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Andy Warhol, or The Machine Perfected

THIERRY DE DUVE

translated by ROSALIND KRAUSS

In the art of the past twenty years, only Joseph Beuys equals Andy Warhol in legend-value — that is, media-value — and the shadows of both of them hover equally over the art of the younger generation. But Beuys is a hero and Warhol a star. For Beuys, capitalism remained the cultural horizon to leave behind; for Warhol, it was simply nature. Like Marx a bourgeois German, Beuys wanted to incarnate the proletarian.¹ Warhol, an American immigrant of working-class origins, wanted to be a machine. At the nexus of these oppositions are several related facts: that Beuys based art on will and thus on a principle of production, and Warhol on desire and thus on a principle of consumption; that Beuys believed in creativity and Warhol did not; and that for Beuys art was labor while for Warhol it was commerce.

The difference, however, is that Warhol stated baldly what Beuys, as a true romantic, forces us to decipher. In order to translate the *bohemian* into the *proletarian*, as is appropriate for Beuys, it is necessary to pass through Marx. But Warhol translated this himself. He called his bohemia the Factory. But that's precisely *his* bohemia. It is a simulacrum of bohemia, having nothing any longer to do with the place of literary myth whose historical meaning and necessity was tied to giving a voice to proletarian hopes and despair. In his factory there were no proletarians, any more than the '60s underground was peopled by masses of workers locked into the netherworld of *Metropolis*. In the Factory one led the bohemian life, played at it, but never submitted to it as a destiny. Drugs and sex, eccentricities and gestures of the accursed inflicted those who assumed them and wreaked more than their share of personal tragedies. But that was the price of a life-style that was beautiful only in its coherence, that wasn't a life, and was in no way the life of the species-being (*Gattungswesen*) in which Marx locates the

1. See Thierry de Duve, "Joseph Beuys, or The Last of the Proletarians," *October*, no. 45 (Summer 1988), pp. 47–62. The present essay is the second of a four-part study exploring, in both its theoretical and ethical dimensions, the modern phenomenon I have characterized as "the overlapping of aesthetics and political economy." The two further essays place Yves Klein and Marcel Duchamp within this analytical field.

essence of the proletariat and which, through labor-power, links the individual to the destiny of the species.

The inhabitants of the Factory were mere individuals, not social types. There were no acrobats or ragpickers in Warhol's bohemia, but, rather, proper names: Edie Sedgwick, Gerard Malanga, Ron Tavel, Brigid Polk, Candy Darling, Viva, Ondine, Billy Name . . . , each with his or her "look," quirks, neurosis, sexual speciality, and idiom. This world of "freaks" gravitated around a central figure who had himself called the "boss" but who made it a point of honor never to seem to have the slightest individuality, never to be anything but the mirror of his entourage, the xerox of what his courtiers wanted him to be. He didn't manage the Factory like a boss but like a madame, if he managed it at all.

Joseph Beuys incarnated the whole list of social types that filled bohemia — dandy, peddler, medical student, poet—except for two: the worker and the whore. The worker, or rather the *proletarian*, supplies the key to a reading of this list, causing it to reverberate for one last time in all the modern utopias that sought to liberate creativity in order to fulfill human needs and to give art its use-value. Warhol, who perhaps believed in divine providence but surely not in *need*, was content to base his art on the universal law of exchange by making himself the go-between for the least allowable desires of his contemporaries. Beuys's equation "creativity = capital" was something Warhol interpreted in reverse; as had Marx, when he assumed the capitalist point-of-view and wrote in the 1844 manuscripts: "Through its mediating role, money is the true creative force." Warhol never made a mystery of his ambitions, nor hid the fact that he loved to swim in the "icy waters of egotistic calculation." Not for him either utopia or the promise of liberation. His philosophy (*From A to B and Back Again*) turns on the sentence: "I started out as a commercial artist and I want to end up as a business artist." Which is what he did, yet not without having slipped in, between his career in the '50s as an advertising designer and his career in the '70s as a go-between in the culture industry, a dazzling and prolific career as artist.

But *career* is a truly bad word, suggesting that the fame Warhol sought and attained also explains and justifies the great artist he was, at least between 1961 and 1968. Not only does fame explain nothing of the kind, but coming from the man who prophesied that "in the future everyone will be world famous for fifteen minutes," the desire to become famous has something suspicious about it. To desire fame—not the glory of the hero but the glamour of the star—with the intensity and awareness Warhol did, is to desire to be nothing, nothing of the human, the interior, the profound. It is to want to be nothing but image, surface, a bit of light on a screen, a mirror for the fantasies and a magnet for the desires of others—a thing of absolute narcissism. And to desire to outlive these desires there as a thing—not to be consumed. In 1968 Warhol survived the violent desire of Valerie Solanis, who fired several gunshots into him. His work would not recover from this, but, unlike Beuys's oeuvre, which (aside from his most formal objects, his drawings and watercolors) seems by no means certain to age



SIZE PKGS.
Brillo
soap pads
SHINES ALUMINUM FAST

24-70 1/2 3 OFF PACK
Brillo
soap pads 3 OFF
SHINES ALUMINUM FAST

24-48 0124
1954
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**CORN
FLAKES**

OTT'S 32
OZ.

very well, Warhol's art of the '60s improves with time. This is all the more astonishing in that it is practically nothing but the ceaselessly repeated accumulation of ordinary consumer goods: cans of Campbell's Soup and boxes of Brillo, bottles of Coca-Cola, images of stars—objects, in short, with little desirability unless viewed through the eyes of the son of Czech immigrants who grew up in poverty and for whom the egalitarianism of consumption was the very stuff of the American dream. ("The President drinks Coke, Liz Taylor drinks Coke, and, can you imagine, you can drink Coke, too.")

The American dream is a weak utopia in comparison with that of emancipation. It simply denies that capitalism does anyone a wrong, for it places everyone, workers and bosses, on the side of the divide where everything is already exchange-value, where to be someone is reckoned in belongings, where it is fair and normal that labor be treated as commodity. This is the cynicism of capital interiorized even by those it causes to suffer; this is the pleasure of the prostitute. The naiveté with which Warhol embraced the American dream finds its equal only in Beuys's economic paradise. But just as this meant that Beuys had to incarnate the proletarian, Warhol had to embody this cynical utopia. His blatant opportunism hides a destiny that is no less tragic, not because the American dream failed, but because it succeeds everywhere—even where it produces as much misery as wealth. And in this success is to be found the end of what all premodern—that is, religious, artisanal, and aristocratic—civilizations have called art, as well as the absorption of all works of art into commodities, of all aesthetic values into exchange-value.

When Warhol's work is convincing, it does what Beuys's does: it promises nothing; it testifies. The American dream can of course do without promises, it only needs to be real for those who know how to get ahead. It might seem that Warhol's work is content to expose it and to strip its cynicism bare. The yuppies who collect it obviously understand it this way and take pleasure in it accordingly. That criticism from the Left which castigates it precisely for not promising anything beyond the level of commodity understands it the same way. But to testify is neither to promise nor simply to expose; it is to attest to reality as it is, in the past or present. It is also to reopen the possibilities of interpreting it and forcing a retranslation; it is, in Warhol's case, to test the possibility of an art condition "below" the level of commodity. The field where this unfolds is, as with Beuys, that of political economy, and the text that we must retranslate—not into the myth of liberation but into its antithesis, the American dream—is, as always, Marx's.

What, then, are commodities for Marx? They are both artifacts—man-made products—and goods—wares possessed by a man. As artifacts they are the fruit of someone's labor, as goods they allow someone (else) the enjoyment of this materialized labor. Under these two aspects wares possess use-value; the use (wear and tear) of the labor-power spent for their production; the use (employment and enjoyment) of this same labor-power in their consumption. But it is the

entry of artifacts and goods into the circuit of exchange that makes commodities of them. Anything whatever becomes a commodity once the use of the labor-power invested in it is postponed in order that it be traded against another thing into which an equal amount of labor-power has been invested, money serving as general means of equivalency. It is in this way that commodities acquire their mystical character, full of the “metaphysical and theological capers” that Marx associated with fetishism. If one moves between the texts of the young, “romantic” Marx and those of the mature, “scientific” Marx, it is easy to see that in the theory of commodity fetishism (which appears in Book I of *Capital*) the wrong caused to the producers (to the proletarians) by means of alienation reappears as the wrong caused to consumers by means of reification.

The concept of reification (*Verdinglichung*), given pride of place by a Hegelianizing Marxism (Lukács’s, in particular), dominates most of the interpretations of the passage on commodity-fetishism, even though it doesn’t occur there. It belongs to the same family as the Hegelian concept of alienation. Now, in *Capital*, the concept of alienation is gone, its meaning in fact returning through that of use-value, thus surreptitiously rehabilitating the concrete and identitary meaning that the concept of alienation carried: the sense of the *same* that must be postulated in order that a becoming-*other* be tied to it. In Marx’s early writings, use-value has not yet appeared. (Even in the *Grundrisse*, Marx still simply speaks of “product” and attributes no “value” to it.) Between the Parisian manuscripts and *Capital*, the *Critique of Political Economy* is a pivot, for it is there that Marx vigorously introduces the two aspects under which all commodities present themselves—the couple use-value/exchange-value—though he still has recourse to alienation to explain what will later become the theory of fetishism. But this time it is from Stuart and not from Hegel that he takes the concept of alienation (as well as use-value, moreover), which loses its dialectical import of negation of the *same* in order to signify, on the contrary, the universal equivalence that the commodity-form imprints on the products of concrete labor of individual workers. If, for the young Marx, alienation severs man from nature and his fellow men, it is because the worker alienates himself in an act of production that from the outset belongs to another, with the consequence that the product that incorporates his labor faces him as a strange and lifeless object in which he cannot recognize himself. For the later Marx, this is because the commodity-form valorizes in every product its exchangeability, measured by the labor-time it incorporates, no matter what the nature of this labor. For the early Marx, commodity was “objectified labor” (*vergegenständlichte Arbeit*), which remains no less for that the particular labor of a particular man, even though in an alienated condition. For the late Marx, commodity appears as the reified relations of production (*verdinglichte Produktionsbeziehungen*), that is, as social relations between things. *Vergegenständlichung* affects the producer, having to sell himself on the labor-market; *Verdinglichung* similarly affects the consumer, buying for his use (his pleasure) the usage (wear and tear) of another man’s labor-

power, as if it were in the nature of things that the most diverse labors should be commensurate, when it is only the nature of the market economy that renders them commensurate through exchange. The mysterious fetishism of the commodity, its hieroglyphic character (as Marx calls it), depends on the truth that the commodity reveals in the very act of hiding it, and which it hides precisely because it reveals it: the nature of the relations of production of the market economy is indeed in the nature of things, literally, since it is these very relations of production that the commodity “thingifies,” reifies.

That is the truth, but it is not fair. A wrong is done to the consumers because the pleasure in what they consume is never gained from the service the product renders, but from the service that has been rendered to the product from the fact that its use-value has been postponed with a view toward exchange. The capitalist who decides to produce a given commodity doesn't do so in relation to its direct utility, but in relation to its expected demand on the market, and, thus, in relation to the exchange-value of a potential use about which he cares neither whether it is fulfilled nor whether it responds to a real need.

In the last analysis the consumer never consumes; he contributes to the *turnover* of the exchange-value, but never realizes the use-value. Not only is money the perfected form of the commodity, but in a completely developed market economy — what one paradoxically terms a consumer society — all commodities act like money. (Hence the well-known fact of consumer society: that all the pleasure resides in the act of buying.) The wrong is there, and a wrong as essential to Marxist thought as that which the proletariat suffers (at any rate, it is the same one, seen from the consumer's angle), which must be righted. Yet, once the Hegelian concept of alienation is abandoned, it can be righted only if resting on the postulate of use-value. If Marx did not postulate the existence of needs, if he did not hold that use-value always contains a natural substratum or that the labor creating the use-value is independent of all social forms, in short, if he had not held above all that utility is a value, even the true value, the only one that humanizes economic production, then the horizon of a communist society — where things will manifest social relations worthy of the name between men, rather than men, all dealing in exchange, manifesting social relations between things — this horizon would vanish.

Much of modern art demanded that the wrong done to consumers be righted. That presupposed that the public for art (not only its buyers) be understood, consciously or not, as a public of consumers and that aesthetic pleasure be perceived as an act of consumption. Now, on the one hand, only use-value is consumed, and on the other, in a capitalist system, utility is nothing but an advance taken on exchange. Exchange-value is the only *value*, as Marx was forced to recognize in more than one place, from which derive the three paths modern artists have explored in order to resist the domination of exchange-value: First, there is the attempt to put their practice in the service of utilitarianism — whether social, economic, or political — and to tie their fate to

the perspective of an overcoming of capitalism. This is the case of Russian productivism and of functionalism, as at the Bauhaus, for example. Industrial design, agit-prop, realism, all hold that aesthetic values are use-values. Second, based on the fact that the art market is only imperfectly a market and in many respects the carry-over of precapitalist relations of production, there is the attempt to push the old aesthetic of contemplation to its most extreme consequences (abstraction, suprematism, the monochrome as a form of the sublime, etc.), and to retain from use-value nothing but value (*wealth*, as economists before Marx called it), entirely denying its utility. Aesthetic contemplation is disinterested and consumes nothing. Finally, there is the attempt to do the opposite and retain from use-value the use and not the value. The work of art manifests its wear, or the artistic act its destruction, as pure loss. An aesthetic of ostentatious consumption exempts the public from consuming and calls on an economy of expenditure (*dépense*) (or of gift and counter-gift), which neither the liberal nor the Marxist economy had foreseen. Bataille made a theory of this in *La part maudite*, and Dubuffet, the *affichistes*, Tinguely, Vostell, and happenings, provide some examples.

Warhol belongs to none of these three traditions. He does not demand that a wrong be righted nor does he fight against the metamorphosis of art lovers into consumers. On the contrary, he positions them as such, as explicitly as possible. In confronting them with rows of Campbell's Soup cans, he registers what in any case they have already become. They are consumers, and the painting is a commodity. Yet Warhol testifies to this situation, he is not content with registering it in as cynical a mirror as the reflection it returns. If it is the case that, in art, the whole of modernity tied its hopes to the myths of creativity, dis-alienation, de-reification, then Warhol is not modern. But was Matisse modern?—he who wanted his painting to be an armchair for the tired businessman. Are aesthetic values sustained by the power of the myths that nourished them, myths that have failed? They are not *values*—there is the answer Warhol implies, one of whose famous sayings was “I want to be Matisse,” and another, no less famous “I want to be a machine.” Two desires whose conjunction, though surprising, ought to be taken seriously. The first shows the ambition concealed behind the quip about the “businessman artist,” and the second is not a quip.

Fair or unfair, it is a fact that the art market, to the precise degree that it is a market, treats works of art as commodities and absorbs aesthetic values into the sole value of exchange. But that is only true if the aesthetic field is totally mapped onto the field of political economy (this mapping that the later Beuys embodied), in other words, if aesthetics has to do with values. It is not true if works of art incorporate no value, no exchange-value. One doesn't leave the field of political economy—quite the contrary. Like Beuys, but even more explicitly, Warhol maps it totally onto that of the aesthetic field, like the Borgeian map that is congruent with the territory it represents. But Warhol seems to hold out a fourth possibility, one apparently unexplored by the modernists, in order to make art

signify that the judgment which names it as such has no more to do with value than it had to do with piety in those days when the aesthetic field was entirely mapped onto the religious field. This path gives up emancipation and has no faith in creativity; it does not claim to right a wrong, since it perceives none; it overlooks use-value and only recognizes value; it instantiates art not in will but in desire, and a very singular one: to be a machine.

Machines, according to good political economy, Marxist or not, are constant capital. They don't work, they don't produce value. The only source of value is human labor and its only measure, labor-time. It is as though Warhol also had his own brand of utopia, a weak utopia, projected by the American dream, the dream of a society that would rid itself of the working class by automation, and where everyone would be a consumer, no one a producer. In the Factory, even if Warhol had himself called the boss, he still wasn't Vasarely. He did not buy machines to increase his productivity and flood the world with silk-screens; he *was* the machine or, at least, said he wanted to be one. Sure, it was wishful thinking, a mere desire. Psychologically speaking this certainly meant to Warhol the desire to be without desire, to be insentient, to be beyond suffering or the fear of death. And all his work shows, often in a moving fashion, that this desire was merely a desire. But economically speaking, to want to be a machine means to maintain that artists don't work. Not that Warhol worked less than anyone else. Simply, the labor-time that an artist puts into his work is not relevant, because it is not of the same order as the average, socially necessary labor-time (as Marx calls it) that constitutes the substance of exchange-value. All artists are machines in this sense. And just as Beuys was not the first artist to want to incarnate the proletarian, Warhol was not the first to wish to be a machine.

Ever since Delaroche, Champfleury, or Baudelaire expressed the fear, inspired in them by photography, of seeing the painter replaced by a machine, modern painters — the great ones, those who deserve to be called avant-garde — have responded with a manifestation of their desire to be one. Courbet, who professed that “nothing that imprints itself on the retina is outside the domain of painting,” was the first to give a strictly photographic definition for it. Manet, who simplified chiaroscuro and succeeded in seizing the blank amazement of his models as if struck by a magnesium flash, made the canvas thrill with a passion that only had its equal in the passivity of the automatic image. Monet, as if he were outracing photography's speed, recorded in his Rouen Cathedrals and his haystacks the light of the instant as it hit and imprinted the canvas. Seurat, in a development contemporary with the invention of the autochrome by the Lumière brothers, digitized the palette and mechanized the hand. Cézanne, who admired Monet for being “nothing but an eye” and Courbet for not knowing what he painted even though he produced the most exact likeness of it, also spelled out, literally, what the driving desire of all painting since realism and impressionism had been, by upholding that “the free brain of the artist should be like a photographic plate, a simple recording device, when he is working.”

Warhol's desire has been explicit ever since, as has been the fact that it is not just any machine that painters wished to be, but exactly the one that put their craft and their economic survival in jeopardy. From Mondrian to Ryman, passing through Moholy-Nagy and many others, the contempt for facture, the desire to give the surface as standardized a texture as possible, the pleasure drawn from repetition, have all displayed the surprising wish that the body of the artist at work be segmented, Taylorized, mechanized, like that of the worker of *Modern Times*, but in order to *be* the machine and not its slave. Nor, for that matter, its master. The recourse to automatism in Pollock or Borduas transfers this wish to the unconscious; the motif of the reproduction in Johns, Rauschenberg, or Lichtenstein consciously refers it to the culture of the museum without walls (*musée imaginaire*). Gerhard Richter's declaration to the effect that he does not use photography as a medium for painting, but painting as a medium for photography, succeeds in giving the desire of the best painters throughout modernity its retrospective meaning: they reacted to the challenge of industrialization with paradoxical resistance. They could have become photographers and suffered the consequences of a new social and technical division of labor (and that's what many did, not without multiplying the contradictions tied to their ambition as artists). They could have ignored the new division of labor and painted as if the commodity-form did not affect their craft (and that is what the academic painters did, not without succumbing ever more surely to the merchandising of their work). Instead they became, in desire and in practice, not the photographer but his instrument, and even more precisely, less the camera (since for a long time it had been the instrument of painters) than the photosensitive plate, the film that records light and captures glances.

"If you want to know all about Andy Warhol, just look at the surface of my paintings and films and me, and there I am. There's nothing behind it." Between the producer and his production, no difference. All are commodities, fetish surfaces, and what surface has been more fetishized than photography's! Its invention threatened painters more directly than other machines threatened other artists. Technically, it supplanted them. Economically, it threw them into an absurd race with productivity where they were beaten in advance. The increasing extent of autonomy of the painting market—which existed before, but as part of a larger market where a social demand for images was registered, to which etchers, draughtsmen, and other artisans could also respond—was the painters' and their dealers' economic response to this threat. First the market for painting separated from that of images at large, then the market of the avant-garde, then of a particular avant-garde, and of a particular artist. Each name is a little monopoly. In a monopoly situation, the price of a commodity is not determined by its exchange-value; only supply and demand operate (which is why the market for living art is often assimilated to that of precious objects and antiques). But that doesn't stop painting from being a commodity, with its fatal consequence the fetishization of the "handmade." It is this fetishization that the best

modern painters challenged, they who acted (and it is here that one finds the sign of their cultural ambition) as if they were in fact in competition with photographers on the same general market for images, and left in their work the marks of a desire, necessarily ungratified, to behave as if their hand, their eye, their whole body were a machine for the recording and duplicating of images.

Thus there are two reasons rendering the average labor-time socially necessary for the production of painting-by-hand irrelevant: either because in its particular market, painting has a price but no value; or because the hand that paints behaves as though it were a sentient machine, and since machines don't labor, the picture is not a commodity. The first option defines academic painting: it adjusts supply to demand, accepts that touch be fetishized, and attaches a quoted value to a name. The second characterizes the avant-garde: it starts from supply and ignores demand, challenging the fetishism of the "handmade" by asking that the object be read in terms of the social relations of production that it indeed "reifies" (in this case the division of labor between painters and photographers as a cultural question rather than an economic fact), and attaching a price only to aesthetic quality.

As a commercial artist, Warhol worked and drew for the advertising industry. In this industry where social demand is motivated only by the prospect of exchange-value, where return on investment dominates, and where photography is used because it increases productivity, he practiced a craft full of outmoded charm, recognized by the profession for its very personal qualities but sold at its exchange-value. For I. Miller Shoes he drew footwear whose fetishistic connotations (in the Freudian sense now) escaped no one and whose "handmade" quality was underscored. Then he became aware, in total opportunism, that there was more money to be made in the painting market than in advertising. It was during the palmy days of abstract-expressionism, when the "handmade" was particularly prized. He was surprised that despite his many attempts no art gallery wanted his work. It had value but no price. He showed this by changing his work while he shifted to another market and by taking, in total realism, exchange-value as his subject matter. He thus proffered images of commodities, reduplicated ordinary consumer goods, made of his signature a brand name, and success came.

Warhol is the machine perfected. Not that his wish to be as numb as a machine was fulfilled. However he might have tried to appear as one, he was no less human than anyone else. Not that his work showed any less than Manet's the marks of a desire that, in order to make itself visible as desire, had to remain unsatisfied. He knew how to exploit the imperfections of the photo-silkscreen, the blurs, the variations of inking, the "surface incidents" (as he himself said), and the more he repeated identical images, the more their accumulation made differences between them apparent and underscored their individuality. What Warhol fulfilled is the historical necessity for the painter to want to be a machine. He terminated it, as Beuys terminated the historical necessity to want to incarnate the proletarian. One century after Manet, but like him as like Matisse,

Warhol followed the fourth path, the one that never feared the market, the one that left it to the Don Quixotes of utopia to get upset about the transformation of art lovers into consumers or to fight against exchange-value in the name of use-value. With a flippancy that could shock only those who still hope that the future of the avant-gardes will be the abolition of capitalism, he did not even consider that such a struggle had a meaning. He made the fetishism of commodities his philosophy in *From Andy to Baudelaire and Back Again*: from the shoes he drew with consummate charm when he was a commercial artist, to the *Dollar Signs* which he complacently supplied to Leo Castelli to satisfy demand after having become “businessman artist.” With the greatest apparent cynicism he printed paper money, the commodity of all commodities, the absolute fetish. And while it was mere Monopoly money on the currency markets (he even made two-dollar bills), it was gold on the art market. He knew the price of that which had no value. He knew not only how to behave as a painting machine, but also as a filming machine, a printing machine, a recording machine, and as the cash register of the art market. He perfected the modern desire to be a machine in displaying its retrospective meaning and in making explicit that the perfect mapping of the aesthetic field onto the field of political economy coincides with monopoly capitalism.

The art market is a market of monopolies, far less because it is a holdover from another age, as is the market for precious objects, than because it is the specialized outlet of a culture industry that looks for monopolies anywhere it can. From then on, and all utopias aside (since neither Manet nor Matisse nor Monet nor Seurat nor Cézanne indulged in utopian dreams), there is no difference between the avant-garde and academicism. It’s just a matter of dividing up the markets, and since monopolies never last, a simple matter of speed. Whether the name of a painter is the fetishized signature of his hand or a silk-screened brand name, as with fashion designers the label is what warrants the exchange-value. Fifteen minutes of world fame, then disappearance into obsolescence and death.

He was asked if he wanted to be a great artist, and he replied, “No, I’d rather be famous.” Could it be that wanting to be famous, wanting to be a machine, wanting to be Matisse, are one and the same thing? What is most astonishing is that Warhol’s work, the best of his work at least, that which dates from the first Factory, and before the assassination attempt of Valerie Solanis, is here to last. Perhaps it’s because he incarnated the American dream to nightmare pitch, and made visible its terrible death drive—the repetition of which is figured by the ceaseless return of commodities. One doesn’t take on the existence of a thing of absolute narcissism without drawing pleasure out of that which drove Marilyn to suicide. Warhol didn’t evolve in the plastic world of stars, but in the demimonde of vamps. His cinema plays out the bland dreams of 1950s Hollywood only to materialize the terror that the Hollywood of the ’20s still knew how to signal. One doesn’t take on the existence of the perfected machine, one doesn’t turn into a camera or a tape recorder, without also taking on the

existence of all machines and above all those that kill: the electric chair and the graves-on-wheels of the car crashes. One doesn't take on the making of one's self-portrait as a can of Campbell's Soup without also putting oneself in the tins of contaminated tuna of *Tuna Fish Disaster*. Perhaps in order for the work to last, the man had to die. According to the noncausal logic of "surface incidents," he had to survive Valerie Solanis's pistol shots *because* that very day the front page of all the newspapers was taken up by Robert Kennedy's assassination. And the same logic decreed that he die on February 22, 1987, almost by accident, like a commodity whose defect had been detected too late.