one of complicity; the photograph "innocents" the connotation of the caption. But he makes an even stronger claim, that this dependence of the caption on the photographic image constitutes a major historical reversal in which "the image no longer illustrates the words; it is now the words which, structurally, are parasitic on the image."[206] John Berger in his highly influential Ways of Seeing (1972), takes this conclusion as a starting point in his case against traditional art historical approaches to the image. His book opens with the sentence: "Seeing comes before words."[207] And Berger's introductory chapter concludes

with an *hommage* to Benjamin's foundational theses on the age of mechanical reproduction.[208] The visual environment for these authors is reconstituted by technologies of reproduction it seems, primarily as a result of the increased speed of the transmission and production of images they enable.

In Benjamin's brief sketch, there is a sense of historical inevitability. The sequence of events that he follows is described causally: "Just as lithography virtually implied the illustrated newspaper, so did photography foreshadow the sound film."[209] The consequences of these developments according to Benjamin are broadly historical, affecting more than just the status of art objects: "That which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art. This is a symptomatic process whose significance points beyond the realm of art. One might generalize by saying: the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition."[210] This separation of the work of art from the domain of tradition "reactivates the object reproduced" by allowing for the viewer's receptive process to unfold "in his own particular situation."[211] This new visual sphere, according to Benjamin, is one in which the work of art is invested with political power since it is no longer dependent on "ritual" contexts.[212] Once again, Berger takes up this formula in his book as a foregone conclusion: "The art of the past no longer exists as it once did. Its authority is lost. In its place there is a language of images. What matters now is who uses that language for what purpose ... the entire art of the past has now become a political issue."[213]

The analysis of **Chapter Two** must be set against this wider, and in some sense democratized visual field, characterized by the accelerated and variously *intended* delivery of information by a whole host of reproductive technologies of the image. When

Warhol takes possession of the material from Life's archive he is engaged in a transaction that must be situated in precisely this wider field of communication that includes but is not at all limited to photography.

In Marshal McLuhan's Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man (1964), the historical arch traced by Benjamin from the technologies of coin manufacture in ancient Greece through to the sound film, is reconsidered and extended into the period that provided the material and historical context for Warhol's production. For McLuhan the electronic age marks yet another epochal shift in the history of communication, and one of its chief instruments is the television. The course that Benjamin follows from the lithograph to the photograph, and finally the film, is extended by McLuhan with the TV, such that this new technology "reprocesses the film."[214]

This new electronic environment makes gains on the environment of film and photography in terms of speed of delivery but also, crucially, by filling out the visual environment with a more inclusive sensory experience and a corresponding demand by what McLuhan calls a "unified sensorium."[215] The television's combined audio-visual and, for McLuhan, even "tactile" nature, justifies its description as an extension of the human central nervous system.[216] But the photograph too is conceived similarly as an extension of the human sense apparatus beyond the simply visual. By granting access to the "sub-visual world of bacteria" and "capturing the inner gestures and postures of the body and mind," the camera, McLuhan argues, "yields the new worlds of endocrinology and psychopathology."[217] Given the analysis of **Chapter Two**, we may add 'criminology' and 'eugenics' to this expansive field of photographic applications. McLuhan concludes

on this basis, that photography must be considered historically in relation to other media both old and new and their effects on human sensory functions.[218]

In Warhol's production, or more to the point in his choice of *techniques of reproduction* and his choice of *media*, there seems to be a trace of this interest in a vast field of communicative practices and corresponding sense experiences. His silkscreen technique is inseparable from the photographic material that it reproduces, and this photographic material is in turn difficult to isolate from its material context, namely Life and that publication's relationship with photo history. But Benjamin's and McLuhan's conclusions about the *succession* of technologies of reproduction suggests that the illustrated press itself, and not just its photographic aspect, ought to be contextualized.

III. 'Video Killed the Radio Star': Warhol's 1960s and *Life*'s Death by Television:

In Warhol's time, Life could not ignore its compromised place in a new electronic media environment established by the TV. Just as the magazine showed signs of its consciousness of the importance of photography by inscribing the figure of the photographer-witness in its coverage, it seemed also to show a consciousness of its compromised status as a kind of industrial-age hold-over in a new age of instantaneous tele-visual reportage. This awareness of the new media terrain is indicated in a multi-page feature study on McLuhan in Life from 1966.[219] Five years later, in 1971, which was the year before Life's cancellation, there was also a special retrospective issue on the age of television, entitled "Twenty-Five Years of T.V."[220] This editorial effort to keep pace with, or at least cover the emerging electric age seems, in a sense, to have been a case of 'keeping one's enemies close.' The magazine's final collapse in 1972 was in large part

attributable to the viral popularity of television. Indeed with McLuhan we might say that the television accustoms the consumer to a total sensory experience to the extent that one "brings to print all their senses and print rejects them."[221] The demand for such sensory involvement that is met by television renders the print medium an insufficient substitute. The challenge television presented to the illustrated press was in this sense, nothing short of an evolutionary challenge. Life was left struggling futilely in the wake of such developments. In 1956, as Wainwright notes in his history of the magazine, although Life was at the top of its game with record sales, its doom was foretold by the collapse of Collier's; "the victim of constant and punishing competition ... as well as the increasingly ... persuasive salesmen from television."[222] In 1972, when this situation of competition had become untenable for much of the illustrated press, Wainwright notes that "Life was utterly washed up," having fallen victim to high production and mailing costs, and crucially the loss of "important blocks of advertisers ... convinced that their money was better spent in television."[223]

Throughout this twilight period there were conspicuous and routine editorial expressions of the magazine's difficult relationship with the electronic age. During the 1960s especially, the magazine's presentation of photographs was often modeled on a kind of TV aesthetic characterized by sequential frames and narrative action. Examples of this type of coverage were seen in **Chapter Two** in Charles Moore's photographs of the Birmingham riots. But most disturbing, perhaps, is Life's historic presentation of the Kennedy assassination taken from the eighteen-millimeter "Zapruder film."(Fig. 33) Acquired by Life's Richard Stolley from Abraham Zapruder at $150,000 dollars for exclusive use in the magazine's coverage of the assassination, the footage was presented

in a sequence of thirty-one frames that responded to the public's desperate appetite for accurate and up to date information.[224] Wainwright notes, interestingly, that Life's readership responded supportively by mail in greater numbers to this issue than any before it in the history of the magazine: "Life's treatment of the tragedy touched a deep need. People needed more than television's marvelous witness; they seemed to want a more or less permanent record of such an event."[225]

The magazine of course stood to benefit economically from its exclusive rights to the footage. But Wainwright reports that the purchase of the rights to the Zapruder tape (for television and film as well as print) by Life's publisher at Time Inc. C.D. Jackson, was motivated primarily by a desire to keep the assassination from being viewed on television "at a time when the country was in anguish."[226] The frame-by-frame presentation in the magazine, Wainwright seems to suggest, protected the country from the shock of a real-time replay of the event, while nevertheless representing the assassination as a significant historical event by situating it in a temporal sequence. The devastating content of the images demanded a narrative presentation even as the magazine's readership had to be shielded from the full impact of the event in real-time.

Warhol's treatment of this national loss is similarly sensitive to the profound shock of the actual spectacle of the assassination. His Sixteen Jackies (1964) (Walker Art Centre, Minneapolis) and Nine Jackies (1964) (The Sonnabend Collection, N.Y.) (Fig. 34) follow Jacqueline Kennedy through alternating frames in which she is shown mourning the loss of her husband and smiling in happier times. This transformation obliquely references the national experience of loss through the figure of the mourning First Lady. In her essay "Warhol Paints History, or Race in America" discussed earlier,

Anne M. Wagner argues that the limited use of narrative, sequential framing in the Race Riot series (see Fig. 19) and the images of Jacqueline Kennedy *exclusively* suggests that Warhol was "taken over by a special, unaccustomed purpose: to return narrative and temporality to his work, and thus to locate his work's narrative within the temporal world."[227] For Wagner, the special historical significance of these events demands a presentation that honors their unfolding in time. But the events in question, represented as they were in the pages of Life and perhaps in Warhol's work as well, also refers to the presence of television in the marketplace, and the demand it generated for the instantaneous transmission of the news. Just as the police dog's lunge toward the protester in the Race Riot series symbolizes the movement of antagonistic social forces, in Sixteen Jackies the entire country's transformed emotional life is animated in the First Lady's passage from sorrow to joy. These works are historical, to be sure, but history itself, or its presentation in the 1960s, was seemingly being reconstituted according to an emerging TV aesthetic and its peculiar mode of temporality.

But Warhol's works also slow these events down to a halt. They are animated only by the viewer's imaginative engagement. Just as the magazine protects the public from the painful sequence of the Zapruder film, stilling the event for the historical record and for the public's mass mourning, Warhol's work seems to respond to a need for contemplation in the face of the frenetic flow of televised history in the 1960s. The world that is accelerated by the television and other reproductive technologies of the image is slowed and made available to a reflective mind in Warhol's capture of tele-visual imagery by the silkscreen. The concept of the screen in this reading departs from what Foster describes in Lacanian terms as a *screening* of the *Real* (understood as trauma), to

take on a more technological and historically embedded meaning. Warhol draws our attention to the aesthetics of the ubiquitous *screen* of television, and thus articulates the changing technological conditions within the broadly visual domain of mass-mediated imagery in the 1960s. Furthermore, Warhol's use of a relatively low-tech silkscreen process seems to roll back the clock, nostalgically, to the simpler, slower times of the pre-photographic era.

Following McLuhan once again, one might extend this analysis of Warhol's reflection on televisual culture to the artist's celebrity portraiture. In McLuhan's chapter on television in Understanding Media, the claim is made that the celebrities who were nurtured in the era of film, faced a great difficulty in their adjustment to the television age and its increased viewer participation:

> It is no accident that such major movie stars as Rita Hayworth, Liz Taylor and Marilyn Monroe ran into troubled waters in the new TV age. They ran into an age that questioned all of the "hot" media values of the pre-TV consumer days. The TV image challenges the values of fame.[228]

The words of Marilyn Monroe for McLuhan are instructive:

> "Fame to me certainly is only a temporary and partial happiness. Fame is not really for a daily diet, that's not what fulfills you. I think that when you are famous every weakness is exaggerated. This industry should behave to its stars like a mother whose child has run out in front of a car. But instead of clasping the child to them, they start punishing the child."[229]

The scrutiny to which celebrities like Monroe and Taylor were exposed as a result of the ceaseless gaze of the television camera and a competing effort by the illustrated press to follow every detail of these stars' lives was, according to McLuhan, a result, at least in part, of the TV's effect of an intensified demand for viewer participation. As he notes, the "action" of film was no longer enough; viewers were interested in the TV's ability to

record a "re-action."[230] McLuhan cites some breaking research in the psychology of perception to illustrate his point. He notes that researchers found TV viewers would overwhelmingly fix their gaze on an actor's facial expressions even during the unfolding of an eruption of violent action, in hopes of registering a response to that action in the actor's faces.[231]

Life's coverage of the day-to-day affairs of celebrities in the 1960s seems to respond to this emerging need for empathetic engagement. But along side the almost constant coverage of war zones, mob violence and anonymous disasters, the representation of celebrity in Life and in Warhol's works stand in a relationship of tension. In light of the experiment cited by McLuhan, one might conclude that the celebrity portraits of the turbulent 1960s were probed by viewers for their traces of the country's contemporaneous spasms of violence. But they might also have provided a much-needed diversion and refuge from such violence. Warhol's portraits seem to follow both the catastrophic and intimate contours of public life in the 1960s. Where Life's photographers bring us behind the scenes during Elizabeth Taylor's time on the set of Cleopatra in an exclusive cover story on the actress's "coming of age in celluloid land"[232](Fig. 35), Warhol's National Velvet (1963) (San Francisco Museum of Modern Art) and Silver Liz as Cleopatra (1963) (Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto) (Fig. 36) taken from the same article, fix and intensify the episodes of her transformation from carefree child to leading lady. And of course, the magazine's coverage of Marilyn Monroe during her slow decline was unwavering.(Fig. 37) Monroe's tragedy, followed so closely in the popular press, is hauntingly echoed in the effaced frames of Warhol's Marilyn Diptych (1962) (Tate, London) (Fig.38) What McLuhan identifies as a peculiar appetite in the

age of television for full sensory participation is registered in Warhol's celebrity portraits through the traces of his sensory and emotional participation as well. The artist's focus in the work on the celebrities' expressive features, and especially the inflation and repetition of these features expresses both the public's and Warhol's need as well, for viewer participation in the reception of images in the mass media of the 1960s.

Of course these celebrity images are memorials too, as was discussed earlier in relation with Thierry de Duve's typology. And along with traces of Warhol's desire we may rightly read his process of mourning in the details of the portraits. But in light of McLuhan's analysis we may add to the standard memorial readings that concern the loss of life or innocence, a third lament for the loss of the film era's values of mythic celebrity and inscrutable fame. Warhol's work seems to function as both a personal expression of the experience of the mass media in the 1960s, and as a key to the changing nature of this experience in the age of television. The theme of loss in this reading thus has both psychological or personal, and technological or historical dimensions. With this loss though, there is a corresponding gain in the availability of visual material for uses such as Warhol's. Images normally lost in the ephemeral flow of television, are seized by Warhol and given a meaning that circulates within the public, visual domain, but nevertheless *for* the artist.

IV. The Gaze and The Homosexual: Warhol's Underground:

Among what Foster calls the "referential" readings of Warhol's work, he includes interpretations that seek to tie the silkscreens to the themes of celebrity and fashion, and the social milieu of New York's gay subculture in the 1960s and the place of Warhol's

Factory therein.[233] While Foster insists that the "most intelligent"[234] version of the referential interpretation of Warhol is Thomas Crow's, which situates the artist as a kind of social critic interested primarily in a critique of celebrity and consumer culture[235], this is only one of a great many "references" that the work makes. Foster's privileging of Crow's interpretation seems to derive from a basic sympathy with his fellow critic's goal. Both authors position Warhol *vis à vis* the mass cultural sphere at a critical distance: for Foster this distance is set up by the distinction between mere shock effects and genuine traumatic experience of the real, and for Crow a distance is presumed to function in Warhol's desire to show, beneath the surfaces of his work, "the reality of suffering and death."[236] In these readings, the simulacral surfaces and sign systems in Warhol's work are set against a reference to a more substantial reality that the work somehow exposes. The difference, as has been seen, is that Foster's reading seeks to mediate, by means of the concept of trauma, between the referential and simulacral dimensions of Warhol's work, whereas Crow's distinction is more oppositional and explicitly hierarchical, setting up "the reality of suffering and death" over and against the simulacral sphere of mass-cultural signs and their "complacent consumption.[237]

Both Crow and Foster avoid a rather obvious reference however, to a pervasive theme of sexuality in Warhol's oeuvre. As Paul Mattick notes in his essay "The Andy Warhol of Philosophy and the Philosophy of Andy Warhol," Crow only makes reference to the theme negatively, insisting that although an "erotic fascination" with Marilyn Monroe was prevalent among "male intellectuals of the fifties," Warhol himself as a gay man "obviously had little stake" in the sex-appeal of the movie star.[238] Similarly, Foster makes only a passing reference to the question of Warhol's sexuality, and a rather

denigrating one at that. Reflecting on Warhol's relation to the mass media's "prosthetic" bodies of adored public figures represented by the celebrity portraits, Foster suggests that the artist was himself "no prosthesis of desirability."[239] A growing body of literature that examines Warhol's work in the context of the gay subculture of New York in the 1960s, a sample of which appears in the edited volume Pop Out: Queer Warhol (1996)[240], suggests that this aspect of the artist's practice ought to be given its due. To exclude this line of inquiry, especially into the meaning of the celebrity portraits, from the considerable discourse around Warhol's work, as Mattick notes is: "to misunderstand profoundly the stake of the gay male subculture within which Warhol moved ... in female movie stars, as representatives of desire and desirability, of the artificiality of gender roles, and of the conflict between appearance and reality."[241]

A couple of these interpretations of Warhol's work will be considered in an effort to examine some of the ways in which his work functions not as a critique of mass culture generally but as a more precise critique of the representation of homosexuality in the mass media. In what follows it will be seen that Warhol's work makes use of the resources of mass culture in order to consolidate a gay identity in the public sphere and to challenge the mass media's habit of vilifying homosexuals, thereby limiting their possibilities for healthy identity formation.

To begin with, Mattick makes his case for an interpretation of Warhol in relation to the gay subculture of the 1960s by citing an often overlooked, but exceedingly helpful passage from Warhol's book The Philosophy of Andy Warhol. Mattick argues that the celebrity portraits ought to be considered as expressions of Warhol's "lifelong interest in

female sexual glamour precisely as separable from the woman's identity."[242] His claim is overwhelmingly supported by Warhol's own words:

> "Drags are ambulatory archives of ideal movie-star womanhood. They perform a documentary service, usually consecrating their lives to keeping the glittering alternative alive and available for (not-to-close) inspection."[243]

Warhol's interest in the figure of the drag queen is not difficult to establish. As Mattick notes, Warhol himself posed in drag for photographer Christopher Makos.[244] (Fig. 39) But Warhol's silkscreens as well provide ample additional evidence of this interest, most obviously in Elvis I *and II* (1963) (Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto) (Fig. 40), in which the actor's features are enhanced with applications of ink that suggest lipstick and eye-shadow. The celebrity portraits as well make use of the same strategy. Warhol's application of a kind of semiotic make-up is generous to say the least in Turquoise Marilyn (1964) (see Fig. 6); a strategy that is often interpreted as an expression of Warhol's interest in a camp aesthetic and the culture of kitsch, but may also refer to the drag-queen's performative and compensatory use of heavy make-up to contrive and express a feminine identity for a male body. Warhol's words seem to suggest that make-up functions for the drag, both as a celebratory expression of femininity and as a kind of defense against the scrutiny of a judgmental, straight gaze. The performer, after all, is both exhibited in a costume and withdrawn from full view behind the costume; "made available for (not-to-close) inspection" as occurs when the actor is on stage.

Mattick makes the further point that the figure in drag is given a powerful political function in Warhol's statement. As he notes, the artist clearly identifies the drag-queen as an "alternative"; an alternative that Mattick reasonably suggests is "cherished ... relative to straight, middle-class existence."[245] With this, the drag queen is to be

understood as a tool for the formation of gay identity in a culture that associates gender unreflectively with sex. Images of screen idols like Marilyn Monroe and Liz Taylor that function in the popular press as outlets for the envious projections of women and for the sexual fantasies of men are taken up into Warhol's work for a different use. As was seen in **Chapter Two**, the signs that circulate in the popular press and in Warhol's work as a result, are by the structural account, always unmotivated and available for use in any number of signifying practices. In the case of Warhol's representation of drags, as Mattick notes, the signs of mass culture "serve as means for the active construction of subjectivity."[246] To use Mattick's phrase cited above, there is a similarity between Warhol's portraits and the press and publicity photos from which they are made that "the differences set off." One and the same sign of female glamour is put to very different uses in Warhol's work and the popular press respectively. But it is just this adaptability of the sign, for the purposes of commercial promotion or gay male identity construction that Warhol's work both reveals and exploits.

Douglas Crimp, in his essay "Getting the Warhol We Deserve" takes this analysis considerably further. Warhol's treatment of the theme and representation of homosexuality is not exhausted by the celebrity portraits and their references to the campy aesthetics of the drag-culture. Following Richard Meyer, Crimp argues that Warhol's Thirteen Most Wanted Men (1964) (see Fig. 25) offers an insight into what is, in Warhol's oeuvre, a direct and scathing criticism of the representation of gay men in 1960s America. Following Meyer's analysis in the essay "Warhol's Clones," Crimp insists on an interpretation of Thirteen Most Wanted Men that turns on a double *entendre*. As Meyer notes: "It is not only that these men are wanted by the FBI, but that the very act

of "wanting men" constitutes a form of criminality if the 'wanter' is also male, if, say, the 'wanter' is Warhol."[247] This identification of homosexuality and criminality might even be referred back to the Race Riot series. (see Fig. 19) Anne M. Wagner points out that the clash of the civil rights protester and the police turns ultimately on a tension between the races represented, but it also seems to "racialize *masculinity*" by positioning the white lawmen with their dogs and phallic Billy-clubs as dominant forces advancing toward the emasculated black protester who can do nothing but submit as his pants are torn from his body.[248] If the celebrity portraits stage a productive process of gay identity construction, making the signs of gender available for such elective uses, the Race Riot series and Thirteen Most Wanted Men illustrate how the sign of gender can be destructively used to confirm a masculine state authority and criminalize the transgression of its normative codes.

Meyer's reading is all but confirmed by a homoerotic film Warhol made shortly after Thirteen Most Wanted Men was rejected from the 1964 New York's World's Fair, entitled Thirteen Most Beautiful Boys (1964).[249] To be sure Warhol's film production during the 1960s often dealt with the representation of homosexuality as in Sleep (1966) and Blowjob (1964).(Fig. 41) These were not isolated instances of Warhol's involvement with the gay subculture but rather representative examples of the kind of creative and subversive production encouraged in this subculture. As Crimp notes it was just this "queer milieu in which Warhol developed his interest in filmmaking."[250] Aside from the filmwork, it might even be said that Warhol's mere membership in this community, indeed the very existence of this community in the 1960s was deeply subversive. In their book Midnight Movies (1983), J. Hoberman and Jonathan Rosenbaum document the

turbulent history of the fledgling gay filmmakers' underground in New York at a time when the police were routinely making raids and arrests in the city's bohemian haunts in an effort to "clean up" before the World's Fair.[251] During one such effort on 3 March, 1964, two detectives raided a movie house in the East Village called the Bowery Theatre during a screening of Jack Smith's Flaming Creatures (1964) and impounded the theatre's projector and screen as well as a "newsreel" by Warhol entitled Normal Love (1964).[252]

The "glittering alternative" to straight middle-class life that the figure of the drag provides for Warhol thus appears to be one of a couple of alternatives, and a relatively frivolous one at that. The gay filmmaker's underground represents a decisive and organized effort in which Warhol participated, and for which he was persecuted, to set up a social and not just symbolic space at the margins of straight society, in which the construction and expression of *queer* identity could be actively pursued. This activity was carried on behind closed doors for the most part and out of public view. To be sure this would be a practical necessity for much of the 1960s given the climate of fear described in the following passage from a New York Times article of 1963 entitled "Growth of Overt Homosexuality in City Provokes Wide Concern":

> The overt homosexual - and those who are identifiable probably represent no more than half of the total - has become such an obtrusive part of the New York scene that the phenomenon needs public discussion, in the opinion of a number of legal and medical experts ... Inverts are to be found in every conceivable line of work, from truck driving to coupon clipping ... But they are most concentrated ... in the fields of the creative and performing arts.[253]

This attitude was not uncommon at the time. The homosexual community was regularly slandered, patronized and 'diagnosed' according to the conventional wisdom

concerning the deviant sexual conduct of "inverts". And the 'illness' was thought to circulate especially within the "creative and performing arts" community of which Warhol was a part. Life magazine's very first feature article on this perceived social blight appeared, incidentally, the very same year that Warhol produced his Thirteen Most Wanted Men for the New York's World's Fair. In an article of 26 June, 1964 entitled "Homosexuality in America,"[254] Life's photographers offered up a (poorly lit) view of the gay underworld that has all the grittiness and the air of criminality that is to be found in an article on the secret lives of Heroin junkies.[255] (Fig. 42) Life's goal was not so much to help the homosexual community claim their place in the public sphere but rather to bring the lurid problem to light in a manner both sensational and distorting. Not seen, or poorly seen, but powerfully suggested in the article, is that a large proportion of homosexuals move threateningly among the straight population unnoticed in all walks of life, and in the gay nightclub atmosphere that disappears into darkness in the photos. This treatment serves to generate fear of the unknown, rather than to produce a productive visibility for the homosexual community.

In such a climate of prejudice and fear, Warhol's work takes on an added social significance. Warhol's celebrity portraits, as tributes to the pantheon of the drag community's goddesses, and the Thirteen Most Wanted Men series as well as the abundant homoerotic filmwork of the 1960s all figure in this reading as very bold attempts to establish a self-styled mythology for the gay underground which might counteract the community's public condemnation in the press. The question of visibility, here, as in the Race Riot series, seems crucial. There is a tension in the celebrity portraits between the expressive quality of the loud colours that stand in for overdone applications

of eye shadow and lipstick and the concealment that such masks accomplish. This is a tension that is paralleled of course in the performance of the drag. And in Warhol's films, Blowjob and Sleep especially (see Fig. 41), the representation of sexual gratification is intimated but ultimately withheld from view. We do not properly *see* the sex act in Blowjob, and Warhol's voyeuristic gratification is only revealed indirectly in the camera's caress of the sleeping figure in Sleep. The Thirteen Most Wanted Men series similarly announces and conceals the sign of homosexual desire; desire is expressed in the double *entendre* of the work's title, and then arrested in the structure of the mug shot and identified as criminal. Warhol's simultaneous exposure of the psychic life and desires of a homosexual and the defensive concealment of such impulses stages a public debate about the status of homosexuals and offers it up for reflection.

In what has been seen, the public sphere emerges as a field of political possibilities to be realized by the use of technologies of visual reproduction. That is, the public sphere, as constituted by a vocabulary of visual signs is *co-extensive* in Warhol's work, with the visual sphere. Warhol's works derive their powerful meaning, at least in part, by "collapsing" to use Danto's word, into the popular visual sphere from which they are taken. The works serve to disrupt taken-for-granted systems of value and regimes of representation by circulating within the visual space carved out by the mass media as an irritant to just those systems of value and regimes of representation. It is necessary for Warhol's celebrity portraits, for example, to retain their erotic value for straight viewers in order for the full force of the drag's "glittering alternative" to appear. Similarly, the Most Wanted Men series must preserve its signification of criminality in order for the taboo of Warhol's desire to be properly understood. And were it not for the ephemeral

flow of televisual images signified by Warhol's use of frames, the impact of his selection and repetition of particular frames would be undermined. Far from offering only shock effects and simulacral commodity-signs, the mass media provide Warhol with the material out of which a counter-discourse may rightly be said to *appear*. And the fullest appearance of Warhol's counter-discourse is secured it seems, by using all and any of the resources available to image producers in the 1960s. The visual world that Warhol both describes and participates in, is without a doubt a world of surfaces, but as Mattick rightly notes, it is presented in the artist's work as one "with depths … enough for millions to swim in."[256]

Conclusion: The Interpretation of Aesthetics and the Aesthetics of Interpretation

In the first chapter of this thesis, Hal Foster's "traumatic realist" interpretation of Andy Warhol's work was evaluated with an eye to identifying its usefulness and its limits. Foster's elegant reading of the work, developed on the basis of Lacan's notion of the *Real* and a modified version of Barthes's notion of the *punctum*, offers valuable insights into the deeply psychological character of the artist's production from the early 1960s especially. But his use of the concept of trauma as an explanatory tool is troubled by logical problems – understandable, since even in the psychiatric field, trauma is at best only partially understood. If the notion of trauma is set aside however, along with its illustration of the formal aspects of Warhol's work, a range of psychologically salient features of the work may be identified at the structural level; that is, in the photographic material from which Warhol's silkscreens are taken. This considerable aspect of Warhol's work, though de-emphasized in Foster's experientialist account, warrants a consideration of the artist's vast archive of popular press photography, an archive from which his work is structurally and historically inseparable.

The reading of Warhol's imagery in **Chapter Two**, in terms of Allan Sekula's analysis of the archival uses and emergence of photography, situated the artist's production in relation to the popular illustrated press in general, and Life magazine in particular. Warhol's engagement with Life's vast archive of the 1960s, and by extension the historical archive of institutional and specifically criminal photography from which Life's connotative procedures are very often derived, emerged as a surgical intervention into an ideologically loaded system of visual and textual representation. The Race Riot (see Fig. 19) and Thirteen Most Wanted Men (see Fig. 25) series' especially, describe and

disrupt the popular press's journalistic adaptation of the historical and institutional uses of photography as evidence, witness and physiognomic index. Sekula's archival paradigm enables consideration of the way in which Warhol acts both within the discursive context of the popular press and upon it to subvert and de-nature its codes.

Life's photographic archive however, is only one aspect of an expansive mass-media environment structured by an array of imaging technologies, each with its own aesthetic and ideological implications. Warhol's production seems to refer as well to this wider visual sphere. In **Chapter Three**, the historical specificity of Warhol's intervention into this mass-mediated visual domain was established by means of an analysis of the pervasive TV aesthetic of the 1960s that his work takes up. This technological and historical framework was prepared by a look at the influential media analyses of Walter Benjamin and Marshall McLuhan, authors for whom reproductive technologies of the image determined the socio-cultural context for art, but also the sensory conditions of its reception and production. It was seen that Warhol's artistic *description* of this changing mass-media environment issues a *prescription* as well. By his example, Warhol seems to urge artists and consumers alike to make personal use of the communicative resources of the mass media's many imaging technologies and its store of signs. Warhol's own appropriation of popular signs and technologies of visual reproduction for the purpose of queer identity construction in the celebrity portraits, films such as Blowjob and Sleep (see Fig. 41) , and the Most Wanted Men series demonstrates the deeply political potential of such resources.

I would like to conclude, as I began, by considering the 2006 Art Gallery of Ontario exhibition Andy Warhol/Supernova: Stars, Deaths and Disasters (1962- 1964).

The exhibition catalogue represented Warhol's production from this period in alternately formal, historical and political terms. These are, without a doubt, remarkable aspects of Warhol's work, which is, and will continue to be, many things for many people. As Hal Foster and Douglas Crimp have noted; we "get the Warhol we deserve."[257] But within the field of art history there is a persistent interest in establishing, once and for all, a consensus interpretation of the artist's work. In the Supernova catalogue, David Moos's essay "Andy Warhol, Painter" focuses on the artist's "preoccupation with forcing the procedures of collage onto the smooth surface of the canvas."[258] This formalist interpretation seeks to position Warhol, and his solution by means of collage to the problems posed by the "American discourse of flatness"[259] in a continuum of late-Modernist American painting. Moos's reflections are guided by Harold Rosenberg's notion of "action painting"[260] and Clement Greenberg's appeals to the "ineluctable flatness of the surface"[261] in Modernist painting. In Francisco Bonami's essay "Paintingslaughter," a very different but equally historicized interpretation is offered to establish Warhol as one of the great history painters of the Western heritage. For Bonami, Warhol's "detached commentary" on the events of his day warrants a comparison with painters like Velasquez, David, Goya and Picasso.[262]

Bonami's approach is historically sensitive in its attunement to the varying critical reception of Warhol in the 1960s by American and European writers respectively, and the "disturbing synchronicity"[263] between the artist's work and his times. But like Moos's, Bonami's interpretation advances a thesis about Warhol's value within and for art history that, to use Crimp's phrase, "forecloses the possibility of alternatives."[264] It is difficult to hold that Warhol was both primarily concerned with producing a detached reflection of

his times and preoccupied with the procedures of collage. These alternatives set up Warhol's artistic values in hierarchical terms, (he is either an artist of materials or an artist for his times), and prioritize the art historical frame of reference as the one most suited to deciding between such alternatives. Crimp's own alternative, namely a "cultural studies" approach to Warhol's work, collapses the boundary between art historical concerns, and the demands of the discipline's structuring canons on the one hand, and the *broadly* aesthetic and political discourses found within the academy and in the public sphere on the other. This cultural studies approach is, for Crimp: "obsessively self-reflexive, obsessed that is, with its genealogy ... the history of its own disputed self definitions, which remain undecided."[265] Crimp, following Stuart Hall, asserts that this is a situation which forces those working within the field to accept the fact and value of contestation and take into consideration, always, the partiality, situatedness and interestedness – that is, the stakes – of all inquiry whatsoever.[266]

In the course of this study, the specifically art historical stakes of Foster's "traumatic realist" interpretation were considered, as were Thomas Crow's, Anne M. Wagner's and several other commentators on Warhol's vast production. Impossible to fully reconcile, these competing views have been positioned in relation to one another precisely as contestatory discourses on Warhol's contribution to our visual culture. While each author considered has emphasized an aspect – formal, historical or political - of Warhol's work, they have all been concerned in the final analysis with one body of work. In what has been seen, the network of images and ideas sustained by Warhol's work is intimately tied up with the visual environment and its technologies of photography, print, television and film. To each, there is a discernable social, historical, epistemological and

ideological context that enriches the analysis of Warhol's work, and often seems inseparable from it. My own "cultural studies" approach, has, I hope, established the significance of this context for the interpretation of Warhol's work.

But where does this expanded field of inquiry into the structures and uses (artistic and popular) of visual culture leave the traditional values of art historical scholarship? The field in question is a visual field to be sure, but, following Marshall McLuhan, we bring much more than our visual sense to the experience of such a field. What, given this diffuse range of sense experience, are we to make of the traditional value of, for instance aesthetic disinterestedness? What, in short, constitutes an "aesthetics" in such a field?

In her essay "Visual Studies and Global Imagination," Susan Buck-Morss argues for a distinct conception of the aesthetic established on the basis of "the new realities of global culture."[267] These "new realities" have emerged in what has been seen. Through Warhol's example, we can conceive of this "global culture" as one in which images are deployed with specific intentions and meanings in a popular visual field, as well as appropriated for alternate uses by private consumers and artists. But what was in Warhol's time, an act of artistic subversion and piracy within the mass-mediated visual sphere, has become a common occurrence. Buck-Morss writes:

> Images circle the globe today in de-centered patterns that allow unprecedented access, sliding almost without friction past language barriers and national frontiers. This basic fact, as self-evident as it is profound, guarantees the democratic potential of image-production and distribution.[268]

Buck-Morss is careful to emphasize that this environment is only potentially democratic. As we have seen, images that circulate in the popular press are presented in a manner that prescribes and naturalizes particular, ideologically loaded, meanings. Writing in 2004,

one year after the embedded presentation in the media of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, Buck-Morss was right to suggest that the visual sphere is still burdened by thick meanings and political and journalistic dogmas. But her philosophical reflection on the "potential" of a sphere in which images are available for the kind of use seen in Warhol's *oeuvre*, is meant to show how this sphere can be freed up and mobilized in the public interest. Her reflection goes to the root of a debate yet unresolved in Warhol scholarship.

To make her point, Buck-Morss distinguishes between three notions of the aesthetic, all represented in the discourse on Warhol's work. "Aesthetics I" for Buck-Morss is concerned mainly with the Kantian values of "disinterestedness" and Clement Greenberg's emphasis on a self-critical, medium-specific conception of art practices. This conception founds an approach to art history, according to Buck-Morss, that produces "progressive methods in Departments of Art History" but remains focused on "art ... however broadly defined" as the "central object of investigation."[269] "Aesthetics II", or what Buck-Morss calls "the often gloomy brother" of the Kantian and Greenbergian conception, follows a Hegelian line in establishing a firm distinction between the sensible realm of "appearances" and the true realm of "essences;" the former is said to be available to sense perception, while the latter is only available through concepts.[270] This notion of the aesthetic positions the ideal viewer at a critical distance from the artwork, wary of its concealment of a supposed essence. Buck-Morss notes that the concept of "reification" in this interpretation of the visual is central; "the truth of the object lies behind its appearance."[271]

In what has been seen, Foster's interpretation of Warhol's work seems to borrow elements from both of these aesthetic frames. He is especially interested in penetrating

the screen of illusion beyond which the Lacanian *Real* is said to be located, albeit as a traumatic missed encounter. He thus reifies (Aesthetics II) the concept of trauma and uses it as a structuring tool for a description of the mass subject and Warhol's work in relation to it. But he also seems to develop an aesthetics based on the psychologically charged nature of Warhol's materials and a critical value of disinterestedness (Aesthetics I). Warhol's artwork is described as acting on Foster, mainly with the resources of its formal attributes, to produce a genuinely traumatic encounter; a direct experience of the work that is to be distinguished from the mediated consumption of commodity-signs. Both of these aspects of Foster's aesthetics, however, converge in one important respect. It is the work of *art* for him, defined in terms of "traumatic realism" which occasions and facilitates a reflection on the entire visual domain and its mass mediated constitution. As has been seen, this privileging of the art object sidesteps a close look at Warhol's intimate relationship with the discursive and visual resources of the mass mediated visual domain.

Buck-Morss notes that a third conception of the aesthetic is made available through the work of Walter Benjamin discussed earlier. Whereas for Aesthetics I, the image is regarded as "medium," and for Aesthetics II it is regarded, suspiciously, as the "problem," Benjamin seems to suggest a third conception of the aesthetic in which the image is mined for "inspiration."[272] Crucial for Buck-Morss are the political implications of an age, described by Benjamin in his essay on mechanical reproduction, in which the image emerges as a "singularity" with an "ability to name itself, to propose its own caption" and thus escape the "pre-existing frames of meaning" used to structure its reception.[273] The political, and specifically democratic potential of images in such a

domain, is for Buck-Morss, ultimately dependent on one condition: "we have to see them."[274]

Following Benjamin, this "seeing," is always a situated act: the artwork, as he says, "meets the beholder halfway,"[275] in his/her own situation, Buck-Morss describes etymologically in her essay "Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered," what such a situated aesthetic experience entails. She writes:

> It is to this origin that, via Benjamin's revolution, we find ourselves returned ... *Aisthitikos* is the ancient Greek word for that which is "perceptive by feeling." *Aisthisis* is the sensory experience of perception. The original field of aesthetics is not art but reality – corporeal, material nature.[276]

In this vast aesthetic field, the distinction between Warhol's appropriated imagery and its original context in the popular press becomes, at best, analytic. Both Warhol's own particular location and agency within the broadly visual sphere, and the everyday experience of Life's readership, for example, find a place in this expanded aesthetic domain. Furthermore, the aesthetic disinterestedness of formalist analysis (Moos's and to a lesser degree, Foster's) appears in this context as one of a great many possible types of response to the vast material of visual culture, alongside what Crimp calls the kind of interpretation that "makes no effort to conceal [its] desire."[277] The peculiarity, that is also a great strength of Warhol's work, is that it offers itself up to both kinds of interpretation, and reveals in the process their respective interpretive mechanisms. In the end, the work seems to refuse any single interpretation. We are returned to the visual culture from which Warhol's production emerged, with his store of signs and the political value of his signifying practices to determine its meaning for ourselves. Alas, we do seem to get the Warhol we deserve. But in describing as he does, the visual culture that continues to feed

our aesthetic, psychological and political experience, we might rightly say that Warhol – the work, not the man – gets us as well.

[1] Douglas Crimp, "Getting the Warhol We Deserve" Social Text, 59. (1999): 49-66.

[2] Hal Foster, "Death in America" October, 75. (1996): 36-59.

[3] Ibid. 39

[4] Paul Mattick, "The Andy Warhol of Philosophy and the Philosophy of Andy Warhol" Critical Inquiry, 24, no. 4. (1998): 965-987.

[5] Ibid. 975

[6] Arthur Danto, "The Artworld" The Journal of Philosophy, 61, no. 19, (1964): 571-584.

[7] Hal Foster, "Death in America" October, 75. (1996): 38.

[8] Ibid. 39

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

[10] Roland Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image," in Image-Music-Text, trans., ed. Stephen Heath, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 32.

[11] Allan Sekula "The Body and the Archive" October, 39. (1979): 3-64.

[12] Ibid. 6-10

[13] Roland Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image," in Image-Music-Text, trans., ed. Stephen Heath, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 45.

[14] Hal Foster, "Death in America" October, 75. (1996), 50.

[15] Caroline A. Jones "The Modernist Paradigm: The Artworld and Thomas Kuhn", Critical Inquiry, 26, no. 3. (2000): 516.

[16] Anne M. Wagner "Warhol Paints History or Race in America" Representations, 55. (1996): 106.

[17] Hal Foster, "Death in America," October, 75. (1996): 36.

[18] Ibid. 39.

[19] Ibid. 37.

[20] Ibid. 38.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid. 39.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

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relation to abjection and obscenity. I will focus instead on Foster's treatment of the concept in relation to Warhol's work and persona, and also his development of the concept using the writings of Roland Barthes and Jacques Lacan.

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Fig. 1 Andy Warhol. White Burning Car III. 1963. Silkscreen ink on linen, 255.3 x 200 cm. The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh

Fig. 2 Andy Warhol. Ambulance Disaster. 1963/4. Silkscreen ink on linen, 316.2 x 202.9 cm. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie, Collection Marx, Berlin

Fig. 3 A.M. Treisman and J. Souther. "Search asymmetry: A diagnostic for pre-attentive processing of separable features. 1985." From Henry Gleitman. Psychology: Fouth Edition. (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1995) 211.

Fig. 4 Salvador Dali. "Figure-ground reversal in the visual arts." From Henry Gleitman. Psychology: Fouth Edition. (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1995) 213.

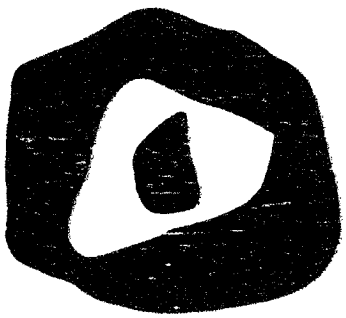


Fig. 5 Jean Arp. "Woodcut/Eleven Configurations," From Rudolph Arnheim. Art and Visual Perception: A Psychology of the Creative Eye. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954) 235.

Fig. 6 Andy Warhol. Turquoise Marilyn. 1964. Acrylic and silkscreen ink on linen, 101.6 x 101.6 cm. Stephan T. Edlis Chicago.

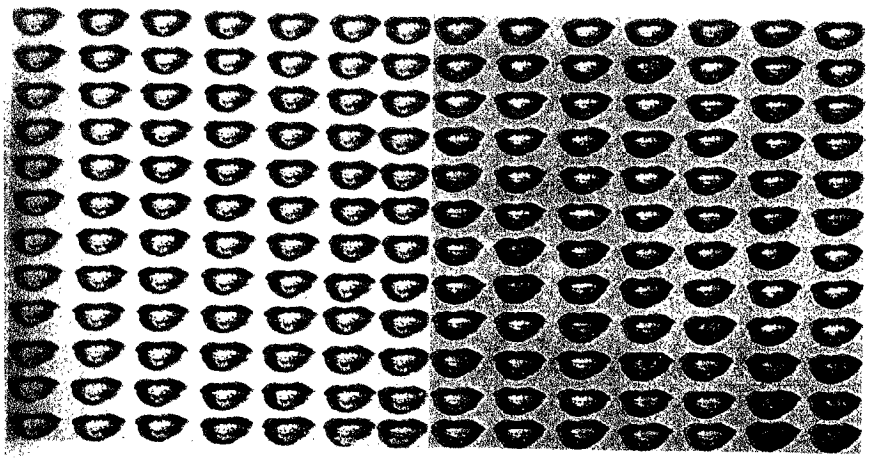


Fig. 7 Andy Warhol. Marilyn Monroe's Lips . 1962. Acrylic, silkscreen ink and pencil on linen, 210.2 x 209.2 cm. each of 2 panels. Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.

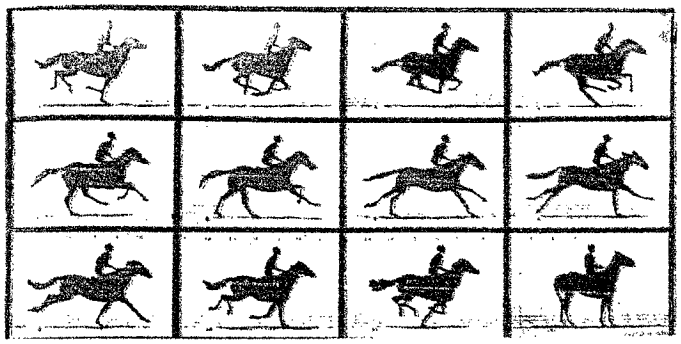


Fig. 8 Eadweard Muybridge. Untitled, (Sequence photographs of the Trot and Gallop). From La Nature, December, 1878. Gravures.

Fig. 9 Eddie Adams. General Loan Executing a Vietcong Suspect, February 1, 1968. Gelatin silver print.

Fig. 10 Larry Burrows. Life, 23 December, 1966.

Fig. 11 John de Visser and Garth Pritchard. Life, 7 June, 1963.

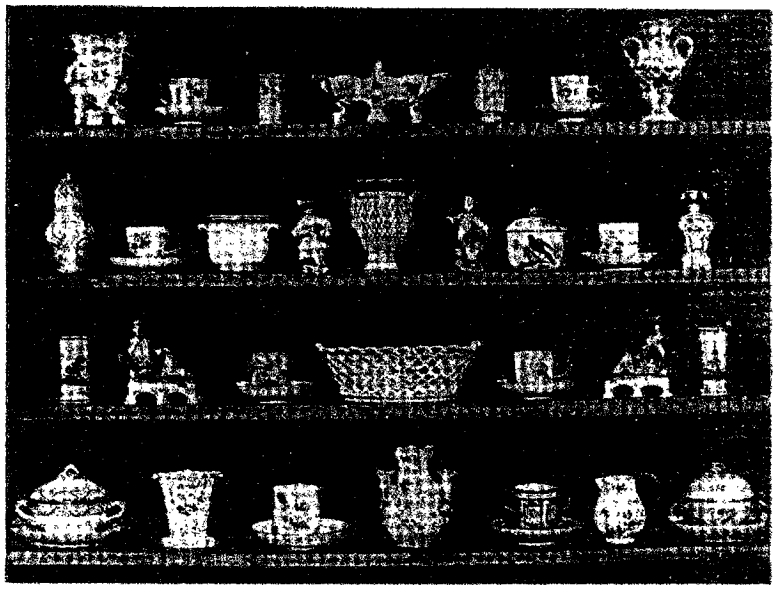
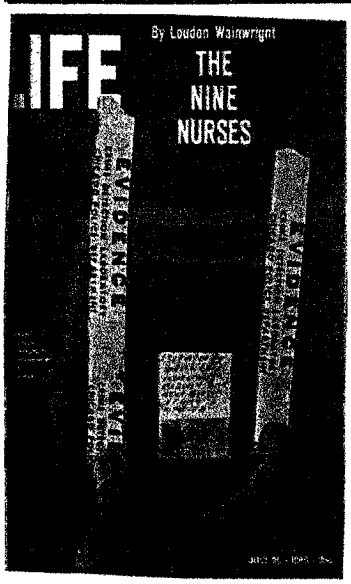


Fig. 12 William Henry Fox Talbot. Articles of China. 1844. From Allan Sekula. "The Body and the Archive," October, 39. (1986): 5.

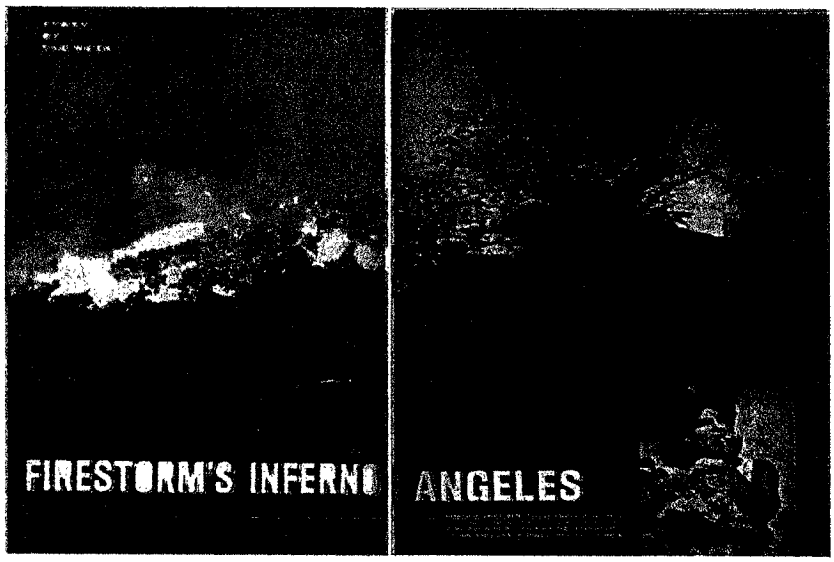
A)

C)

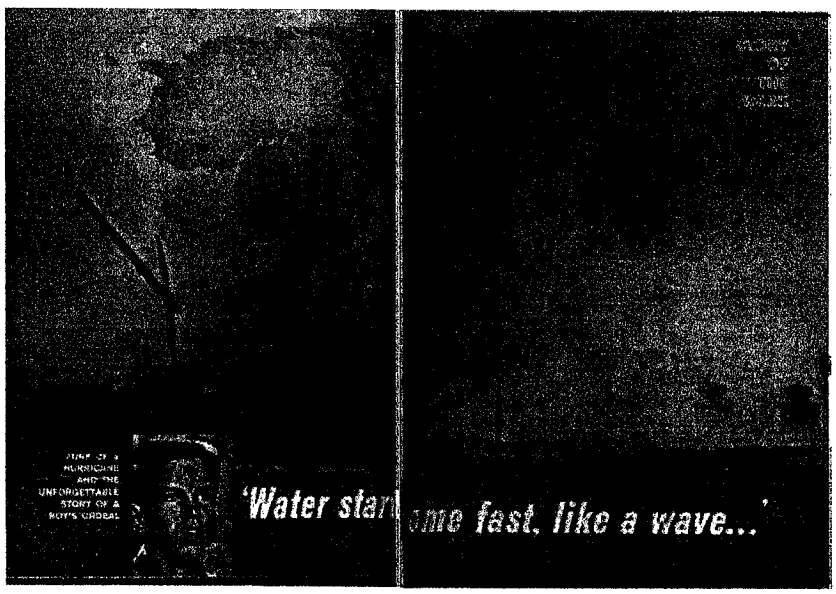


B)

Fig. 13 A) Shel Hershorn. Life, 12 August, 1966 B) Art Shay. Life, 29 July, 1966 C) Life, 21 June, 1963



A)



B)

Fig. 14 A) Ralph Crane. Life, 17 November, 1961. B) Philip Schulke. Life, 22 September, 1961.

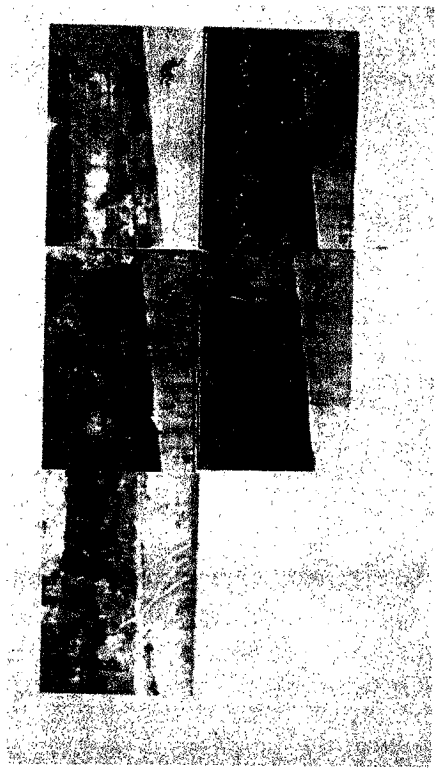


Fig. 15 Andy Warhol. Suicide (Silver Jumping Man). 1963. Silkscreen ink and silver paint on linen, 359.4 x 201.9 cm. Daros Collection, Switzerland.

Fig. 16 Henri Cartier-Bresson, Behind the Gare St. Lazare. Gelatin silver print. 1932.

A)

B)

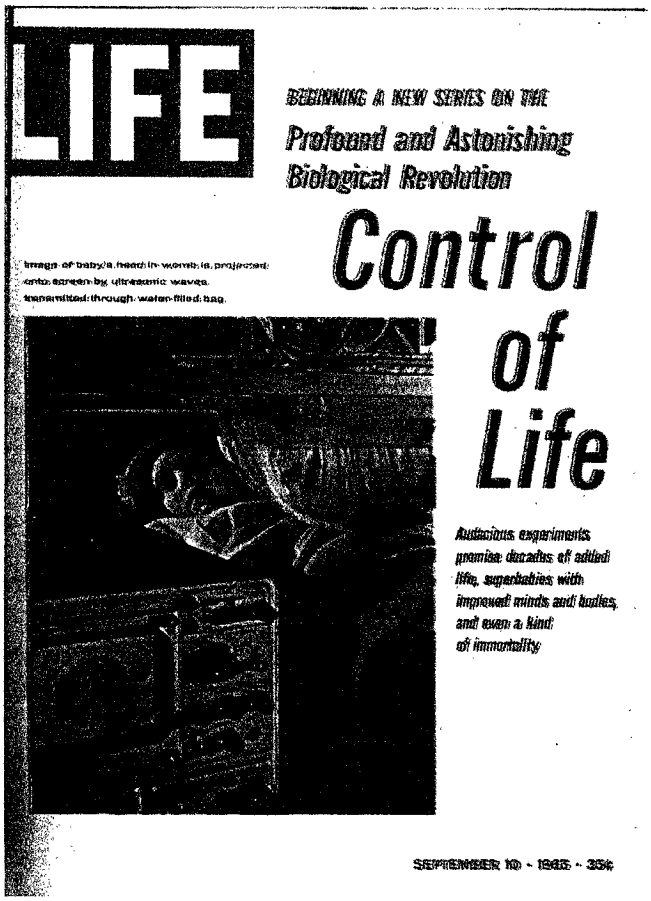
C)

Fig. 17 A) Francis Miller. Life, 17 August, 1962. B) Louiz Bueno Filho. Life, 12 July, 1963. C) Joe Clark, Life, 9 August, 1962.

Fig. 18 Don Uhrbrock. Life, 22 October, 1965.

Fig. 19 Andy Warhol. Race Riot 1963. Silkscreen ink on linen, 306.7 x 210.8 cm. Daros Collection, Switzerland.

Fig. 20 Charles Moore. Life, 17 May, 1963.



A)

B)

Fig. 21 A) Fritz Goro. Life, 10 September, 1965. B) Life, 29 October, 1965.

Fig. 22 Andy Warhol. Little Race Riot. 1964. Acrylic and silkscreen ink on linen, 76.2 x 83.8 cm. each of four panels. Private collection, Monte Carlo.

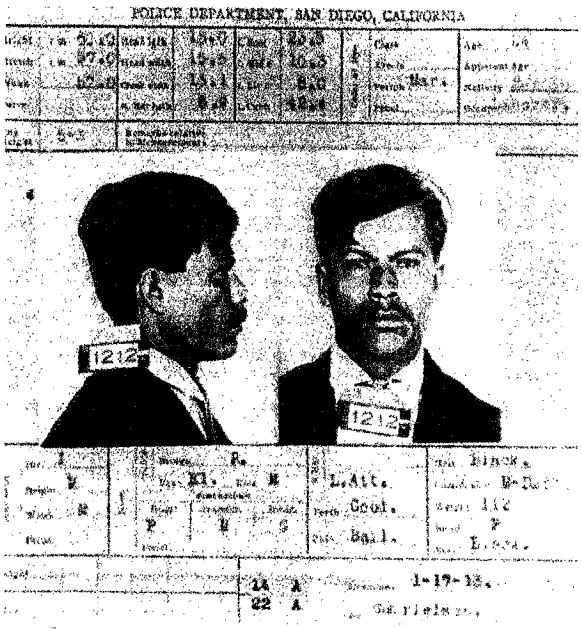


Fig. 23 Alphonse Bertillon. 1913. From Allan Sekula. "The Body and the Archive," October, 39. (1986): 36.

Fig. 24 Francis Galton. From Allan Sekula. "The Body and the Archive," October, 39. (1986): 49.

Fig. 25 Andy Warhol. Most Wanted Men No. 2, John Victor G. 1964. Silkscreen ink on linen, 123.2 x 98.1 cm. each of 2 panels. Daros Collection, Switzerland.

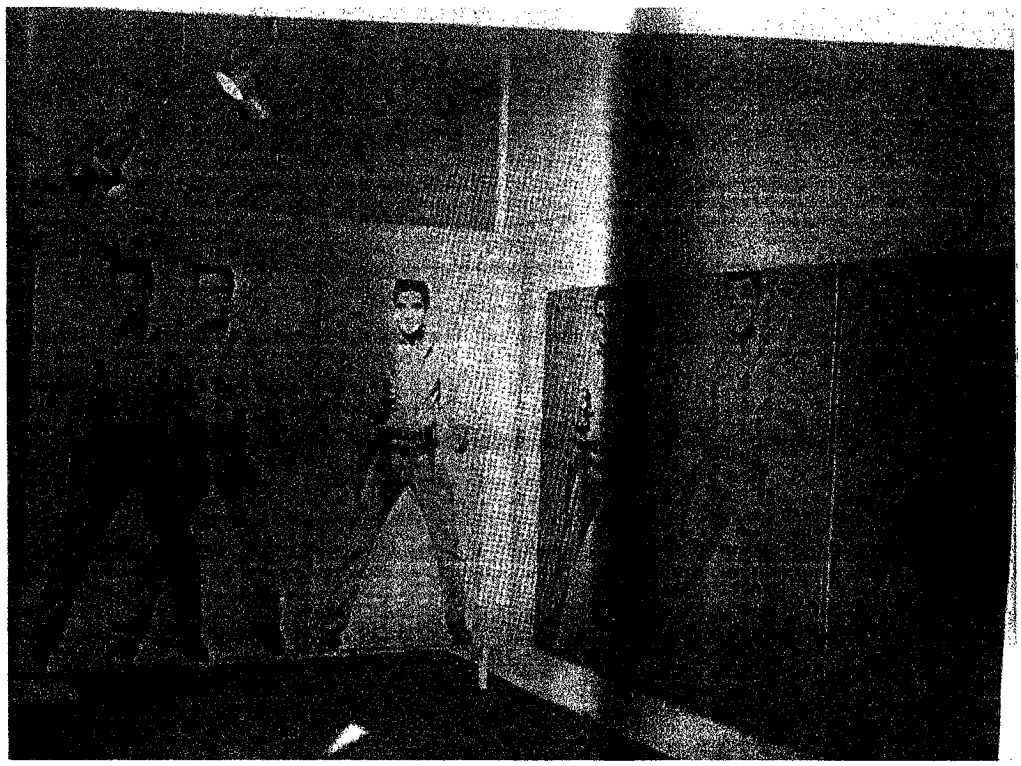


Fig. 26 Andy Warhol. Ferus Gallery, Los Angeles, Sept.-Oct. 1963. From David Moos. "Andy Warhol, Painter," in Supernova: Stars, Deaths and Disasters (1962-64), ed. Douglas Fogle (Minneapolis, Walker Art Centre, 2006) 36.

Fig. 27 Alphonse Bertillon. From Allan Sekula. "The Body and the Archive," October, 39. (1986): 32.

Fig. 28 Andy Warhol. Natalie. 1962. Silkscreen ink on linen, 210.8 x 226.4 cm. The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh.

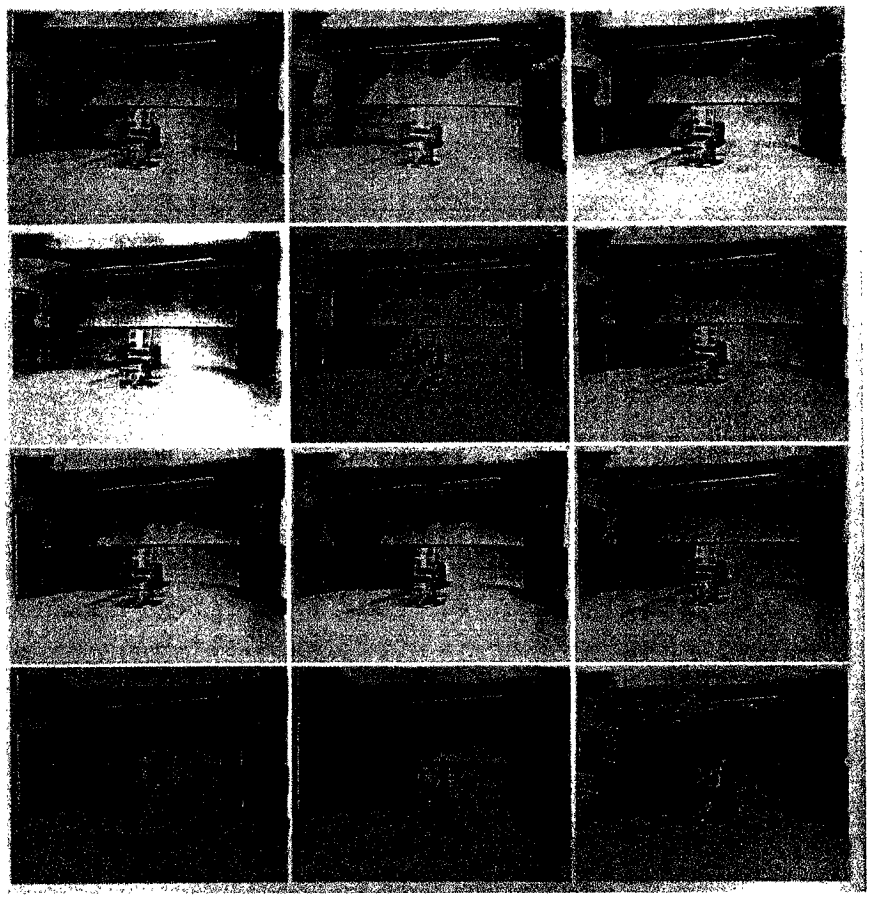


Fig. 29 Andy Warhol. Twelve Electric Chairs. 1964/65. Silkscreen ink and acrylic paint on canvas, 55.9 x 71.1 cm. each of 12 panels. The Stephanie and Peter Brant Foundation, Greenwich, Connecticut.

LIFE
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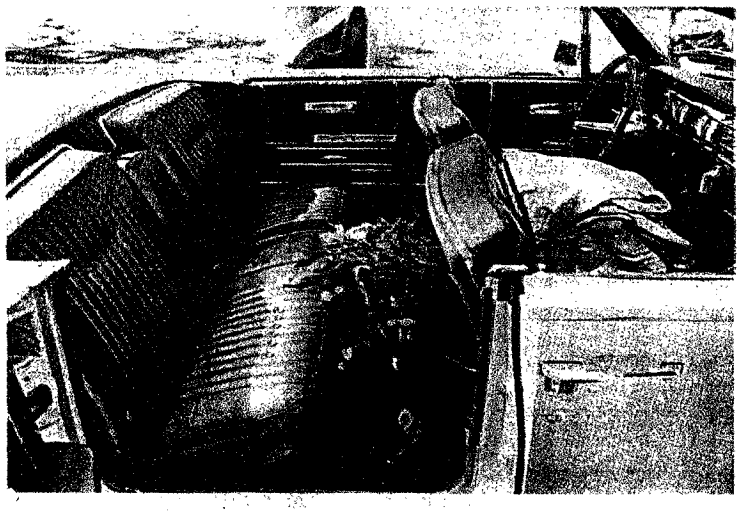
THE ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT KENNEDY



Now in the sunny freshness of a Texas morning, with roses in her arms and a luminous smile on her lips, Jacqueline Kennedy still had one hour to share the buoyant surge of life with the man at her side.

It was a wonderful hour. Vibrant with confidence, crinkle-eyed with an all-embracing smile, John F. Kennedy swept his wife with him into the exuberance of the throng at Dallas' Love Field. This was an act in which Jack Kennedy was superbly human. Responding to the warmth his own genuine warmth evoked in others, he met his welcomers joyously, hand to hand and heart to heart. For him this was all fun as well as politics. For his shy wife, surmounting the grief of her infant son's recent death, this mingling demanded a grace and gallantry she soon would need again.

Then the cavalcade, fragrantly laden with roses for everyone, started into town. Eight miles on the way, in a sixth-floor window, the assassin waited. All the roses, like those here abandoned in Vice President Johnson's car, were left to wilt. They would be long faded before a stunned nation would fully comprehend its sorrow.

Fig. 30 Arthur Rickerby. Life, 29 November, 1963.

Fig. 32 Andy Warhol. Brillo, Cornflakes, Motts Apple-Juice Boxes. 1964. Acrylic and liquitex silkscreened on wood, various sizes. Collection Karl Stroher, Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstaedt.

Fig. 33 Abraham Zapruder. 18 mm film stills, Life, 29 November 1963.

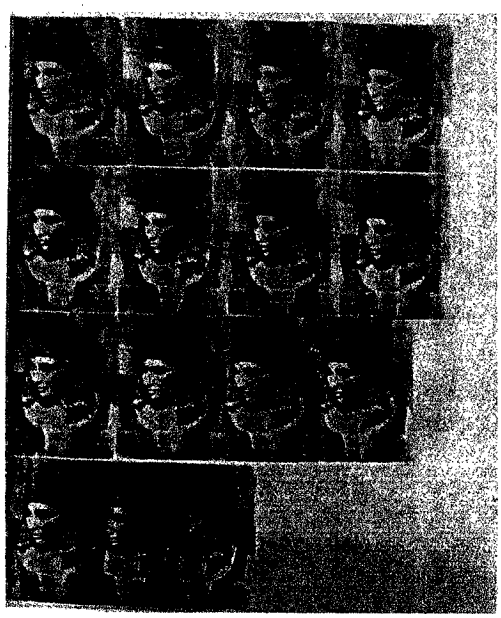
A)

B)

Fig. 34 Andy Warhol. A) Sixteen Jackies. 1964. Acrylic and silkscreen ink on linen, 204.2 x 163.5cm. Walker Art Centre, Minneapolis. B) Nine Jackies. Acrylic and silkscreen ink on linen, 154.6 x 123.8 cm. The Sonnabend Collection, N.Y.

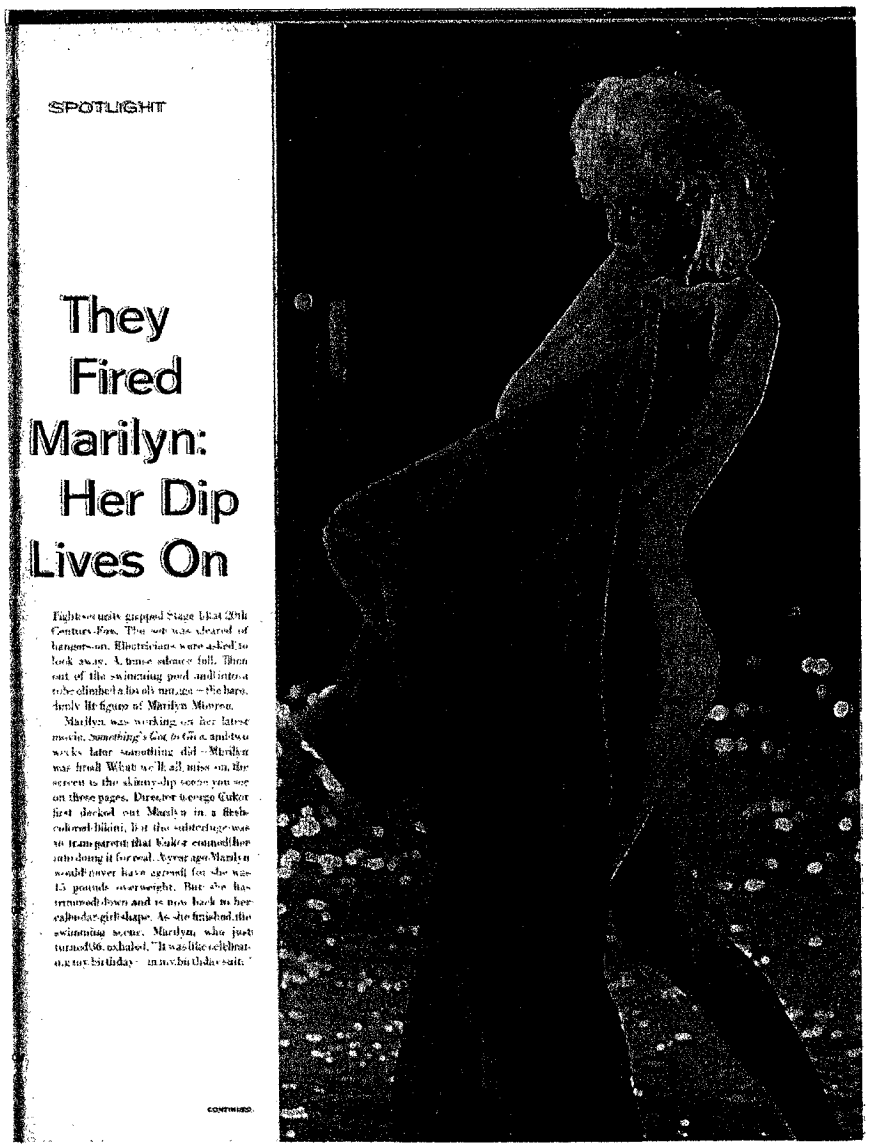
Fig. 35 Paul Schutzer and Sam Shaw. Life, 13 April, 1962.

A)



B)

Fig. 36 Andy Warhol. A) National Velvet. 1963. Silkscreen ink, silver paint and pencil on linen, 346.4 x 212.1 cm. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. B) Silver Liz as Cleopatra. 1963. Silver paint silkscreen ink and pencil on linen, 208.3 x 165.1 cm. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.



SPOTLIGHT

They Fired Marilyn: Her Dip Lives On

Fight security gripped Stage 14 at 20th Century-Fox. The set was cleared of hangers-on. Electricians were asked to look away. A tense silence fell. Then out of the swimming pool and into a tube climbed a lavish nude – the bare, dimly lit figure of Marilyn Monroe.

Marilyn was working on her latest movie, *Something's Got to Give*, and two weeks later something did. Marilyn was fired. What we'll all miss on the screen is the skinny-dip scene you see on these pages. Director George Cukor first decked out Marilyn in a flesh-colored bikini, but the subterfuge was so transparent that Cukor commodlher into doing it for real. A year ago Marilyn would never have agreed, for she was 15 pounds overweight. But she has trimmed down and is now back in her fabulous girl-shape. As she finished the swimming scene, Marilyn, who just turned 36, exhaled, "It was like celebrating my birthday – in every bubble bath."

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Fig. 37 Lawrence Schiller and William Read Woodfield. Life, 22 June, 1962.

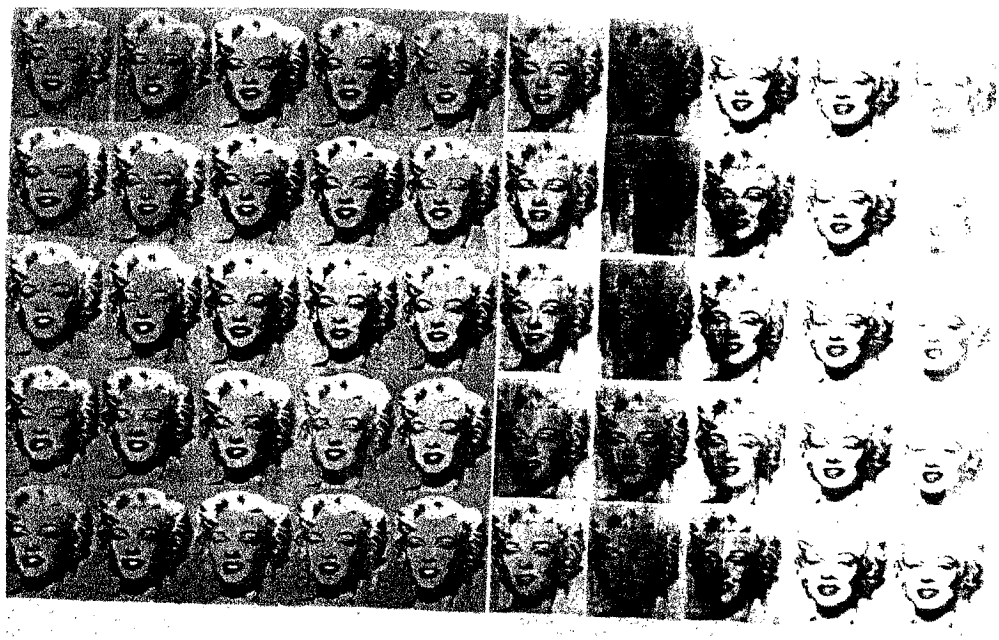


Fig. 38 Andy Warhol. Marilyn Diptych. 1962. Acrylic silkscreen ink, and pencil on linen, 205.7 x 144.8 cm. each of 2 panels. Tate London.

Fig. 39 Christopher Makos. Andy Warhol. 1981. Altered Image.

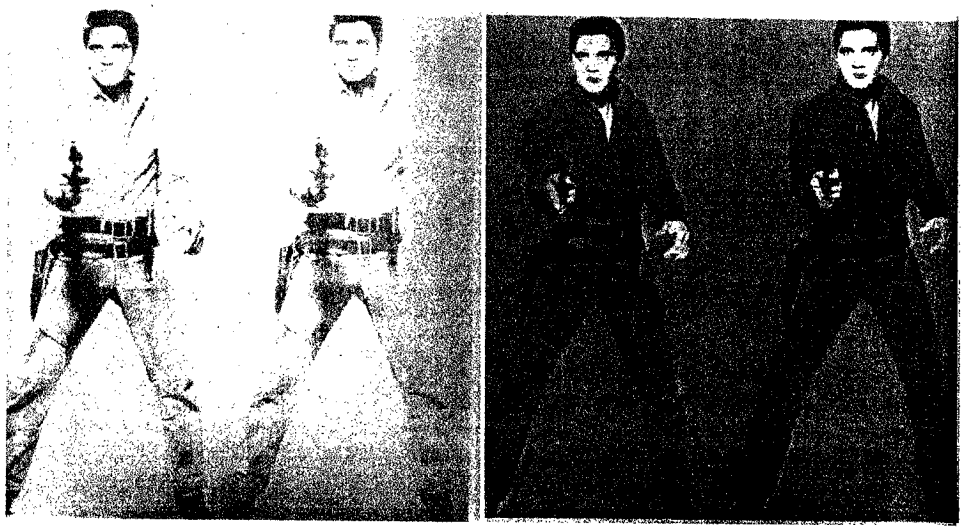
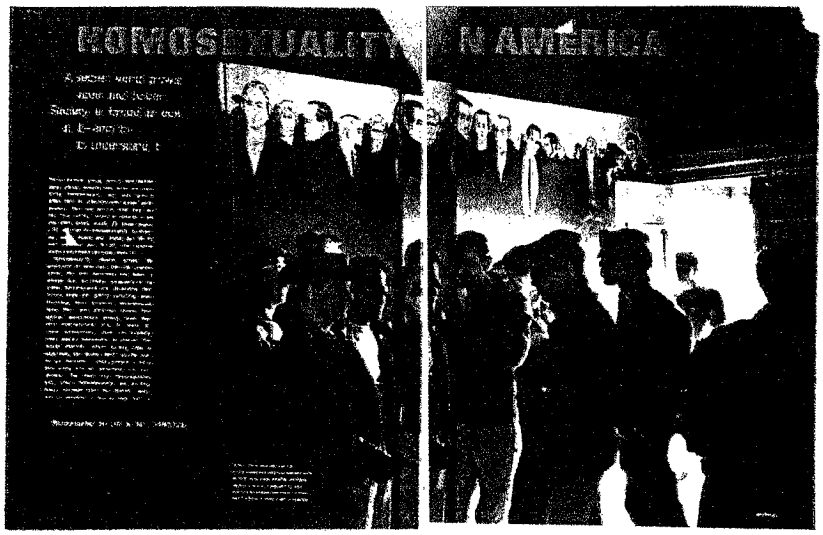


Fig. 40 Andy Warhol. Elvis I and II. Silkscreen ink and spray paint on linen, 208.3 x 208.3 cm. each of 2 panels. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

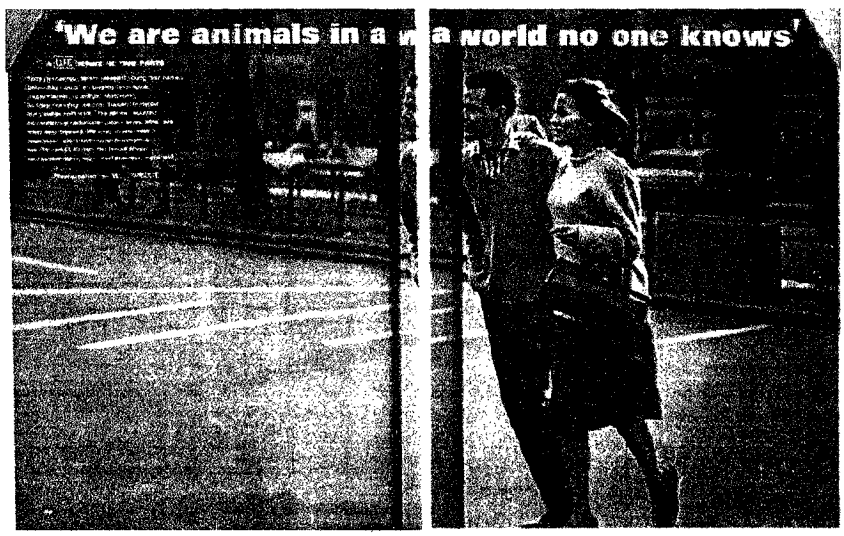
A)

B)

Fig. 41 Andy Warhol. A) Sleep. Film still, 1966. B) Blowjob. Film still, 1964.



A)



B)

Fig. 42 A) Bill Epridge and Paul Welch. Life, 26 June, 1964. B) James Mills and Bill Epridge. Life, 26 February, 1965.