Kenneth E. Silver

Modes of Disclosure:
The Construction of Gay Identity and the Rise of Pop Art

In memory of Zack

The epistemology of the closet is not a dated subject
or a superseded regime of knowing...there can be few gay people, however courageous and forthright by habit,
however fortunate in the support of their immediate communities, in whose lives
the closet is not still a shaping presence.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Epistemology of the Closet* (1990)

"The moment you label something, you take a step — I mean, you can never go back again to seeing it unlabeled."[1] These are Andy Warhol's words, which in their typically halting rhythm, anti-lapidary syntax, and use of commercial vernacular — note that he says "label" rather than name — express a simple truth: that the act of labeling is, like the U.S. Navy tattoo on the arm of the young man he drew in ca. 1957, indelible. Along with a number of other key figures in the art world of the late 1950s and early 1960s, Jasper Johns and Andy Warhol began to label something — male homosexuality — that had hitherto been considered too unworthy or too dangerous to name. As they were for the civil rights movement, the fifties and sixties were the key years of *naissant* gay political activism, when pre-Stonewall organizations like the Mattachine Society were founded.[2] Early Pop, or proto-Pop, is closely allied with burgeoning gay identity in the art worlds of New York and London.[3] In the waning years of the Abstract Expressionist hegemony homosexuality began to acquire a visual language, with the vocabulary provided by the gay artists themselves.

It is to state the obvious to say that Abstract Expressionist painting, like all non-representational art, does not label or name, but suggests: how could it be otherwise, as the content is meant to be ineffable? To be sure, we sometimes sense tragedy in an especially dark and monumental painting, or joy in another buoyant, brightly-colored composition. Of course the title of a picture, be it Willem de Kooning's *Excavation* or Jackson Pollock's *Sounds in the Grass*, sometimes points us in the direction of more specific evocations, but this is all guesswork, since we are provided with neither objects nor words in the images

ANDY WARHOL
Untitled (Boy with USN Tattoo), 1957
Ballpoint ink on sketchbook paper, 16 3/4 x 14 inches
The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc., New York

themselves. In 1955 Leon Golub, in an article critical of what he considered to be Abstract Expressionism's vagueness, wrote "There are few common verbal equivalents of any such discursive motion and as observer recognition is not constant (except on rather illustrative levels in regard to the artist's undetermined intent), descriptive comment tends to be hyperbolic."[4] Not only does Abstract Expressionist art evoke rather than name, it also engenders a critical language of exaggerated claim equal in scale to the size of the works themselves.

Yet there are subjects so compelling, at least to certain artists at certain moments, that invocations of the ineffable and appeals to the non-specific will not satisfy the need for a clear, or clearer, summoning forth. In a provocative 1984 article on the art of Jasper Johns, Charles Harrison and Fred Orton make the important point that in the historical circumstance of the 1950s, this was easier said than done: "...we might say that the ambitious artist of Johns's generation (and since perhaps), who knows his or her Modernism and understands what 'American-Type' painting has to be in order to succeed as Modernism, has a real problem if he or she wants to express and to deal with subject-matter and to express feelings as subject matter."[5] Johns's *Painting with Two Balls* (1960), is at once a meditation on this dilemma of signification and a resolution of the generational problem. Here he calls into question the discursive system of high abstract art, a master narrative if there ever was one, by unpacking — and literally exposing — its gendered rhetoric. In this case, objects and labels are crucial to the enterprise.

Painting with Two Balls both embraces and betrays Abstract Expressionism: the hatched brushstroke, brilliant of hue, conveys the pleasure that Johns takes in the painterly abandon of Action Painters like Pollock, de Kooning, and Clyfford Still; the tripartite horizontal division recalls the rectilinearity that ordered the free play of paint in the work of artists like Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman. But of course in an early work by Johns even the seemingly most spontaneous handling is a feint; these are not traces of impetuosity, but its representation — the strokes are always smaller, shorter, and more controlled than those of his predecessors, and the various coloristic campaigns are more evenly distributed over the canvas. The use of encaustic here and in so many other works of this period serves to "mummify" what had been signs for vitality, so that we sense ourselves distanced from both the work as a record of activity and, one might add, from the artist whose activity is recorded.

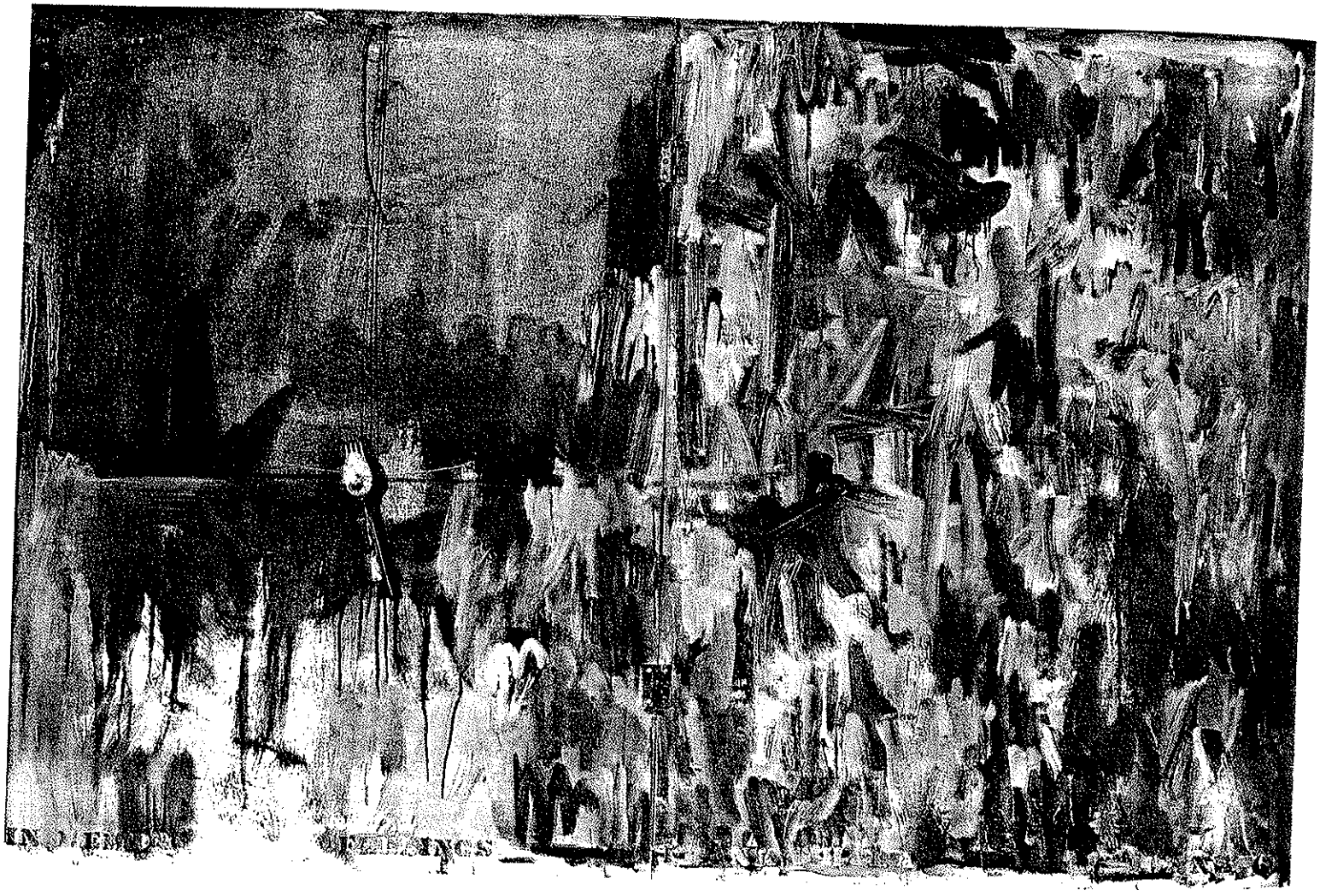
JASPER JOHNS
Painting with Two Balls, 1960
Encaustic and collage on canvas with objects,
65 x 54 inches
Collection of the artist

We have entered into the realm of the simulacrum, a place of lost innocence with perhaps a residual nostalgia for the belief in originating acts and primal gestures. Needless to say, while Johns situates himself as the ironic "conservator" of Abstract Expressionism's "instinctual" gestures, he casts doubt on the very notion of instinctive gestures and unfettered aesthetic play. Not that he was alone in this strategy: Robert Rauschenberg's *Factum I* and *Factum II* (both 1957), which offer for all intents and purposes nearly identical renderings of post-Abstract Expressionist "authenticity," and Roy Lichtenstein's *Brush Stroke* (1965), with its cartoon rendering of monumental Action Painting brushstrokes, mark the terminus post and ante quem of this younger generation's parodic recasting of Abstract Expressionism's pictorial system. But Johns goes much further in his dis-illusioning of that painterly rhetoric by first wedging two small balls between the two top panels, and then inscribing the three-inch high words "PAINTING WITH TWO BALLS/1960/J JOHNS" along the bottom edge. This double transgression has the effect of turning the high seriousness of abstract New York painting into low comedy—the two "real," three-dimensional balls are experienced as an absurd, banal intrusion into the two-dimensional paradigm of non-specific and limitless aesthetic field, while the words below perform a related operation, labeling or naming not a psychic state or metaphysical event but that which is merely before us. Irony is the sign under which this work by Johns, and almost all his art, operates.

The irony of this deflationary procedure is that, by means of the insertion of the twin balls, Johns has performed a kind of counter-castration of the body of Abstract Expressionism (of its pictorial rhetoric and critical discourse). As Rosalind Krauss saw so clearly in 1965: "The objects undoubtedly refer to the myth of masculinity surrounding the central figures of Abstract Expressionism, the admiration for the violence with which they made their attack on the canvas, and the sexual potency read into their artistic acts."[6] Krauss is referring to readings like Harold Rosenberg's famous statement in "The American Action Painters," that "the painter no longer approached his easel with an image in his mind; he went up to it with material in his hand to do something to that other piece of material in front of him. The image would be the result of this encounter,"[7] or Elaine de Kooning's terse pronouncement: "Franz Kline's image found its virile originality in his response to non-art or life."[8]

By way of the addition of two silly balls, and the words naming them, Johns enunciates the unspoken term of Action Painting's puissance: he gives us the proverbial "painting with balls," the "ballsy" art that was New York painting's special purchase on modernist abstraction. Moreover, the frankly artificial nature of the entire enterprise of *Painting with Two Balls*, its myriad transgressions of the rhetoric of its predecessor, points to a specific moment in the master narrative, what we should perhaps call the "master equation" of Abstract Expressionism: artistic authenticity is the concomitant of identifiably masculine behavior, even an attribute of masculinity; tough, non-literary, serious art is made only by rough-hewn, spontaneous, male artists (sub-text: sissies can't make real art). In effect, Johns has torn asunder the rhetorical veil of Action Painting's look and commentary, revealing not a pair of Taurean globes of potency, but two little balls. Let there be no mistake: there is a great deal of rage contained in Jasper Johns's visual pleasantry.

But of course *Painting with Two Balls* tells us nothing of homosexuality per se; at issue is only the equation between stereotypical maleness and a certain kind of art. Yet the dismantling of Abstract Expressionism's rhetoric of the image was the precondition, or attendant strategy, for Johns's forging of a gay identity in his art, for his mapping of gay desire. On the other hand, so densely coded, so camouflaged, and so elusive are the homosexual thematics of Jasper Johns's work, that the myriad evasions which to a large extent determine both his form and content are inconceivable without the Abstract Expressionist code of non-specificity which he himself undertook to subvert. This is probably why we sense both pleasure and disdain in the meta-brushstrokes of his pseudo-gestural pastiches of de Kooning and Pollock. So implicated is Johns's art in the "abstracting" procedures of Abstract Expressionism that it would be to overstate and dehistoricize the case to think of Johns's homosexual references of the period as constituting "gay art." As Eve Sedgwick has termed it, we are dealing with the "epistemology of the closet." Still, there are closets and there are closets; if the



JASPER JOHNS
In Memory of My Feelings—Frank O'Hara, 1961
Oil on canvas with objects, 40 x 60 inches
Stefan T. Edlis Collection, Chicago

doors to Jasper Johns's aesthetic are not exactly flung open for all to examine, neither are they, nor were they intended to be, completely closed to us. As Marcel Duchamp, one of Johns's key influences, set out to demonstrate in his *11 rue Larrey* (1927-64), by hinging a door in the jamb between two openings, "a door need not be either opened or closed." It may be both.

In the manner that we have seen adumbrated in *Painting with Two Balls*, the gay component in Johns's art is constituted by means of objects (readymade objects) and words which are assemblaged into an Abstract Expressionist-like, painterly field, with its associations of deep, powerful "feelings." But the words —some contained within the pictorial fields and others serving only as titles in the traditional sense—are themselves ready-mades, inasmuch as they take the form of allusions to poets and their works, specifically to three gay American poets: Frank O'Hara, Hart Crane, and Walt Whitman. Johns also alludes in these works to the art of two gay American painters, Marsden Hartley and Charles Demuth. Needless to say, as is always the case with art which makes extensive use of allusion, Johns's work requires, insists upon, hermeneutical investigation; only an intense voyage *inward*, along a rather tortuous path, will reveal its meanings.[9]

In a sense, this movement inward rehearses the dynamics of "closeted" behavior, the result being that the traditional art historical exegesis—the investigator's journey into the work's meaning, the revealing of "hidden" or buried signification—bears an unfortunate but necessary relationship to "outing." But there is no choice really, to the extent to which Johns's allusions, his references both subtle and plain, may be said to constitute his authorial voice. Indeed, the artist has said that early on he had "worked in such a way that I could say that it's not me...not to confuse my feelings with what I produced. I didn't want my work to be an exposure of my feelings."[10] Yet, if we cannot offer airtight interpretation of his art—would we want to?—we may nonetheless point to a range of possibilities, and look in the direction of Johns's own glance. And we *can* say this: that in the name of vacating the place of his own feelings, Johns performs a kind of ventriloquism. The voices that speak through the vessel of his art are those of O'Hara, Crane, Demuth, Hartley, and Whitman.

Roberta Bernstein was the first to point out that Johns's two main literary interests, at least as evidenced by his paintings, were both gay poets, O'Hara and Crane.[11] Harrison and Orton have provided a useful and sensitive approach to Johns's 1961 painting *In Memory of My Feelings—Frank O'Hara*, where, as in *Painting with Two Balls*, the full title, signature, and date are stenciled along the bottom. In this case Johns puts to dramatic use the very pictorial rhetoric he had demythologized the year before: three-quarters of the canvas is covered in a dense matrix of hatched strokes *en grisaille*, intended in Abstract Expressionist fashion to suggest powerful feelings, presumably those recollected and/or mourned in the "title" (which of course is not a title in the usual sense, a verbal equivalent existing outside the work, but an element of the pictorial structure itself, smack up against the picture plane). The upper left quarter of the picture is covered only by a gray wash, against which a coupled fork and spoon hang attached by a wire. The painting is actually composed of two panels, hinged like a religious diptych, suggesting that sacred information is being conveyed. Also implied by the hinges, again in association with traditional religious imagery, is the potential for closing this work in upon itself, for concealment or protection of the contents.

Yet, for all that Johns freights his work with signs of concealment, *In Memory of My Feelings —Frank O'Hara* is notable for how much it reveals. First, of course, is what we can know from O'Hara's poem of the same title, written in 1956, a work about the attempt to distance oneself from the feelings of desolation caused by love lost. It begins, "My quietness has a man in it, he is transparent," and ends, some two hundred lines later, "and I have lost what is always and everywhere present, the scene of my selves, the occasion of these

JASPER JOHNS
Diver, 1962
Oil on canvas with objects, 90 x 170 inches
Collection of Irma and Norman Braman, Miami

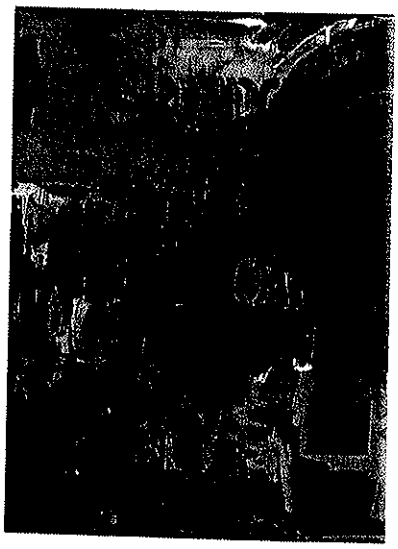
ruses, which I myself and singly must now kill and save the serpent in their midst." Although difficult to see, Johns has stenciled the words "DEAD MAN" at the lower right corner of the painting.

Then there is the inclusion of Frank O'Hara's name, which insists that we attend not only to his art but to his person: even before his accidental death on Fire Island in 1966, O'Hara had achieved near-legendary underground status in the New York art world. An associate curator in the Department of Painting and Sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art, an editor at *Art News*, a prodigious writer of poetry and art criticism, O'Hara was renowned for his brilliance, personal charm, and intense loyalty to his friends. Moreover, from the point of view of a gay history, he was remarkable for the extent to which he was more or less openly gay, both in his work and his life, in the repressive and hyper-masculinist atmosphere of 1950s America. Finally, O'Hara was also crucial as a kind of linchpin between the older generation of the mostly heterosexual Abstract Expressionists and the younger group of artists and writers, among whom homosexuality and bisexuality were common. Johns's inclusion of both the title of an O'Hara poem about love and the poet's name—which is coupled on the right panel with the painter's own name and date—insures that only a willful ignorance can suppress the gay allusions. Whether this is a portrait of O'Hara's poem, or a portrait of O'Hara the man, Johns has asked us to meditate before this "altarpiece" of loss.

In fact, Harrison and Orton go further, relating *In Memory of My Feelings—Frank O'Hara* to Johns's own feelings of desolation during the turbulent final years of his love affair with Robert Rauschenberg, a relationship of more than six years duration (they would definitively break the following year). Considered in this light, then, the "hanged" knife and fork may convey a sense of the "death of the ordinary," the terrible dawning realization, at the end of a longstanding relationship, that one has lost not only love in its romantic form, but also in its daily, mundane aspect.

Even more crucial than O'Hara to Johns's art is Hart Crane—again, important to Johns both for his poetry and his life. Johns created a veritable gallery of images devoted to Crane, who committed suicide in April 1932 by jumping from the ship *Orizaba*, at sea three hundred miles north of Havana. Most direct is *Periscope (Hart Crane)* of 1963, which derives its title from one of the best-known images in Crane's great poem "Cape Hatteras": "time clears/Our lenses, lifts a focus, resurrects/A periscope to glimpse what joys or pain/Our eyes can share or answer—then deflects/Us, shunting to a labyrinth submersed/Where each sees only his dim past reversed...." Johns here makes reference, somewhat in the manner of *In Memory of My Feelings*, not only to the poem but to the poet as well: for this memorial to Crane the artist uses his own handprint as a surrogate for the drowning poet's, and draws in charcoal an arrow pointing downward, at the lower right, to the watery deep. Two works of the previous year are also homages to Crane: *Passage*, whose title comes from another Crane poem, and *Diver*, an obvious reference to the suicide itself, invoked by Johns's handprints at the center moving outward from the body like a swan dive. And there are other works, including the lithograph *Hatteras*, and the painting *Land's End*, made the same year as *Periscope*, which is, again, a coded portrait of the poet: now the hand reaches up from the deep at the lower left—again represented by Johns's own handprint—with an even more prominent downward pointing arrow at the lower right.

But there is more to Johns's interest in Hart Crane and "Cape Hatteras" than this—"Cape



JASPER JOHNS
Land's End, 1963
Oil on canvas, 67 x 48 inches
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Harry W. Anderson

Hatteras" is *already* a memorial, Hart Crane's memorial to his gay poetic ancestor, Walt Whitman. It begins with a citation from Whitman and ends with Crane's own words: "Yes, Walt, afoot again, and onward without halt, not soon nor suddenly—no, never/let go/ My hand/ in yours, Walt Whitman, so..." which, it is important to recognize, is Crane's specific response to Whitman's own opening lines of "Salut au Monde!" in which he calls to himself: "O take my hand Walt Whitman! Such gliding wonders, such sights and sounds! Such joined unended links, each hooked to the next, each answering all, each sharing the earth with all." By substituting his hand for Crane's in the paintings, Johns closes the circle, so that the hands of these three gay American artists are linked, "each hooked to the next," through their work.

Indeed, Johns appears to have appropriated elements of his "portrait" of Crane for his two self-portraits of 1964, *Souvenir 1* and 2. Not only have the words "red, yellow, blue" been transferred from the Crane works to the souvenir plate on which we find the artist's photograph, but, more importantly, a flashlight and mirror (a car's sideview mirror?) have been affixed to the canvas so that they function as a periscope, where light bounces off a mirror angled at forty-five degrees, allowing the underwater viewer to see what is above water. Johns so places himself here that he is the "submersed" viewer.

There is a precedent for Johns's tribute to Crane in Marsden Hartley's painting *Eight Bells Folly: Memorial for Hart Crane*, painted the year after the poet's suicide. Here is Hartley's description of his Crane picture:

> *It has a very mad look as I wish it to have—there is a ship foundering—a sun, a moon, two triangular clouds—a bell with an eight on it—symbolizing eight bells—or noon, when he jumped off—and around the bells are a lot of men's eyes—that look up from below to see who the new lodger is to be—on one cloud will be the number 33, Hart's age—and according to some occult beliefs a dangerous age for a man—for if he survives 33 he lives on—Christ was supposed to be 33....*[12]

The painting is filled with occult references that seem to be Apocalyptic: the sun and the moon are present simultaneously.

It's possible that Johns knew Hartley's homage to Crane[13]; certainly his interest in his predecessor's art has long been noted.[14] *Land's End* has several things in common with Hartley's picture: the blue, black, and white palette punctuated with powerful touches of yellow-orange, and the raised arm and hand in *Land's End*, which parallels the upward-thrusting diagonal from lower left towards the center in *Eight Bells Folly*. But whether or not Johns knew Hartley's homage, the fact remains that both gay American artists have chosen to depict Crane's suicide. This seeming coincidence is not surprising, given that Hart Crane, his remarkable poetry and the fact of his suicide, have long been part of gay mythology: the great gay artist, tortured by social constraints and finally driven to take his own life, would be High Cornball, were it not for the reality it serves to remember. Gay remembrance—gay memorializing, even before the advent of AIDS—has throughout the modern period had the double sense not only of recollecting actual death, but of speaking for death-in-life: of the need to kill one's desire, of the sense of impending retribution from society, of the constant deadening of one's sensitivities in order to defend against what society considers an indefensible disposition. The death of the (gay) poet, be it Crane's or Oscar Wilde's, or even Frank O'Hara's accidental death on, of all places, Fire Island, is a trope for the persistent agon of homosexual experience.

Johns's early work is situated in a discourse, for those who could decipher it, of gay identity. Or

JASPER JOHNS
Souvenir 2, 1964
Oil and collage on canvas with objects, 28 3/4 x 21 inches
Collection of Mrs. Victor Ganz

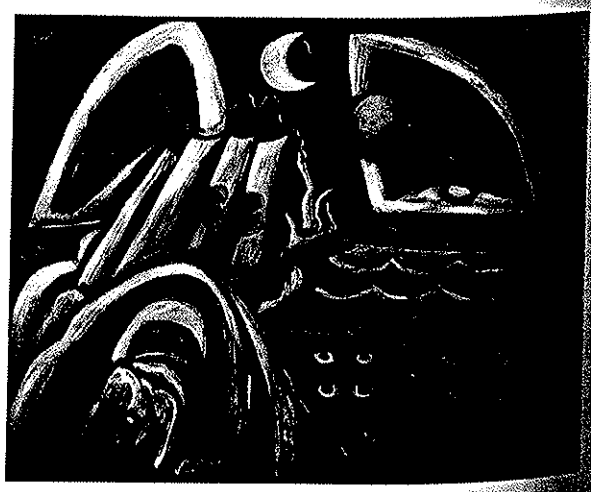
perhaps I should say gay identification, so consistently does Johns speak through his gay antecedents, and they through him. But there is at least one more important figure in Johns's "family tree" of gay male artists, and that is Charles Demuth. Johns was surely struck, as so many gay American artists and critics have been ever since, by the fact that arguably the two most important modernist American painters of the years between the wars, Demuth and Hartley, were gay (even if this information was passed along *sub rosa*, until recently). As has been long recognized, Johns's *Figure 5* (1955), is an homage to Demuth's coded portrait of William Carlos Williams, *I Saw the Figure 5 in Gold* (1928); and this number 5, along with other numbers later, became a kind of talisman for Johns, appearing repeatedly over the years.[15]

Demuth's homosexuality was an important aspect of his art. He made both out-and-out raunchy pornographic watercolors, which he kept to himself, and more subtle, allusive images of sexuality between men, like the well-known *Acrobats* (1919), which he exhibited. But even more important for the art of Johns, I think, is that the need Demuth felt to keep his sexual interests hidden from public scrutiny also disposed him toward coded images and picture-puzzles. These include his well-known poster portraits of the late twenties, of both gay and straight friends, including *Love, Love, Love (Homage to Gertrude Stein)* and *I Saw the Figure 5 in Gold.* In these portraits, words, word fragments, letters, numbers, and imagery combine to both encode and reveal, to those who could decipher them, the identities of Demuth's sitters.

Johns's interest in Demuth was closely allied to his interest in Hartley: Demuth and Hartley were good enough friends for Demuth to have made a study for a poster portrait of Hartley, which seems never to have gone beyond the planning stage. In fact, Demuth really owed Hartley a portrait, inasmuch as he had got his idea for the coded, secret portraits from Hartley in the first place. I am referring to Hartley's well-known German military series of 1914-15, pictures that daringly combine Cubist elements and symbols —letters, numbers, flags, insignias, and war medals—for example, *Portrait of a German Officer* (1914). This and numerous others like it are all coded portraits of Lieutenant Karl von Freyburg, the young Prussian officer, killed in October 1914, who was Hartley's close friend and probably his lover.[16]

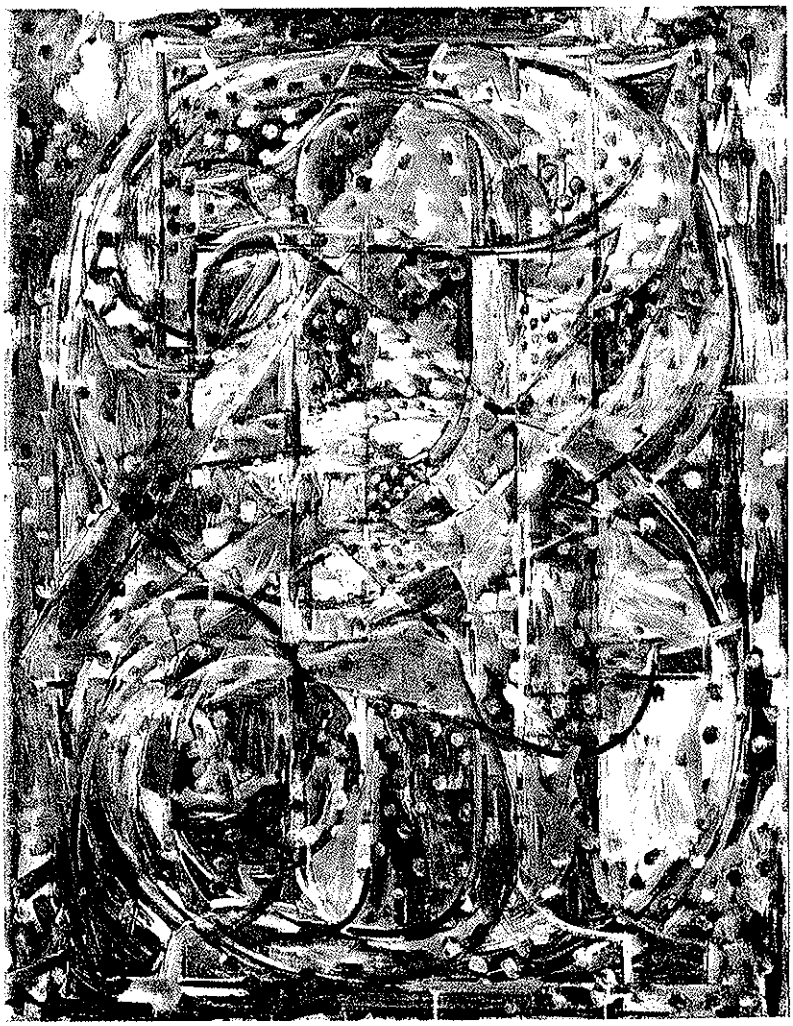
Max Kozloff long ago noted the striking similarity between Hartley's and Johns's surfaces,[17] which result from the wedding of two conflicting systems: the thickly built-up surface—a rich geography of paint in Hartley's case, and newsprint with encaustic in Johns's—covered by a thinly applied, colored layer on top. The two layers are so conjoined that we remain conscious of a lower stratum of indistinct activity and an upper level of delineation, strangely "out-of-sync" with what lies below. Given the "iconographic" impetus that Johns shared with Hartley, there is all the more reason for this commonality of surface, at once a private emotional geography beneath and a public emblem above. In Hartley's and Demuth's modernist, symbolic, emblematic, esoteric portraits, I think Johns found, or simply sensed, a way to give public form to his intensely private experience of being gay. In the work of his gay predecessors Johns found a language—shaped, as it

right:
MARSDEN HARTLEY
Portrait of a German Officer, 1914
Oil on canvas, 68 1/4 x 41 3/8 inches
The Metropolitan Museum of Art
The Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1949



far right:
MARSDEN HARTLEY
Eight Bells Folly: Memorial to Hart Crane, 1933
Oil on canvas, 30 5/8 x 39 3/8 inches
University Art Museum, University of Minnesota
Gift of Ione and Hudson Walker

JASPER JOHNS
Figure 8, 1959
Encaustic and collage on canvas, 9 x 6 inches
The Sonnabend Collection, New York



JASPER JOHNS
Numbers 0 Through 9, 1961
Oil and charcoal on canvas, 54 1/8 x 41 3/8 inches
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden,
Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
Gift of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, 1966

were, by the closet—which could vouchsafe his passage as a modernist, American, gay painter.

It is, in fact, the very imagery of the closet which impresses itself upon us in that most famous early work of Johns's, *Target with Plaster Casts* (1955), an assemblage which he made the same year as his first neo-Demuth, *Figure 5*. Harrison and Orton, who had already noted that *In Memory of My Feelings* more or less coincides with the end of Johns's relationship with Rauschenberg, also made the significant point that the making of *Target with Plaster Casts* coincides in date with the beginning of that relationship. But they did not offer a reading of it. And again we are faced with a trap which Johns himself has set for us: to attempt to interpret the work is to violate the Surrealist-inspired ethos of free, imaginative play; yet to refuse to do so is an act of willful ignorance, which requires that one pretend that a target does *not* presuppose an archer, whose place is identical with the viewer's (whose gaze might be said to be the equivalent of arrows). Typically, Johns creates a work which is highly provocative, but which freezes the spectator in his or her attempt at response.

Nonetheless, if we accept the risk of reading, and of misreading, we can make the following observations: 1) the hinged doors, one for each compartment, may be either opened or closed, revealing or concealing a specific part of the anatomy; 2) the juxtaposition of target and fragmented body parts encourages us to attempt to make them cohere in signification; 3) any significance we can construct will involve both danger and sexuality.

These observations then allow us to go further. This kind of fetishistic dismemberment before our eyes or concealed from us (typical of Surrealist procedures) is usually reserved for women, whereas the only gender we can positively ascribe to any of the body parts is male: the penis and part of the testicles, in the third (green) compartment from the right. The nipple (in the pink compartment in the center) appears to be a male's and the foot at the far left (red) compartment looks male as well. Johns has told me in a letter that the casts were made from the bodies of both men and women[18]; nonetheless, the genitalia are male, and even if the ear, nose, and mouth are all female body parts, their presence has a relatively low psychic valence. The same cannot be said for the penis and nipple, the presence of which, especially in the art of a modern male artist, catches the spectator completely off-guard.

The simple enumeration of body parts might be called Whitmanesque. I am thinking of "I Sing the Body Electric," which after 130 lines, draws to a close with one of those plain-speaking, American catalogues of experience for which Whitman is so famous: the list.

Mouth, tongues, lips, teeth, roof of the mouth, jaws and the jaw-hinges,
Nose, nostrils of the nose, and the partition,
Cheeks, temples, forehead, chin, throat, back of the neck, neck-slue,
Strong shoulders, manly beard, scapula, hind-shoulders, and the ample side-round of the chest,
Upper arm, armpit, elbow-socket, lower-arm, arm-sinews, arm-bones,
Wrist and wrist-joints, hand, palm, knuckles, thumb, forefinger, finger-joints, finger-nails,
Broad breast-front, curling hair of the breast, breast-bone, breast-side,
Ribs, belly, backbone, joints of the backbone,
Hips, hip-sockets, hip-strength, inward and outward round, man-balls, man-root,...
O I say these are not the parts and poems of the body only, but of the soul,
O I say now these are the soul!

far left:
JASPER JOHNS
Figure 5, 1955
Encaustic and collage on canvas, 17 1/2 x 14 inches
Collection of the artist

left:
CHARLES DEMUTH
I Saw the Figure 5 in Gold, 1928
Oil on composition board, 36 x 29 3/4 inches
The Metropolitan Museum of Art
The Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1949

JASPER JOHNS
Target with Plaster Casts, 1955
Encaustic and collage on canvas with objects, 51 x 44 x 3 1/2 inches
Collection of Leo Castelli, New York

This matter-of-fact list is strong stuff: it not only presupposes that the poet has fixed his gaze on the male body, but the poem itself is the trace of that gaze. Indeed, even if the observation is of himself in the mirror (which it is not in the fiction of the poem), this kind of narcissicism is certainly not considered appropriate for men, indeed implies "femaleness," where narcissicism is figured as a reasonable facsimile of the male objectification of women. At any rate, one can easily imagine Johns's interest in Whitman's non-inflected catalogue of the male body. Perhaps his numerous images of American flags and maps of the United States are more Whitmanesque than we have previously thought.[19]

But to return to the work in its entirety: the juxtaposition of salient male body fragments and target presents us with the highly unusual association, in modern art, of *danger* with the nude male body, and especially the male sexual organs. Again, one need only think of Surrealist imagery: the female body has often been represented by men as both dangerous (the "vagina dentata" immediately comes to mind) and endangered (how many breasts presented to male eyes and hands, how many bound or otherwise captive nude female figures?). So we must ask: under what circumstances is the male body endangered by the gaze? Under what regime of looking, or knowing, do men come under the same kind of scrutiny as women? What system of understanding will make sense of the target and the body, especially a target and body produced in the United States in 1955?

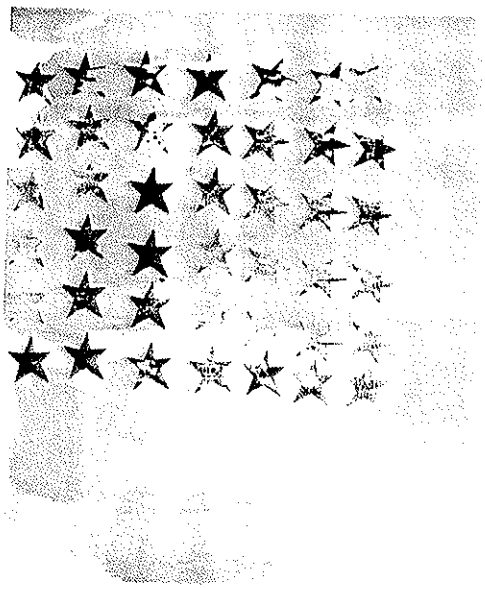
The answer, it must be obvious, is the male homosexual experience. For whatever else it may be, Johns's *Target with Plaster Casts* is first a portrait of the homosexual man of the postwar period, an era of extreme sexual repression; the besieged gay body—and gay psyche—is fragmented and sorted into compartments, each one capable of being alternately closeted or exposed. Moreover, the general realm of gay social and political repression alluded to here is simultaneously the site of personal, sexual, and romantic experience: in positive terms, the male body is offered as a target for Cupid's arrow, and in negative terms as a target for the ego fragmentation that can result from frustrated or thwarted desire. Moreover, in the context of the gay American subculture, the parceled-out body and secreted presences are redolent of the kind of anonymous and legally hazardous sexual practices—the use of so-called "glory holes" in public toilets—that are the concomitant of society's extreme limitations on homosexual contact.[20]

There is a precedent in more distant art history for this image of the nude male as target for the arrows of malevolent archers, one taken up often in gay subculture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: the martyrdom of Saint Sebastian[21]; we might say that in *Target with Plaster Casts* Johns has created an image of gay martyrdom in a demystified age. And there is a more immediate precedent for this kind of image; again we find the figure of Marsden Hartley. In 1939 Hartley painted *Sustained Comedy (Portrait of an Object)*. Hartley has portrayed his sitter—almost certainly a self-portrait—as a living target: his eyes are pierced with flaming arrows, and on his chest is a picture of the crucified Christ. Once again, whether or not Johns was consciously aware of Hartley's painting, the fact of their extraordinarily close manipulation of given imagery argues for a commonality of interest and intention. Finally, we might even ask, in the light of Harrison and Orton's observation that the work dates from the precise moment of the beginning of Johns's and Rauschenberg's relationship, whether *Target with Plaster Casts* ought not to be read in tandem with Robert Rauschenberg's *Bed*, made the same year (1955), under the same roof (the Pearl Street building where they both lived). The two works offer us some approximation—an inchoate and impulsive bodying forth, in the Abstract Expressionist sense—of the excitement, intensity, and danger of two men falling in love.

MARSDEN HARTLEY
Sustained Comedy (Portrait of an Object), 1939
Oil on board, 28 1/8 x 22 inches
The Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh
Gift of Mervin Jules in memory of Hudson Walker

JASPER JOHNS
4 the News, 1962
Encaustic and collage on canvas with objects, 65 x 50 1/4 inches
Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Dusseldorf

Girl Sucking Forefinger, ca. 1956-58
Oil and graphite on primed linen, 48 x 41 inches
The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc., New York



ANDY WARHOL
Flag, ca. 1956
Tempera on paper, 22 1/2 x 28 1/2 inches
The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc., New York

Although Andy Warhol had been a working commercial artist in New York since 1949, and had even exhibited his "fine art" in galleries in New York during the 1950s, his desire to be a full-time (and big-time) artist did not come to realization until 1960. We should not be surprised then, given this chronology, that it was Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg who were his idols, to use the terminology of Hollywood: not only were they the most important young artists in New York, they were gay, and they were lovers. As Rauschenberg said recently to the critic Paul Taylor about his relationship with Johns: "It was sort of new to the art world that the two most well-known, up-and-coming studs were affectionately involved."[22] What more appropriate role models for Warhol than these two mavericks? Warhol even made several silkscreen homages to Rauschenberg, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, unabashedly proclaiming his devotion and admiration for the strikingly handsome Texan. But all did not go as Warhol had hoped—he felt slighted by the storybook couple, ignored despite his entreaties. Here is the passage from *POPism: The Warhol '60s* in which Warhol recounts the luncheon at which he finally summoned up the courage to ask his good friend, the filmmaker Emile De Antonio, what the problem was:

> *As we sat at "21"...we talked about the art around town.... De was such good friends with both Jasper and Bob that I figured he could probably tell me something I'd been wanting to know for a long time: why didn't they like me? Every time I saw them, they cut me dead. So when the waiter brought the brandy, I finally popped the question, and De said, "Okay, Andy, if you really want to hear it straight, I'll lay it out for you. You're too swish, and that upsets them."*
>
> *I was embarrassed, but De didn't stop. I'm sure he saw that my feelings were hurt, but I'd asked him a question and he was going to let me have the whole answer. "First, the post-Abstract Expressionist sensibility is, of course, a homosexual one, but these two guys wear three-button suits —they were in the army or navy or something! Second, you make them nervous because you* collect *paintings, and traditionally artists don't buy the work of other artists, it just isn't done. And third," De concluded, "you're a commercial artist, which really bugs them because when* they *do commercial art—windows and other jobs I find them—they do it just 'to survive.' They won't even use their real names. Whereas* you've *won* prizes*! You're* famous *for it!"...*
>
> *What De had just told me hurt a lot.... Finally I just said something stupid: "I know plenty of painters who are more swish than me." And De said, "Yes, Andy, there are others who are more swish—and less talented—and still others who are less swish and just as talented, but the* major painters *try to look straight; you play up the swish—it's like an armor with you."*
>
> *There was nothing I could say to that. It was all too true. So I decided I just wasn't going to care, because those were all things that I didn't want to change anyway, that I didn't think I* should *want to change. There was nothing wrong with being a commercial artist and there was nothing wrong with collecting art that you admired. Other people could change their attitudes, but not me—I knew I was right. And as for the "swish" thing, I'd always had a lot of fun with that—just watching the expressions on people's faces. You'd have to have seen the way all the Abstract Expressionist painters carried themselves and the kinds of images they cultivated, to understand how shocked people were to see a painter coming on swish. I certainly wasn't a butch kind of guy by nature, but I must admit, I went out of my way to play up the other extreme.*[23]

It must be said, before I proceed to analyze this rich account, that we are dealing with Warhol's recollections of his feelings about an afternoon nearly twenty years previous. We will never know just what De Antonio said to him, nor whether Johns and Rauschenberg ever told De Antonio what he claims they communicated. But this is of little importance; what concerns me is what Warhol believed he heard (and for all we know, he may have heard and recounted things precisely as they happened) and how he felt about it. In order to indicate that

Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns at Tibor de Nagy Gallery, New York, 1959
Photo: Fred W. McDarrah

ultimately this is Warhol's narrative, and no one else's (except perhaps Pat Hackett's, his co-author on *POPism*), I will refer to Johns, Rauschenberg, and De Antonio as they are invoked by Warhol: as "Jasper and Bob" and as "De," in quotation marks.

As Warhol tells it, according to "De" it is precisely what Andy shares with "Jasper and Bob" —homosexuality—that creates an unbridgable distance between them: Andy's effeminacy, as it used to be called—his "swishiness" in gay parlance—is an embarrassment. For "Jasper and Bob" the private and the public are two distinct and essentially separate realms; the self which inhabits one is not necessarily co-extensive with the other. For Warhol, on the other hand, the private and the public, if hardly identical, were a pair of interconnecting chambers: swishiness is the public sign he wears for his private desires, and which he, as he has just told us, clings to fiercely.

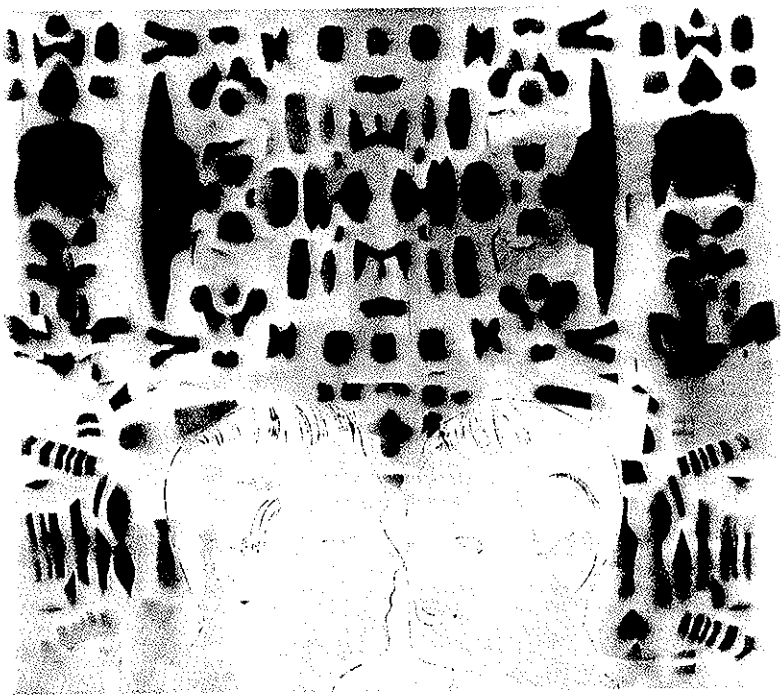
Moreover, Warhol's queerness—which seems the appropriate term for a system of sexual signification which parades its "inappropriateness,"—"I must admit I went out of my way to play up the other extreme"—was manifested not only in his comportment; "Jasper and Bob" may also have been offended by the homosexuality manifested in Warhol's pre-Pop art, which was quite well known in New York at the time.[24] Not that we are dealing with an artist whose (homo)sexuality was "out" in the sense that that of a young artist in 1992 might be: Warhol was enough a man of his times that his sexual "identity"—even his purported asexuality—was accentuated or de-emphasized depending on moment, medium, and context. For instance, during the early Pop art years, 1960-65, as distinct from the periods both before and after, representations of frank sexuality are almost completely displaced from the realm of the pictorial to the filmic, as in *Blow Job* (1963), which Stephen Koch has referred to as the "apotheosis of the reaction shot, never to be surpassed."[25] The entire film is made up of the facial reactions of its fortunate, fellated star; except for a very brief glimpse of a leather-jacketed shoulder, the other participant and the act itself are withheld from the spectator. Furthermore, in contrast to the relatively direct "boy drawings" of the 1950s, full appreciation of Warhol's early Pop paintings and silkscreens required at least a certain gay-attuned sensibility and a sense of humor. A case in point is the *Thirteen Most Wanted Men* mural which Warhol created for Philip Johnson's New York State Pavilion at the 1964 World's Fair, which was—for those who could decipher it—a punning reference not only to the FBI's desire, but to Warhol's own. That "wanting men" was here synonymous with criminal activity must have made the joke all the better to Warhol. As local post offices across America offered, if unintentionally, male pinups to the American public, Warhol can be said to have collaborated with the U.S. government in cultivating gay sensibility. Inasmuch as Warhol was asked to hide his mural from public view before the Fair opened (which he did by painting over his "most wanted men" with silver paint), it may be that some of his "inside" jokes were, at least subliminally, too close to the surface.

But let us return to "De's" statement to Warhol that the first reason that "Jasper and Bob" don't like him is that he is too swish. If this were only a question of the personal reaction of two particular gay artists to the behavior of another gay artist, it would not, it seems to me, merit a great deal of attention. But the 21 Club anecdote is not idiosyncratic, it's exemplary; it provides us with another glimpse into the gendered nature of the discourse of postwar American art. We know what Warhol is talking about when he says, "You'd have to have seen the way all the Abstract Expressionist painters carried themselves and the kinds of images they cultivated to understand how shocked people were to see a painter coming on swish." But "De" continues: "Second, you make [Jasper and Bob] nervous because you *collect* paintings, and traditionally artists don't buy the work of other artists, it just isn't done. And third, you're a commercial artist, which really bugs them, because when they do commercial art—windows and other jobs I find them—they do it just 'to survive.' They won't even use their real names. Whereas *you've* won prizes! You're *famous* for it!"

Andy Warhol *was* proud of his commercial work, and with good reason: he was one of New York's

best-known and highest paid commercial artists of the fifties. But there is special pleading in "Jasper and Bob's" objections to Warhol's willingness to "own" his commercial reputation: as "De" recounts, they also did commercial assignments. Specifically, they designed windows for Gene Moore at Tiffany and Bonwit Teller, both working under the same pseudonym: Matson Jones. There is a parallelism, then, between Warhol's willingness to wear his "swishiness" as a sign and to wear his "commercialism" as a sign, just as there is a symmetry in "Jasper and Bob's" twin refusals to do either. Moreover, these two buttoned-down guys were surely aware that moonlighting as a window dresser was not quite the same thing as moonlighting as a security guard: to dress Tiffany's windows was, and often still is, a typically gay pursuit; it is highly lucrative; and it is perilous because it is morphologically close to the making of paintings. Warhol's insistence on being both a commercial and a fine artist wreaked havoc on the kinds of binarisms — social, economic, sexual, aesthetic, and political — that structured, and still do to a large extent, the discourse of art.

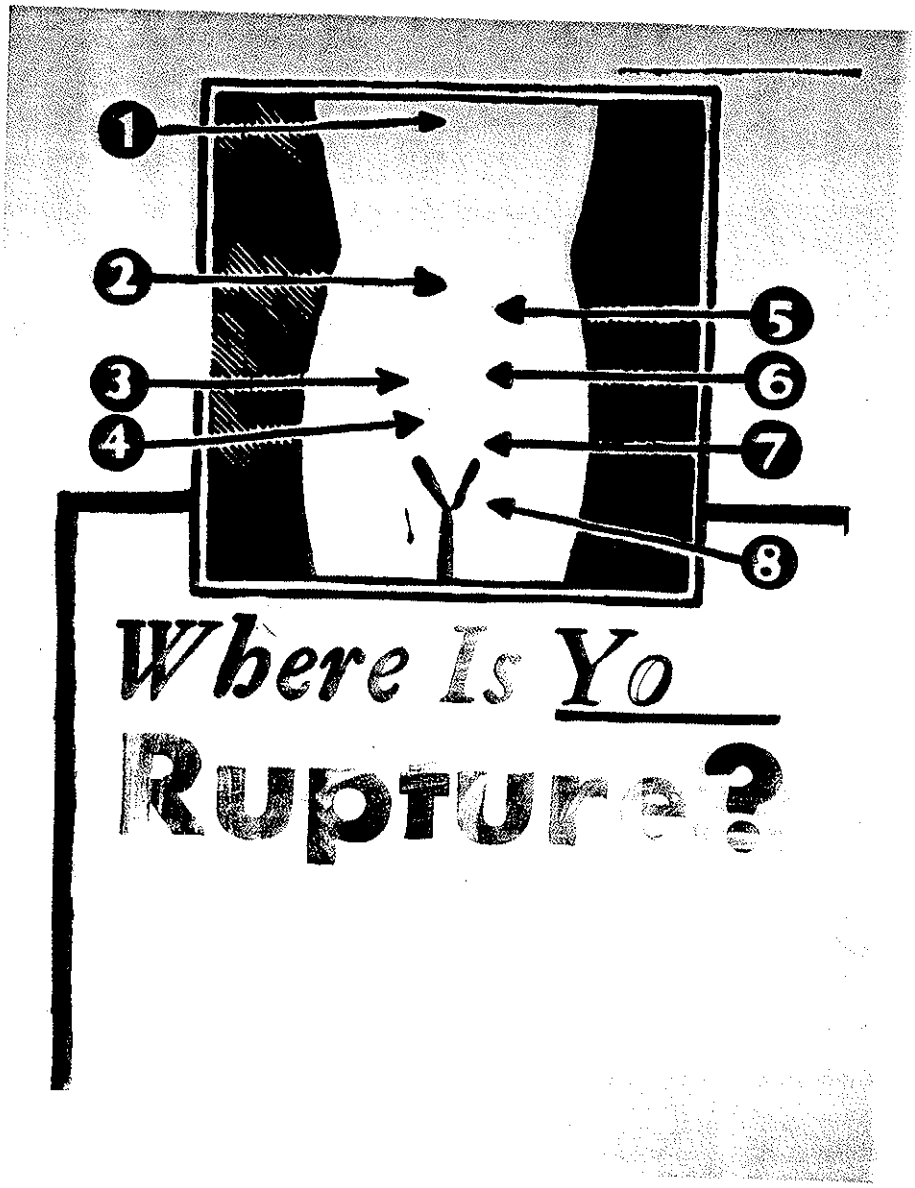
I will return to the issue of commercialism, but we must first attend to "Jasper and Bob's" third objection, that Warhol has committed trespass in being an art collector. To say that Andy Warhol was a collector is to risk understatement — Warhol was King of the Collectors. In his later years he was a fixture on



Madison Avenue and at the Sixth Avenue Flea Market, where he collected the good, the bad, and the ugly. He not only collected the work of his contemporaries, he also accumulated cookie jars, jewelry, furniture, illustrated books, gay pornography, Native American art, eighteenth-century silver, you name it.

But we still don't know precisely what it is that is so objectionable about Andy's collecting; "De" himself isn't certain either — he concludes with the phrase: "it just isn't done." The trick here, I think, is to change our terminology: collector is another word for shopper, a *fancy* word for shopper, one who shops for high-class goods. Both shoppers and collectors are consumers, and this leads us again to the threshold of gender. Warhol is disliked by his gay predecessors because he acts like a *consumer*, when he is supposed to act like

ANDY WARHOL
Two Heads, ca. 1952-57
Oil, ink, and commercial spray paint on primed linen, 42 x 47 3/4 inches
The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc., New York

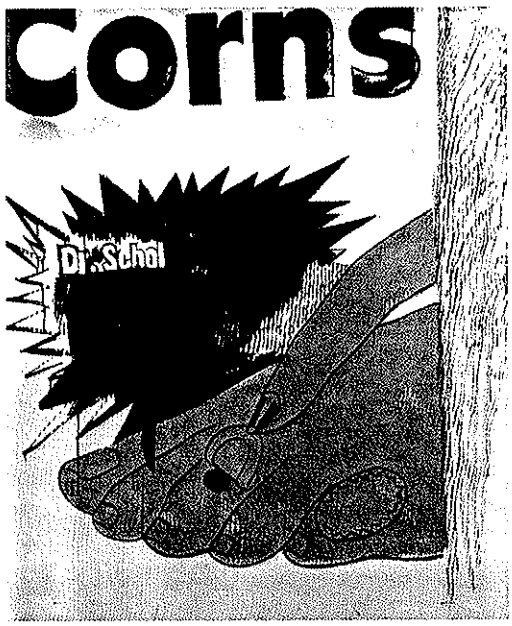


ANDY WARHOL
Where is Your Rupture?, 1960
Synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 70 x 54 inches
Private collection, courtesy of Gallery Bruno Bischofberger, Zurich

a *producer*. This is another way of saying that Warhol acts like a *woman*, not like a *man*. In the postwar world that provides the context for Pop art, consumerism — especially consumerism of the supermarket — was associated with women. The supermarket was the domain of women shoppers, the place where mothers and wives went to seek sustenance for their families. Only an unmanly man ventured forth to the market, according to the stereotype. So, in a very real sense, to say that Warhol is too "swishy" and to say that he is a collector is to say more or less the same thing — that he has transgressed his proper gender identification, that he has taken on the attributes of a woman.

Furthermore, Andy Warhol was not only a "sissy," he was a "momma's boy," and seemingly as proud of *that* as he was of being a commercial artist. Again Warhol displays as part of his identity the very things he is supposed to keep hidden by the codes of adult maleness. But these two identities — mother-identified man and commercial artist — are inextricably bound together: Warhol had made his reputation, above all else, as an illustrator for the women's "carriage trade." As is well known, mother and son at times collaborated on various projects, commercial and otherwise. In 1958 the Art Director's Club actually bestowed an award on Julia Warhola, which referred to her in mock hand-drawn calligraphy, as if it were her name, as "Andy Warhol's Mother."

Yet something remarkable happened when Warhol left commercial art for his own art



— although he still thought about commerce, he now thought about commercialism and consumerism not through the eyes of a *Vogue* reader or Bonwit shopper, but through his mother's eyes. In terms of his iconography, Andy's grown-up world in New York was relinquished for a return to the world of Pittsburgh and his childhood. Cross and Blackwell was traded in for Campbell's. It was a "blue-collar" woman's world that Warhol offered New York's sophisticated art consumers. In a Duchampian transference, women *and* men who never did their own shopping or cleaning were sent to the Stable Gallery and Leo Castelli's to buy Campbell's and Brillo, just like Mrs. Warhola and the vast majority of American women. And it was of course his same working-class woman's world that Warhol held up to us in his portraits of movie stars. In the repetition of images, the off-register printing, and the general lack of nuance, Warhol's portraits of stars reveal their source in the daily newspaper and the fan magazines, those halfway houses between fact and fiction.[26]

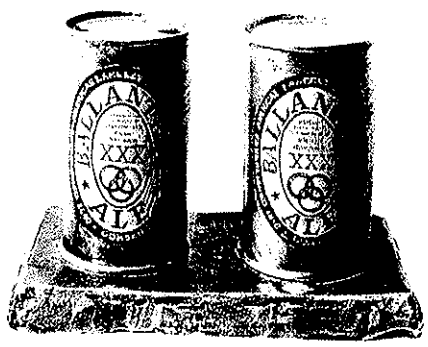
ANDY WARHOL
Dr. Scholl, 1960
Synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 48 x 40 inches
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Gift of Halston

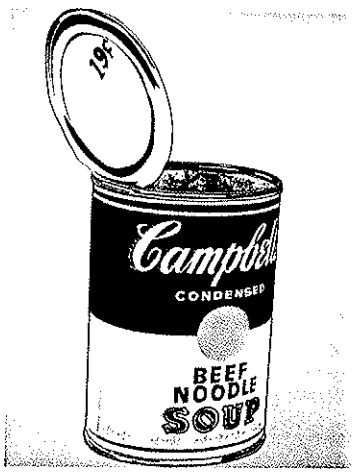
For Warhol, his past and his present could now be made to cohere. His class origins and his sexual preferences could be expressed in one utterance, for on the common ground of "camp," that is to say in popular culture, the working class and the homosexual meet. The year that Warhol made his first Troys and Marilyns, 1962, is the same year that Susan Sontag published her "Notes on Camp," in which she made available to the general population the gay, cult sensibility which embraces all that good taste abhors: the popular, the outré, and the forgotten. How felicitous that mother and son could share a taste for Troy Donahue and for an Art Deco club chair (which in the case of Andy's mother and her friends survived in the living room because they could not afford to replace it with a more up-to-date specimen).

Indeed, Warhol's *Campbell's Soup Can* of 1962 now begins to look like a "feminine" response to Johns's "masculine" *Painted Bronze* of two years earlier: supermarket vs. saloon, shopping vs. drinking, nourishment vs. escape. But the comparison, I think, is instructive in other ways as well. Both, obviously, are "portraits" of objects drawn from popular culture, and both are intended as Duchampian demonstrations of the power of the art context to determine value (Johns's work apparently originated as a dare, when someone commented that Leo Castelli was such a superb salesman that he could even sell a couple of beer cans to a collector, if he had to). More specifically, both works are representations of vessels that can be found in any supermarket or grocery store. In both cases the labels, the "text" that would have been so anathema to Abstract Expressionist artists, make up a good part of the image.

But at that point the similarities end. Obviously in the case of the Johns we are dealing with sculpture, a work in three dimensions, and Warhol's work is a two-dimensional representation; but the example could have been reversed, with a Warhol Campbell's Soup crate and the Johns print of his subject. This distinction does not seem important. What is important, though, is the means of manufacture: Johns has made a bronze cast which he subsequently hand paints, Warhol a photographic silkscreen. Although both are in effect derived from a template which, in theory, can be used to reproduce itself, the Johns work, after all the trouble he has gone to, ends up as a handmade object, which of course is the point. The hand of the artist turns ale cans into "art," whereas Warhol's silkscreen simply reiterates — on canvas instead of paper — the original mode of the referent's manufacture. It may now be art, but that simply means that art's definition has been pulled "down" to include supermarket items; Johns's hand-painted Pop objects have, on the contrary, had their originals brought "up" to the museum.

But this leads us to the spectator and the way in which each work is to be apprehended. We must still perform the hermeneutical pursuit of meaning to read Johns's *Painted Bronze*; we must get beneath its "skin," we must know of its multiple moments of realization, and we must sense and savor the contrariness of object and appearance. In Warhol's *Campbell's Soup Can* we remain where Warhol always insisted we remain: on the surface. There is no place to go "into" the work, no depths to plumb, no mysteries to unravel. Indeed, if we are to go anywhere it is outward, back into our own space and the cultural codes which determine how we evaluate the relative worth of things in the world. We might say that if with Johns we are required to move at a ninety-degree angle into the work, perpendicular to the picture plane, or into the body of the objects, like one of the arrows that would pierce his *Target with Plaster Casts*, with Warhol we can only move laterally, or find ourselves bounced back to where we stand, reflected. That is to say, if with Johns the irony which structures





far left:
JASPER JOHNS
Painted Bronze, 1960
Painted bronze, 5 1/2 x 8 x 4 3/4 inches
Museum Ludwig, Cologne

left:
ANDY WARHOL
Big Campbell's Soup Can 19¢, 1962
Acrylic on canvas, 72 x 54 1/2 inches
The Menil Collection, Houston

ANDY WARHOL
Peach Halves, 1960
Synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 70 x 54 inches
Staatsgalerie Stuttgart

the work pulls us ineluctably further in, with Warhol's "camp" facsimile—camp being the poor relation of irony—we remain outside, laughing perhaps, and maybe recognizing how artificial, how arbitrary, are our systems of representation. Indeed, I have come to think that Warhol's insistence on our taking his art at face value, his insistence that we remain on the surface of things, derived from acute awareness that "depth," intellectual or pictorial, could all too easily begin to assume the shape of "the closet," from the depths of which one might never reemerge. One could hide in deep, dark places, be those the spaces of high Abstract Expressionism, or the spaces we construct for ourselves by means of less-than-forthright behavior. "So I decided I just wasn't going to care," Warhol comments on "Jasper and Bob's" censure, "because those were all things that I didn't want to change anyway, that I didn't think I *should* want to change.... Other people could change their attitudes, but not me—I knew I was right."

Now, lest I give the impression that Warhol took all his cues from mass culture, and was somehow oblivous to high art discourse (as distinct from Johns's more rarified system of reference and understanding), I should point out that the battle lines were clear even at the highest levels: an inviolable distinction between the popular and the elite had long been inscribed in American art discourse. It was in 1939, after all, that Clement Greenberg—the most powerful, serious American critic of Warhol's era—published "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," an essay written against the terrifying background of European fascism on the eve of World War II.[27] The essay is well known in part because it is here that the young Greenberg exhibited his supposed left-wing sympathies. The essay ends with a paraphrase of Marx: "Today we no longer look toward socialism for a new culture—as inevitably as one will appear, once we have socialism. Today we look to socialism *simply* for the preservation of whatever living culture we have right now." Yet, as has been discussed by Robert Storr, this encomium of socialism occurs at the end of an extended indictment of popular culture, which Greenberg saw as essentially fascist.[28] In order to do this, of course, he had to construct a proletariat which was both powerless and benighted: "There has always been," Greenberg writes," on one side the minority of the powerful—and therefore the cultivated—and on the other the great mass of the exploited and poor—and therefore the ignorant. Formal culture has always belonged to the first, while the last have had to content themselves with folk or rudimentary culture, or kitsch." And Greenberg continues:

> *Where there is an avant-garde, generally we also find a rear-guard. True enough—simultaneously with the entrance of the avant-garde, a second new cultural phenomenon appeared in the industrial West: that thing to which the Germans give the wonderful name of kitsch: popular, commercial art and literature with their chromeotypes, magazine covers, illustrations, ads, slick and pulp fiction, comics, Tin Pan Alley music, tap dancing, Hollywood movies, etc. etc....to fill the demand of the new market, a new commodity was devised: ersatz culture, kitsch, destined for those insensible to the values of genuine culture, but who are hungry nevertheless for the diversion that only culture of some sort can provide.*

Without debating the validity of these attitudes, I want nonetheless to point to one final passage in Greenberg's essay, which brings us yet again to the threshold of gender. Greenberg says that "If the avant-garde imitates the processes of art, kitsch, we now see, imitates its effects." This is Greenberg's shorthand way of saying, as he explains a bit more clearly elsewhere in the essay, that avant-garde art requires the spectator to sympathetically involve him or herself with the making of art—the processes—whereas kitsch makes no demand on the spectator—he or she has simply to consume the end result: the effects. But we may usefully understand this distinction as the same one we have already encountered, the very same one that "Jasper and Bob" found so odious in the Warhol scenario: if the avant-garde is allied with processes, according to Greenberg, it is an expression of production, of the world of men; if kitsch is allied with effects, again according to Greenberg, it is an expression of consumption, of the world of women.

Andy Warhol at Eleanor Ward Gallery, New York, 1964
Photo: Fred W. McDarrah

Once launched in the New York art world, this gendered distinction between avant-garde and kitsch had a particular tenacity, although never with the slightest self-consciousness (as in all ideological constructs, an auto-critique would have vitiated the power of the mythicizing assumptions).[29] In 1962, the year of Warhol's first Campbell's Soup cans, his paint-by-number pictures, and his Green Stamps, Greenberg in his essay "After Abstract Expressionism," coined the term "homeless representation." He wrote:

> *This manner, as returned to abstract art by de Kooning himself and the countless artists he influenced, I call "homeless representation." I mean by this a plastic and descriptive painterliness that is applied to abstract ends, but which continues to suggest representational ones. In itself "homeless representation" is neither good nor bad, and maybe some of the best results of Abstract Expressionism in the past were got by flirting with representation.*[30]

It is interesting to note, by the way, that after discussing the art of Jasper Johns, Greenberg concludes that the artist is, in effect, the last Abstract Expressionist: "Johns sings the swan-song of 'homeless representation,'" he writes, "and like most swan-songs, it carries only a limited distance."[31]

Of course, Greenberg's use of the term "homeless representation" is intended to point us *away* from the "home," away from figuration (even in its orphaned, late-abstract, or Johnsian incarnation), towards the color-field painters he was championing. But his choice of terminology is significant, and must have been especially resonant at the very moment that not only Warhol, but also Jim Dine, Roy Lichtenstein, Claes Oldenburg, and numerous other Pop artists were creating such a sensation with their images of consumer culture in general and of the home in particular. Indeed, the trope of the "anti-domestic" was inscribed in the discourse of Abstract Expressionism by at least the early 1950s, if not sooner.

A case in point is the article published in 1951 in *Art News*, "Pollock Paints a Picture," by Robert Goodnough, which accompanied the well-known photographs by Hans Namuth of Jackson Pollock at work in his studio in East Hampton. Here is the gospel of Pollock according to Goodnough:

> *Before settling on the Island, Pollock worked for ten years in a Greenwich Village studio. Intermittently he made trips across the country, riding freight trains or driving a Model A Ford, developing a keen awareness of vast landscape and open sky. "You get a wonderful view of the country from the top of a freight car," he explains. Pollock loves the outdoors and has carried with him and into his painting a sense of the freedom experienced before endless mountains and plains, and perhaps this is not surprising in an artist born in Cody, Wyoming, and raised in Arizona and Northern California.*[32]

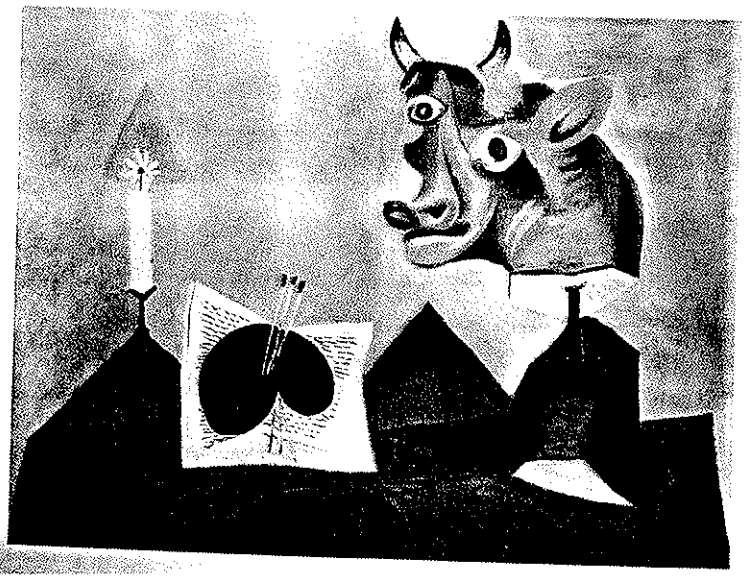
At the very moment of the successful domestication of the American artist within American culture, of the "Triumph of American Painting," we are asked to recall, as we gaze at Pollock working in the barn alongside his Long Island house, the "natural habitat" of the species. In fact, just months before Namuth took his photographs, Pollock showed himself to be not only domesticated, but a paradigmatic 1950s consumer: he traded in his Model A Ford for a Cadillac.[33] The moral of Goodnough's postwar tale is a variation on the one which Johns will send up in *Painting with Two Balls*, i.e., that only authentic American males can make authentic art. Now the critic says: *in spite of appearances*, with all evidence to the contrary, the American male painter is still not a part of the domestic world of women. The excessive need to insist upon the wide-open expanses of the virilizing American landscape, the need to affirm what is neither domestic or commercial, is precisely the same need which so many Pop artists—and by no means only the gay ones—took such pleasure in

ANDY WARHOL
Marilyn, 1962
Acrylic and silkscreen on canvas, 20 x 16 inches
Collection of Douglas S. Cramer, Los Angeles

parodying. So essential to postwar art criticism was the anticonsumerist, antidomestic, masculinizing construction, that in 1952, in "The American Action Painters," we find Harold Rosenberg not only decrying the arrival in America of mass good taste—"Modern furniture and crockery in mail-order catalogues; Modern vacuum cleaner, can openers," but also describing the abstract painting he considered empty as "apocalyptic wallpaper" which he further says we may recognize by "a few expanses of tone or the juxtaposition of colors and shapes purposely brought to the verge of bad taste in the manner of Park Avenue shop windows...."[34]

We perhaps should not be surprised that Warhol, in his typically matter-of-fact reification of the disdained terms of art and behaviorial rhetoric, went right to the heart of this Abstract Expressionist no-man's-land in 1966: he produced wallpaper, with which he papered Ileana Sonnabend's gallery in Paris and Leo Castelli's gallery in New York.[35] Wallpaper: housewives, consumers; Park Avenue shop windows, fairy decorators; cows. Not only did the cow remind Americans of that era of Elsie, the Borden Dairy company logo, but in Warhol's paper the female of the species' benign gaze is a campy deflation of the imperious bull's glare, that look of masterful control that had become more or less synonymous with a certain kind of male, avant-gardist authority.

So, when it came time five years later for Andy Warhol's retrospective at the Whitney Museum, in 1971, what more economical gesture, what more succinct way of expressing his allegiances—in terms of gender identification, sexual orientation, and class origins—than his decision, before hanging his paintings, to paper the immense fourth floor of Marcel Breuer's brutalizing, modernist building. With the pananche of a big-time decorator or a strong-willed housewife, Warhol transformed the public space he was given into a jumbo-sized simulacrum of the domestic interior. By way of making the Whitney's vast rooms look cozy, he dressed up the galleries designed for the display of avant-garde "production" in the trappings of kitsch "consumption." Obviously, this is a kind of transvestism. Warhol was willing to have a decade of his painting and sculpture look like so many gaudy accessories on a cheap dress in order to unleash, yet once more, the free play of gender, sexuality, and class signification that was his special field of knowledge.



PABLO PICASSO
Still Life with Red Bull's Head, 1938
Oil and enamel on canvas, 38 1/4 x 51 1/4 inches
The Museum of Modern Art, New York
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. William A. M. Burden

1 Andy Warhol and Pat Hackett, *POPism: The Warhol '60s* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), p. 40.

2 The Mattachine Society was founded in Los Angeles in 1950 and the Daughters of Bilitis in San Francisco in 1955. The Stonewall Riots took place in New York in June 1969. For a moving oral history of the early gay liberation movement, see Eric Marcus, *Making History: The Struggle for Gay and Lesbian Equal Rights 1955-1990* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992).

3 This article is based on a series of lectures that I delivered between 1986 and 1991: "Belated Notes on Camp: Homosexuality, Representation, and the Decline of Abstract Expressionism" (College Art Association Annual Meeting, New York, 1986, and the University of Pennsylvania, 1986); "The Body Electric: Jasper Johns' Song of Himself" (Lesbian and Gay Studies Conference, Yale, 1988; Simon Watson Gallery, New York, 1989); and "Andy Warhol, Soup to Nuts" (The Museum of Modern Art, 1989; the Getty Center for Art History and the Humanities, 1989; UCLA, 1989; Harvard, 1990; Stanford, 1990). I am especially grateful to Jim Salsow, John Goodman, Jim Herbert, Annette Michelson, and Romy Golan for their help and suggestions at various stages. I also want to thank Kurt Forster and the Getty Center for Art History and the Humanities for inviting me, as a Visiting Scholar, to refine my ideas on Warhol.

4 Leon Golub, "A Critique of Abstract Expressionism," *College Art Journal* 14, no. 2 (Winter 1955): 143.

5 Charles Harrison and Fred Orton, "Jasper Johns: 'Meaning What you See'," *Art History* 7, no. 1 (March 1984): 97.

6 Rosalind Krauss, "Jasper Johns," *Lugano Review* 1, no. 2 (1965): 97.

7 Harold Rosenberg, "The American Action Painters," *Art News* 51, no. 8 (December 1952): 22.

8 Elaine de Kooning, "Franz Kline: Painter of His Own Life," *Art News* 61, no. 7 (November 1962): 31.

9 On the issue of Johns's "evasions," see Jill Johnston, "Trafficking with X," *Art in America* 79, no. 3 (March 1991): 102-111, 164-65.

10 Vivien Raynor, "Jasper Johns: 'I Have Attempted to Develop my Thinking in Such a Way That the Work I'm Doing is Not Me'," *Art News* 72, no. 3 (March 1973): 22.

11 Roberta Bernstein, *Jasper Johns' Paintings and Sculptures 1954-1974: "The Changing Focus of the Eye"* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1985). This is a revision of her Ph.D. dissertation for Columbia University, New York, 1975.

12 Marsden Hartley to Adelaide Kuntz, December 5, 1932, quoted in Barbara Haskell, *Marsden Hartley* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1980), p. 94.

13 I asked Johns in a letter of October 8, 1988, if he knew either Hartley's homage to Crane or *Sustained Comedy (Portrait of an Object)* (1939); in a letter of October 17, 1988, Johns wrote to me: "The two Hartley titles mean nothing to me. I might recognize the paintings if I saw them, but I have no way of looking them up at the moment."

14 See, for instance, Max Kozloff, *Jasper Johns* (New York: Abrams, 1967), pp. 11-12.

15 Ibid.

16 For a discussion of the German military portraits in the light of Hartley's homosexuality, see Haskell, *Marsden Hartley*, pp. 31-32, 43-45.

17 See Kozloff, *Jasper Johns*, p. 12.

18 "The casts in my *Target with Plaster Casts* were taken from several (4, I think, or perhaps, 3) models, male and female." Letter from Jasper Johns to the author, October 17, 1988.

19 Philip Fisher alludes to Jasper Johns's maps of the United States in "Democratic Social Space: Whitman, Melville, and the Promise of American Transparency," *Representations* 24 (Fall 1988): 99-100.

20 Moira Roth discusses Johns's work in terms of McCarthy-era investigations and codes in "The Aesthetic of Indifference," *Artforum* 16, no. 3 (November 1977): 46-53. Jonathan Katz is currently at work on a Ph.D. dissertation for Northwestern University, the subject of which is the art of Johns and Rauschenberg in the context of Cold War politics.

21 Dr. Annemarie Springer delivered a paper at the College Art Association annual meeting in New York in 1986, on this subject: "Saint Sebastian from the 15th to the 20th Centuries: A Study in Homoerotic Imagery."

22 Robert Rauschenberg interviewed by Paul Taylor, *Interview* 20, no. 12 (December 1990): 147.

23 Warhol and Hackett, *POPism*, pp.11-13.

24 For an excellent study of gay imagery in Warhol's pre-Pop art, see Trevor Fairbrother, "Tomorrow's Man," in *"Success is a Job in New York...": The Early Art and Business of Andy Warhol* (New York: Grey Art Gallery, New York University, in association with the Carnegie Museum of Art, 1989).

25 Stephen Koch, *Stargazer: Andy Warhol's World and His Films* (New York and London: Marion Boyars, 1985), p. 48.

26 For an insightful study of Warhol's movie-star portraits, see Cecile Whiting, "Andy Warhol, the Public Star and the Private Self," *Oxford Art Journal* 10, no. 2 (1987): 58-75.

27 Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," *Partisan Review* (Fall 1939); all citations here are from the essay as published in *Clement Greenberg: Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 1, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 5-22.

28 Robert Storr, "No Joy in Mudville: Greenberg's Modernism Then and Now," in *Modern Art and Popular Culture: Readings in High and Low* (New York: Abrams, 1990).

29 The seminal essay on the subect of the gendered nature of modernism and mass culture, and particularly of Greenberg's place in the discourse is Andreas Huyssens, "Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other," which originally appeared in *Studies in Entertainment: Critical Approaches to Mass Culture*, ed. Tania Modleski (Bloomington, Ind.: University of Indiana Press, 1986).

30 Clement Greenberg, "After Abstract Expressionism," *Art International* 6, no. 8 (October 25, 1962): 25.

31 Ibid., p. 27.

32 Robert Goodnough, "Pollock Paints a Picture," *Art News* 50, no. (May 1951): 38-41, 60-61.

33 Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith, *Jackson Pollock: An American Saga* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1989), p. 627.

34 Rosenberg, "The American Action Painters," p. 49.

35 Thomas B. Hess first suggested that Warhol's cow wallpaper might be read as a response to attitudes about modern art: "It is as if Warhol got hung up on the cliche that attacks 'modern art' for being like 'wallpaper,' and decided that wallpaper is a pretty good idea, too." Hess, review of Andy Warhol at Castelli, *Art News* 63, no. 9 (January 1965): 11. I am grateful to my student Joelle LaFerrara for this reference. Benjamin Buchloh relates the cow wallpaper to Rosenberg's proscription in "Andy Warhol's One-Dimensional Art: 1955-1966," in *Andy Warhol: A Retrospective* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1989), p. 56.

Installation view of the exhibition "Andy Warhol" (1971) at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York