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Andy & Edie, Warhol & Sedgwick

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Andy & Edie, Warhol & Sedgwick

Senior Project Submitted to
The Division of the Arts
of Bard College

by
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This project is dedicated to my parents:

My biggest supporters and the most interesting couple I know.

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Introduction

It is difficult to interpret the relationship between Andy Warhol and Edie Sedgwick. They were friends, yet not always friendly. Collaborators, but largely unprofessional. Platonic, and yet Sedgwick *was* one of few ever to have slept in a bed with Warhol. The moment is described in Warhol's memoir, in which he refers to his fascination with Sedgwick as "very close to a certain kind of love."¹ But what kind of love this was is hard to say, and perhaps unimportant in terms of what it produced. In 1965, the year this uncertain kind of love both bloomed and started to wilt, Warhol met Sedgwick, starring her in nine of his films, and the two emerged as a media couple.

Each stood to gain from the partnership. Seen next to the glamorous, upper class Edie Sedgwick, Warhol was elevated in the eyes of the press. Seen next to the mysterious, rising artist Andy Warhol, Sedgwick received a much-desired visibility. But seen together, with their shared, cropped silver hairdos and frequently coordinated outfits, Sedgwick and Warhol appear like doppelgängers (fig. 1).

¹ Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol: From A to B and Back Again*. (Orlando: Harcourt, 2006), 27.

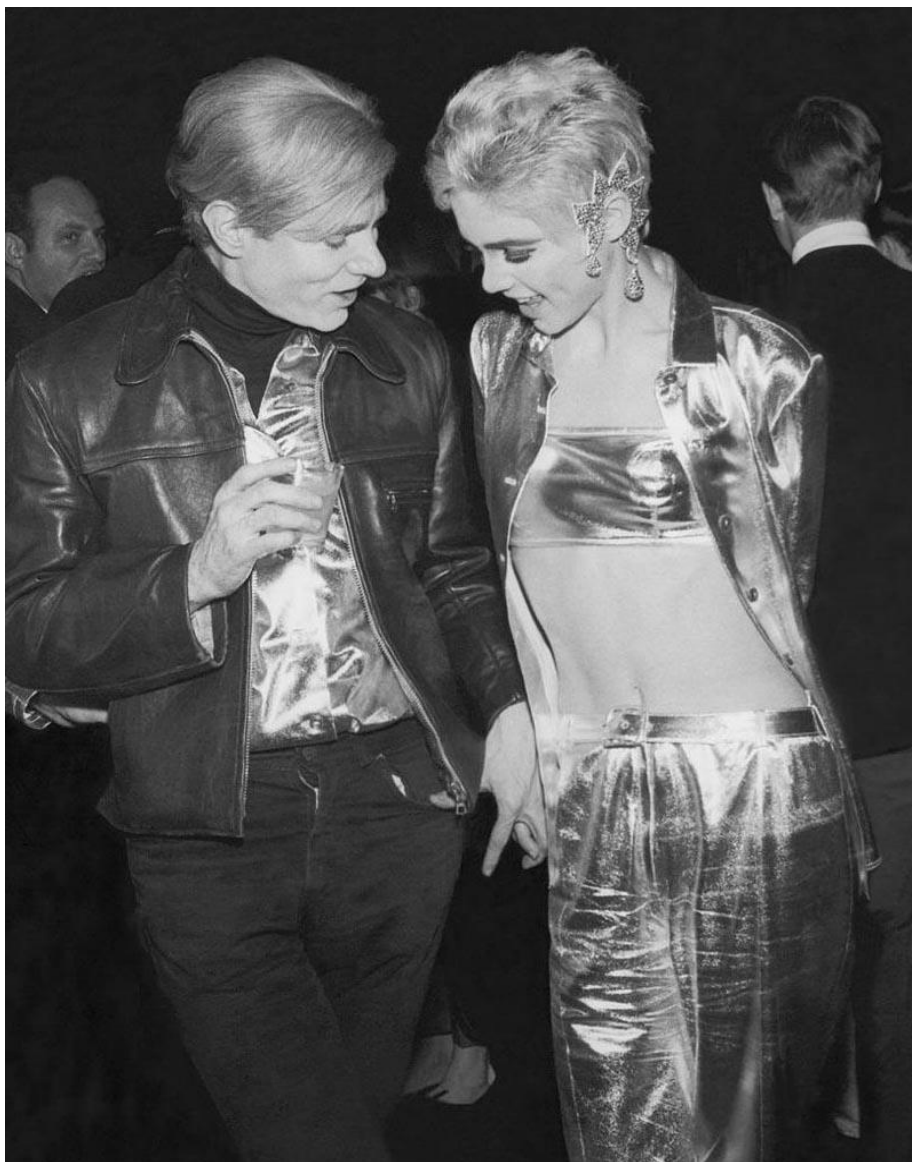


Fig. 1

In *POPism*, Warhol's book with his writing collaborator Pat Hackett, Warhol describes the outset of his coupling with Sedgwick and the effect it produced in the press:

By now we were getting pretty notorious around town for being at every party, and reporters loved to write us up and take our picture, but the funny thing was, they didn't

really know what to say about us—we looked like “a story,” but they didn't really know who we were or what we were doing.²

I'm interested in Warhol's description of their reception not as a *good* story, or a *scandalous* story, but just as “a” story. The lone letter hints at a cautious but curious kind of interest, one which neglects to take a stance, but lingers nonetheless. This uncertain address seems to be a common thread in the public's treatment of their pairing, reflecting the particular effect that Warhol and Sedgwick produced.

Like the reporters, I'm weary of making any definitive statements on the couple in question. My pause, however, isn't due to feeling unfamiliar or uncomfortable—which seems to be the case in many of the reports made by the press—but rather due to the very nature of their relationship, which appears at home in this gray, or perhaps silver, area. Thus the only adjective that feels appropriate in characterizing Warhol and Sedgwick's story is *queer*.

I use ‘queer’ not solely in reference to gender or sexual identities falling outside of a heteronormative framework, but more so by way of feminist theorist Teresa DeLauretis' definition: queerness as, “the space of a transit, a displacement, a passage and transformation.”³ DeLauretis relates queerness to a kind of heterotopia, what Michel Foucault describes as “a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory.”⁴ The queer, heterotopic space which opens up in Andy Warhol and Edie Sedgwick's coupling will serve as the focus of this paper. Existing as two different bodies, two different sexes, and yet, visually alike and (for a year) inextricably linked, Andy Warhol and Edie Sedgwick create the illusion of a self that is shared, fluid, and most of all, reproducible.

² Andy Warhol and Pat Hackett, *POPism: The Warhol '60s*. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), 152.

³ Teresa De Lauretis "Queer Texts, Bad Habits, and the Issue of a Future." *GLQ* 17, no. 2-3 (2011) 243.

⁴ Michel Foucault “Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias” *Architecture/ Mouvement/ Continuïte* (1984), 8.

Seriality runs as a through-line in Warhol's career, where his selection of iconic, well-known images are processed and repeated until they've been broken down. Likeness becomes a foundational method of reconstruction, where, in the case of Warhol's portraits of Marilyn Monroe, the variations in color that differentiate each print; the image's increased seediness; the slight displacement of Monroe's contours, situates her identity in that same, uncertain gray area. There, Monroe's image enters a seemingly endless stream of like-images, making it impossible to say which Monroe is "real", or if such an identity even exists.

In Warhol's likeness to Sedgwick, or Sedgwick's likeness to Warhol, a similar disturbance of self occurs, but between two bodies, and on a much more intimate scale. Warhol himself is implicated, perpetuating his image in physical form, in real time, with and through another being. The self is thus subjected to a constant performance, always existing relative to, and in conversation with the body by its side. But just as the self becomes dependent on the other, it is independent and even in opposition to its surrounding world. In theorist Brian Massumi's book *Couplets*, he describes likeness in nature as a strategy to discreetly subvert nature's hierarchy. Massumi writes

Resemblance is a beginning masking the advent of a whole new vital dimension... An insect that mimics a leaf does so not to meld with the vegetable state of its surrounding milieu but to reenter the higher realm of predatory animal warfare on a new footing. Mimicry, according to Lacan, is camouflage. It constitutes a war zone. There is a power inherent in the false: the positive power of ruse, the power to gain a strategic advantage by masking one's life force⁵

⁵ Massumi, Brian. "Realer Than Real" in *Couplets: Travels in Speculative Pragmatism*. Thought in the Act. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021)17.

In his public coupling with Sedgwick, a woman, Warhol mimics heterosexuality, in theory camouflaging himself in that “higher realm of predatory warfare”, but his camouflage doesn’t aim to match the leaf so much as it turns to question the whole of its branch. Along with mimicking heterosexuality, Warhol mimics the very woman with whom he’s coupled up with—rendering the entire convention queer. Through and with Sedgwick, Warhol ruses his own ruse, effectively disturbing and confronting “nature”.

While this paper will consider Warhol and Sedgwick’s media presence as a couple, and thus as a whole, it will not neglect the often contradictory sum of this whole’s parts. Jonathan Flatley, who has closely studied Warhol’s use of likeness, stresses that “to be similar to something is precisely not to be the same as it.”⁶ Like their names: “Andy” and “Edie”, similar, but not the same. And if the sonic harmony in their first names doesn’t reveal enough difference, “Warhol” and “Sedgwick” does. Warhol’s last name, which he shortened from “Warhola”, points to his Slavic ethnicity, and his attempt to mask it. Once, in an interview, Warhol even admitted to inventing a different background for himself each time asked.⁷ In *Absolut Warhola* (2001), a documentary made by Stanislaw Mucha, a camera crew travels through rural Slovakia to interview Warhol’s surviving relatives, and investigate the impact of his legacy within the community. But what the documentary reveals is a bleak vignette into an impoverished and forgotten part of Europe, where its residents are either largely unphased or unaware of their relation to the late artist. And those that do have something to say about Warhol are most interested in clearing his name from any homosexual association. But those curious about Sedgwick’s ancestry might travel to Stockbridge, Massachusetts, where a large and well-maintained gravesite known as the “Sedgwick Pie” houses an array of deceased Sedgwicks,

⁶ Jonathan Flatley “Like: Collecting and Collectivity.” *October* 132 (2010), 73.

⁷ Kenneth Goldsmith Reva Wolf and Wayne Koestenbaum, *I’ll Be Your Mirror : The Selected Andy Warhol Interviews 1962-1987* (2004), 87.

all of whom are buried in a circle with their feet facing one Theodore ‘The Judge’ Sedgwick—a former U.S. representative, senator, and Judge, who rests at the pie’s origin, beneath a tall marble obelisk.

So, there are two ways of approaching this. The first is to consider the pair as “Andy and Edie”, as fraternal twins like *Jack and Jill*. The other is to consider “Warhol and Sedgwick”, two vastly distant and different histories. The latter perspective is more akin to reality, especially considering that ‘Andy’ is short for “Andrew”, and ‘Edie’ is short for “Edith”. Their pairing might actually highlight greater difference than similarity, and yet, this identification *despite* difference is what causes a rupture in what it means to be.

The first chapter of this paper will provide a contextual backdrop for Warhol and Sedgwick's relationship by exploring the transitional periods that each experienced at the time of their pairing. Warhol was by then already an established artist, but shortly before meeting Sedgwick, he had begun to shift his attention towards film, which catapulted with Sedgwick’s arrival. Only twenty-two at the time, Sedgwick moved to New York City following a tumultuous childhood and the recent death of two brothers. Warhol is often blamed for Sedgwick’s descent into drug-abuse, which ultimately led to her death in 1971, however, in this chapter, I will offer a brief history of Sedgwick’s personal history, to contextualize her life in New York City. Following an account of their initial meeting, I will explore more of the couple’s reception in the press, citing newspaper and magazine articles published about Warhol and Sedgwick at the pinnacle of their presence as a media couple. The title of the chapter, “A Couple Means Two”, makes reference to the definition of the word ‘couple’ in its purely quantitative form—broadening the use of the word from signifying a romantic relationship to defining anything that constitutes two entities.

In the second chapter, I will expand on a specific event in Warhol and Sedgwick's media career: their joint appearance on an episode of *The Merv Griffin Show*—a late-night talk show that aired on network television. The interview provides valuable insights on the roles and dynamics of Warhol and Sedgwick's media presence, and illustrates the difficulty they posed to the public's methods of interpretation. Hardly saying a word the entire interview, Warhol designates Sedgwick as his orator, occasionally whispering answers in her ear for her to relate back to Griffin and the audience. In my analysis of their performance, Susan's Sontag's essay "Against Interpretation", is used as a guiding framework to discuss the ways in which media structures revolve around interpretation, and a constructed sense of familiarity and transparency.

Finally, the third chapter will address Sedgwick's role in Warhol's films, relating the frequent duplication of her image to a larger discussion on her relationship with Warhol and the differences in their values and personal philosophies. After a brief history of the style and nature of the majority of Warhol's films revolving around Sedgwick, I will provide a formal analysis of *Lupe* (1965), in which Sedgwick stars as the deceased Mexican actress Lupe Velez, who's death in 1944 is eerily similar to Sedgwick's death in 1971. As Velez, Sedgwick enacts the last night of the late actress' life, which culminates with an implied drug overdose, and her head in the toilet bowl. With most of Sedgwick's performance in *Lupe* doubled by a large mounted mirror, the film recalls the myth of Narcissus, in which Narcissus falls in love with his own reflection and dies from the impossibility of his desire. Following *Lupe*, I will turn to Warhol's film *Outer and Inner Space* (1965), which also presents a plural Sedgwick, but this time through the advent of video. Drawing from Rosalind Krauss' essay, "Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism", and an alternative approach to Sedgwick's relationship with narcotics, I will argue that both films situate narcissism as a kind of narcotic. Although both of these films are intensely psychological and personal to

Sedgwick, they each reveal, in different ways, how the self can simultaneously be endless and unique.

In the biography of Andy Warhol written by the artist, critic, and poet Wayne, he writes that the questions Warhol spent his life trying to answer were “what does it mean to exist in a body, next to another person, who also exists in another body? Will these two bodies ever join? Are they the same or different?”⁸ Ultimately, this project is interested in similar questions, but less so in finding answers and more so in exploring the methods in which they are asked, and what it means to ask them in the first place.

⁸ Wayne Koestenbaum, *Andy Warhol: a Biography*. (New York: Open Road Integrated Media, 2015), 11.

A Couple Means Two

By 1965, Warhol had already garnered significant success and notoriety for his serial investigations of Campbell Soup Cans, Brillo Boxes, and celebrity portraiture, and had begun to shift his focus towards film. *Sleep* (1963), Warhol's first film, features five and a half hours of John Giorno, his lover at the time, sleeping. Most of Warhol's early films that followed, such as *Kiss* (1963), *Blowjob* (1964), and *Empire* (1964), follow a similarly simple structure and style as *Sleep*. Using long shots, little plot, and few subjects, Warhol approached the medium with a kind of detached stillness, allowing the film and its subjects to drag themselves out.

But the simplicity of Warhol's early films was accompanied by a complex social circle forming around him. In a large loft in Manhattan on East Forty-Seventh St, purchased by Warhol as a studio, a microcosm of New York's avant-garde began to spawn and populate the space. Dubbed 'The Factory', the studio was covered from floor to ceiling in silver foil, blocking out most of the light from the windows. Like Foucault's heterotopia, the space seemed to suspend the laws and norms beyond its walls, inviting in and attracting what was deemed deviant in the outside world—namely, narcotics and homosexuality.

The Factory was the beginning of Warhol's brand, a structure to house and uphold the mythical presence he was cultivating. As its center, Warhol donned a silver wig, sometimes dark sunglasses, and was careful never to say too much. His persona aligns with Susan Sontag's idea of "Being-as-playing-a-role" as outlined in her essay *Notes on Camp*⁹. Sontag characterizes camp as "the farthest extension, in sensibility, as the metaphor of life as theater", and imagines that

⁹ Susan Sontag "Notes on Camp" *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1966)

anything falling under camp's category might be better understood in quotation marks.¹⁰ Under the lens of camp, Warhol is likened to a "filmmaker" with "silver hair" working in a "factory". Duality constitutes his performance, where each facet, each detail of his life, possesses a double meaning. Thus Warhol too would need a double, and he found one in Edie Sedgwick.

Only twenty-two at the time, Sedgwick moved to New York City following a turbulent childhood in Northern California. Born in Santa Barbara, Edie Sedgwick was raised on an isolated ranch with her seven siblings: Saucie, Bobby, Pamela, Minty, Johnny, Kate, and Suky. Her childhood was anything but traditional, and yet tradition seemed to have been paramount to generations of Sedgwicks, dating all the way back to early American settler colonies in New England. Since the dawn of Theodore 'The Judge' Sedgwick, it was expected that every Sedgwick boy would attend Groton and then Harvard and join the porcellian club, and that every Sedgwick girl would enter high society as a poised, charming young lady. But Edie Sedgwick's father, Francis Sedgwick, was the first of his family to relocate to the West Coast, effectively breaking from tradition, while also continuing tradition by figuratively beginning his own 'Sedgwick Pie' with himself at its center.

Known as 'Fuzzy', or alternatively, 'The Duke', Edie's father was an overbearing and reigning presence on the ranch. Described by a family friend as "a cross between Mr. America and General Patton" Fuzzy raised his children as his disciples, keeping them isolated and under his constant control.¹¹ Alice 'Saucie' Sedgwick, the most outspoken of the remaining Sedgwicks, describes their childhood in detail in *Edie: American Girl* and in her own book, *As it Turns Out: Thinking About Andy & Edie*. In *Edie*, she writes:

¹⁰ Susan Sontag "Notes on Camp" *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1966), 4.

¹¹ Jean Stein and George Plimpton, *Edie, an American Biography*. (New York: Knopf, 1982), 88.

My parents owned the land from horizon to horizon in every direction. Imagine a situation like that where nobody entered who wasn't invited or hired! In this landscape my mother and father rooted out any influence that they could not dominate...Edie had so little to work with. How small the furniture of her life was! She grew up with a total lack of boundaries, a total lack of sense of scale about herself. She was stuck in there.¹²

'In there' was also where Sedgwick was first introduced to sedatives and injections. Sucky Sedgwick recalls her and Edie receiving daily vitamin B shots, and her brother, Jonathan Sedgwick, tells of their father putting Edie on tranquilizers after she had walked in on him having an affair.¹³ In her teen years, Sedgwick's mental health began to decline, and she suffered from bulimia which led to two stays at two mental hospitals. She wasn't the sole Sedgwick who was struggling, either. Two of her brothers, Bobby and Minty, also spent time in mental hospitals, and both died tragically around the time of Edie's move to New York City. Minty took his life in 1964, and Bobby was killed in a motorcycle accident in 1965. The death of the two brothers, only ten months apart, doubtlessly informed their sister's first year in New York City. But perhaps it was the instability of this transition, and the seclusion of her childhood, that drew her to The Factory's heterotopia, and to Andy Warhol.

When Warhol was first introduced to Sedgwick at the beginning of 1965, he was conveniently in the market for a new *superstar*—a term made popular by Warhol's circle. In the year prior to Sedgwick's arrival, it had been Jane Holzer, commonly known as 'Baby Jane', who occupied that space next to Warhol and in front of his camera. Baby Jane was the first in what became a long line of Superstars, but she was married—thus less available as a single—and as

¹² Stein, 69.

¹³ Stein, 105.

Lester Persky (the source of Warhol and Sedgwick's introduction) put it, was "sort of running out of speed."¹⁴

Edie Sedgwick, however, had no shortage of speed. She was frequently high on amphetamines, but also, often described as possessing a naturally energetic and insatiable attitude. Her closest confidant at the time, Chuck Wein, characterizes Sedgwick's presence as catalytic, claiming that when she walked into a space, "there was an energy uplift. [She] got everybody off their boring number. Here was this glamorous freak. People were willing to let Edie be the star."¹⁵

As the story goes, Sedgwick paid her first visit to The Factory sometime in March, following a brief introduction to Warhol at a dinner party. The day she came by, Warhol happened to be shooting *Vinyl*, an adaptation of Anthony Burgess' novel *A Clockwork Orange* (this was the book's first adaptation on film). Inspired, Warhol spontaneously placed Sedgwick in the scene, contrary to the objection of his screenwriter Ronald Tavel, who had intended the film to be an all-male cast. Gerard Malanga, who played the lead, recalls Warhol saying, "It's ok. She looks like a boy."¹⁶ So, the seeds of stardom were planted with Edie Sedgwick's cameo in *Vinyl*, where she sat silently chain-smoking cigarettes on a trunk by the edge of the frame, appearing nonchalant and vaguely bored despite the sadomasochistic torture scene playing out behind her. All Sedgwick did was sit there, and yet her presence made a powerful impression on Warhol—the connoisseur of people *just sitting there*. Tavel too was impressed, comparing the effect of Sedgwick's performance with Marilyn Monroe's minor but breakout role in *Asphalt Jungle* (1950). Factory regular, Ondine, recalls how upon watching reruns of *Vinyl*, "some of us got an

¹⁴ Stein, 180.

¹⁵ Stein, 176.

¹⁶ Stein, 232.

inkling of what was going on there with [Edie] in the Factory...a power we hadn't even suspected."¹⁷

Following *Vinyl*, Sedgwick and Warhol emerged as “Andy & Edie”, a noteworthy presence at any party or event. And the press attempted to take note, trying to make sense of who Warhol’s new companion was, and what her pairing with Warhol meant. “Where is the *real* Edie Sedgwick—home with a book?” asks a reporter from *The New York World Telegram*, suggesting that the Sedgwick present must be a copy—a deviant double of who the reporter describes as “the bob-haired, 20-year-old heiress from California.”¹⁸ Sedgwick’s reply: “the real Edie is where the action is. Fast cars, fast horses, and people doing things!” Speed is an undercurrent in Warhol and Sedgwick’s representation in the press. Their most impressive feature, a two page spread in *TIME* Magazine’s ‘Society’ section simply titled “Edie & Andy”, reads: “they have gone to more parties than a caterer, sometimes staying for just a moment before moving on to the next one.”¹⁹ Perhaps a moment is just long enough to be seen, but short enough not to be seen through. In their constant movement and haste, Warhol and Sedgwick affected a presence that was opaque, but difficult to grasp. “Andy Warhol and Edie Sedgwick, who look as if they live in Spook Hollow and only venture out at night to go Boo!” writes *The Philadelphia Inquirer*.²⁰ Across media outlets, the press seemed to view the pair as a vaguely threatening mythical other—like a joint apparition haunting the halls of culture, only appearing in place long enough for the camera’s flash. But the images Warhol and Sedgwick returned provided no further clarity. In *POPism*, Warhol references a party he attended with Sedgwick covered by the *Journal American*, recalling being told by Mel Jaffe, the reporter, that upon developing the night’s

¹⁷ Stein, 232.

¹⁸ Joseph X. Dever, "Edie Sedgwick and Andy Warhol, Royal Members of Underground Movies." *The New York World Telegram* (New York, August 18, 1965).

¹⁹ “Society: Edie & Andy.” *TIME*, (New York, 1965)

²⁰ Suzy Knickerbocker, “Windsor in N.Y.” *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, October 8, 1965), 21.

photographs, “all the guys in the city room at the Journal American stood around trying to guess which was “Edie” and which was “Andy.”²¹ But the confusion they incited seemed only to further the public’s interest. Baffled and bemused, Juffe tells Warhol:

Nobody could figure you out, nobody could even tell you apart— and yet no event of any importance could go on in this town unless both of you were there. People gladly picked up your checks and sent cars for you—did anything and everything to entertain you. And one of your favorite jokes at the time was shoving different people forward and saying they were you...²²

The ‘joke’ Warhol played, however, wasn’t always met with a laugh. When, in 1967, Warhol sent an actor, Allen Midgette, to pose as him on a lecture tour titled “Pop Art in Action”, colleges were furious when their wigged speaker was revealed to be a different wigged speaker than they had anticipated. In the press, Warhol’s defense was “He was what the people expected... They would rather have someone like that than me.”²³ In other words, the public would rather have someone *like* Andy Warhol than Andy Warhol. But even Warhol himself seemed to be a *like* version of Andrew Warhola, the boy raised by Slavic immigrants in a working class neighborhood in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. Sontag’s notion of Camp as “Being-as-Playing-a-Role” is expanded into Being-as-Playing-the-Role-of-Being-as-Playing-a-Role. With Warhol, identity isn’t just quoted, it’s also limitlessly translated, with each iteration adding and subtracting meaning from their former. Like how reports of Warhol’s scandal varied slightly across headlines: “Pop Arts’ King ‘Puts ‘Em On’”, “Actor is ‘Put-On’ Artist As Stand-In For Warhol”, “‘Put-on’ Specialist Dupes Colleges by Using Imposter”... Similar, but different.

²¹ Popism 152

²² Popism 153

²³ Kay Israel and Angelyn Nelson, “Warhol Hoax Confirmed!”, *The Daily Utah Chronicle* (Salt Lake City, Feb 8, 1968), 1.

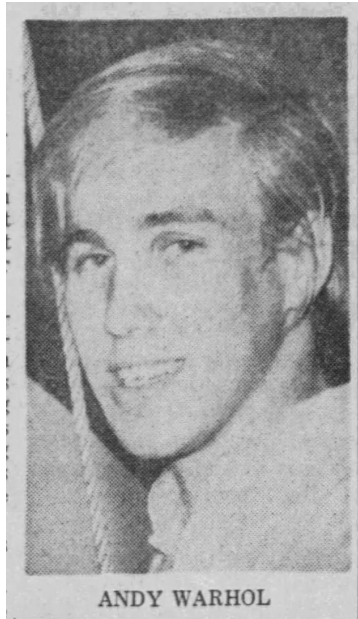


Fig 2

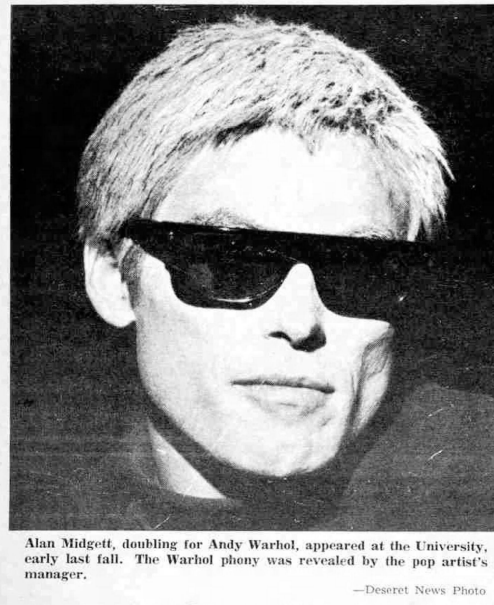


Fig 3

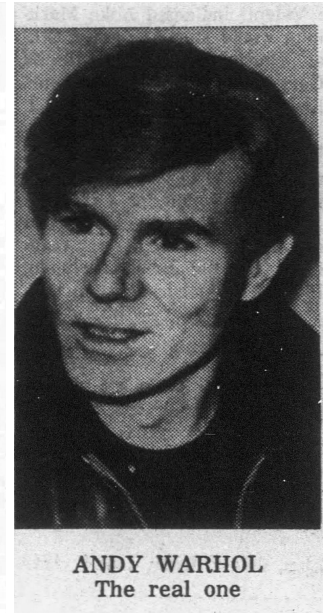


Fig 4

But with Sedgwick, Warhol's abstraction of identity is less incriminating, and more oblique. Identity isn't necessarily 'shoved' forward in a lateral progression, but dispersed rather by a structure akin to the rhizome proposed by Deleuze and Guattari: a horizontal network with no point of origin.²⁴ One didn't stand in place of the other, they stood side-by-side— a couple.

²⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari "A Thousand Plateaus" (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987)

Andy & Edie on *The Merv Griffin Show* (an interpretation)

On October 6th, 1965, Merv Griffin, the host of the the late-night talk show *The Merv Griffin Show*, read the following introduction off a small note card:

Pop Art, Op Art, underground movies, call it what you will, these two are the leaders. No party in New York is considered a success unless they are there. It's hard to explain this young lady and man. They say they don't want to be explained. One is a beautiful actress, and she calls herself a "superstar", the other is a young man named Andy Warhol, the creator of Pop art. So here are two leading exponents of the new scene: Edie Sedgwick, and Andy Warhol.

Emerging from behind a curtain, Warhol and Sedgwick walk on stage accompanied by the applause of a live studio audience, assuming their positions in the armchairs beside Griffin's desk. *The Merv Griffin Show*, often rivaled to *The Tonight Show With Johnny Carson*, aired across North America from 1962-1986, shuffling between networks like NBC and CBS. At the time of this episode's airing, the show's guests ranged from actress and model Jayne Mansfield to psychedelic advocate Timothy Leary. Topicality is possibly the only undercurrent in Griffin's guest list. And while Warhol and Sedgwick were certainly topical, they were not typical, and that much is obvious from the moment they step on stage. Sedgwick, who walks out first, is dressed in all black, donning tights-as-pants. And Warhol, who follows closely behind, is also dressed in all black, carrying with him a large mysterious bag.

Griffin begins by commenting on Sedgwick's outfit, which was by then her signature look but likely an unheard of attire for talk-show television. But as he shifts to address his other guest, Sedgwick casually breaks the news that Warhol won't be speaking for the duration of the

interview. If asked a question, Sedgwick explains, Warhol will whisper his answer into her ear, which she will then relay to Griffin and the audience. At first, Griffin is surprised, and pushes back by turning to Warhol to say, “Aren’t you going to say one word, Andy?” But when Warhol responds by whispering to Sedgwick, who then turns to Griffin and says “no”, the conditions are quickly accepted, and the length of the fifteen minute interview is conducted without Warhol uttering much more than “uh, yes” and “uh, no”.

The situation is emblematic of their mutualistic relationship, where Sedgwick enjoys the spotlight, and Warhol the silence. But seen as a whole, their performance challenges and queers the conventions of the show. The talk-show, as outlined by media theorist David P. Marshall, is a space whose hidden structures rely on a constructed sense of familiarity. Familiarity, Marshall argues, is crucial to television in that it supports the format’s domestic presence within the home—an intimate and familiar space—and offers the viewer an experience of comfort, leaving them more susceptible to advertising, whose support funds the show. Within this system, a triangle is formed between the host, guest, and viewer. Only the host and guest exist together in one space, but the live studio audience, whose presence is frequently engaged with and acknowledged by the host, represents viewers watching at home, and allows for their identification within the triangle. But if the triangle forms its connections via familiarity and a mutual exchange between all three points, Sedgwick and Warhol’s dynamic puts the structure at risk.

However, the unfamiliar can be rendered familiar through interpretation. Even before Warhol and Sedgwick have walked on stage, their presence is prefaced by Griffin, who asserts that “they say they don’t want to be explained.” Delivered with a trace of mockery, Griffin’s claim signals his attitude to the viewer—one that might be familiar to the parent of a rebellious

teenager—and casts a hint of doubt as to whether his guests mean what it is that ‘they say’. The desire that Griffin challenges, to not be explained, is after all one that goes against the ethos of the talk-show, and even the ethos of the introduction, which is itself a means of explanation, and a process of making familiar.

From the very beginning of the interview, there is a tension surrounding interpretation. The struggle recalls Sontag’s “Against Interpretation”, in which she argues against the overemphasis of explaining and interpreting artwork. According to Sontag, the interpreter is essentially a translator working to excavate the artwork’s “latent” content in order to “set up a shadow of “meanings”” and “turn *the* world into *this* world.”²⁵ Griffin, whose job it is to interpret—to sublimate what is topical in the world into a topical substance, reformulating information to be gently massaged into the audience (whose ultimate interpretation affects the show’s advertisers), has set the stage as one against “Against Interpretation”. And while the odd twinned appearance of his guests, along with one’s refusal to speak, certainly plants Warhol and Sedgwick in the space carved out for them prior to their arrival, the interview proves their roles to be much more complex.

For one, Sedgwick too acts as interpreter, translating Warhol’s silence into speech to be interpreted by Griffin (and by extension the audience), herself forming a link within a chain of interpretation. And by expanding the chain, Griffin’s role is lessened, and the structure is made more visible. There’s even a moment at the outset of Sedgwick’s explanation of Warhol’s conditions where she whispers to Griffin, who then turns to whisper to his co-host, who then turns to whisper to no one—essentially miming the game of ‘telephone’. Humor might lessen the blow of the situation, but the bit is a telling visual of how the show operates. And Warhol, by

²⁵ Susan Sontag “Against Interpretation” *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1966), 7.

embodying the word passed along a chain of operators, his meaning modified with each whisper, subjects himself to a process of interpretation without ever being reliably interpreted. In essence, the strategy goes against interpretation without necessarily being, by Sontag's definition, "Against Interpretation". Translation occurs, but it occurs so many times that something of its authority is lost, and its meaning changed. Like Warhol's stunt with Allen Midgette, the chain of interpretation poses a challenge to the show, and to mass media at large, in that it doesn't allow for effective familiarization of Warhol's image. As Marshall points out, the talk-show's desired format "decontextualizes the aura of the star and re-creates the possibility of the star's establishing a more personal and familial public personality."²⁶ But Warhol isn't willing to give up his aura, and even in his own work, argues that it's merely a construction.

For example, in the wake of Marilyn Monroe's death, while media outlets were scavenging for images of a pained and tormented Monroe to support the headline of her death, Warhol chose to appropriate a widely circulated, bombshell image of her. By processing the image even further, subtracting detail and leaving only her unmistakable outline, a kind of aura took shape. But the aura doesn't belong to Monroe, it belongs purely to her image. As art historian Cecile Whiting points out, Warhol's Monroe challenges mass media's notion of "a private life which legitimizes the reality of the public image."²⁷ Just as mass media relies on transparency, which allows for the layering of something behind, Warhol relies on opaqueness, which reveals nothing beyond its surface. Warhol's use of opaqueness lends itself to a different kind of aura, one that's less available to be manipulated.

This theory counteracts with parts of what German philosopher Walter Benjamin argues in his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", which surmises that

²⁶ David P. Marshall, "Television's Construction of the Celebrity." In *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture*, (University of Minnesota Press, 1997). 125-126

²⁷ Cécile Whiting, "Andy Warhol, the Public Star and the Private Self." *Oxford Art Journal* 10, no. 2 (1987): 58

“that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art.”²⁸ In Benjamin’s framework, aura is equated to authenticity and authenticity is equated to a unique and original existence. Although Benjamin accepts reproduction as a reflection of mankind’s changing sense of perception, he argues that the process eliminates the substance of the art-object’s individuality, thus depreciating its aura. But in contending on individuality as an essence, as an almost spiritual matter emanating from behind the object’s surface, Benjamin’s conception of aura, which prevailed in artistic representation up until this point, is not unlike the transparent model used by mass media. But the aura Warhol practices, the opaque aura, relies on surface rather than depth, its glow emanating not from the projection of something within or behind but from the perpetuated impression of the exterior. The surrender of meaning incites its own meaning.

In the chapter titled “Fame” of Warhol’s *Philosophy*, he makes his position clear with an anecdote about a company interested in purchasing his aura. Mulling over the offer, Warhol determines that the value of one’s aura is correlated to the strength of one’s image. Warhol writes, “when you just see somebody on the street, they can really have an aura. But then when they open their mouth, there goes the aura. “Aura” must be until you open your mouth”²⁹. So Warhol keeps his mouth closed.

But the strategy only works to Sedgwick’s credit, who is willing to speak on behalf of their whole, and commodify her aura in exchange for the spotlight. Hardly ever even having to bend her ear, Sedgwick knows exactly what to say without giving too much authority to the host, and her replies are given and met as if she is the artist. Here is a fragment of the transcript:

M: But then why would you paint a Campbell soup can?

²⁸ Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” 4.

²⁹ Andy Warhol, *Philosophy*, 77.

E: Because it's part of the culture. It is.

M: I agree. I think advertising is something that we *snap* recognize.

E: Yeah but the effect of it you might not realize. Art has something to do with the reflection of it. If you begin seeing it on canvases you start thinking about it—What do we have around us all the time? What do you see the most of? What do you notice?

Sedgwick delivers these last few lines with intensity, pausing between each question and looking Griffin intently in the eye. And considering how the program has only just returned from an ad break, it's a suggestive comment. Griffin is only willing to admit that advertising is recognizable—any stance beyond that is past his limits. For him to address the *effects* of advertising, which has a direct impact on the very audience he claims allyship towards, could undermine the network's business and jeopardize his position. In this instance, Sedgwick's speech, in its ability to confront, is equal to Warhol's silence.

She only fumbles once, and it's not to the credit of Griffin, but to Renee Taylor, a comedian and fellow guest of the show seated on the other side of Warhol. Taylor spends most of the interview just listening, occasionally interjecting with a pun or a joke, but towards the end of the segment, Taylor's expression grows pensive and sincere, and she turns to ask Sedgwick, out of what she sensitively describes as “ignorance about art”, to justify the thousands of dollars it costs to buy a Campbell Soup Can print by Andy Warhol when one could just inexpensively remove and frame a label from a real can. Unable to formulate a quick response, Sedgwick can only retort that the gesture would be tacky. But when pressed further, and asked *why* it would be tacky, and “what about the guy who designed the original Campbell soup can?”, Sedgwick doesn't know what to say, and Warhol doesn't move to whisper. It's evident from Sedgwick's previous reply to Griffin that she understands the work's value as conceptual, but her hesitation

in answering raises suspicion over her commitment to that belief, and suggests that Sedgwick herself might have her doubts.

Despite appearing on the show together, and acting as one force, there are many moments such as this, which reveal flashes of differing opinions, hint at the possibility of a power struggle, and foreshadow the relationship's soon-to-be split. At odds with Sedgwick's desire to compliment Warhol, and to confront the show, is an opposing desire to also conform to it, and to use her partner's silence as means of directing their mutual enterprise into a larger commercial realm. But this interpretation is difficult to argue because Warhol of course shared this ambition to expand, and is after all seated in Griffin's armchair right beside her. French philosopher Jean Baudrillard writes, "it is logical for an art which does not contradict the world of objects, but explores its systems, to make itself part of the system. It is even the end of a hypocrisy and of a radical illogicality."³⁰ So whether one is a Pop artist and the other a Superstar makes no difference in the direction of their logical path. However, in their tradition of similar but different, deviation occurs in the lengths at which each is willing to travel, and how each intends to become 'part of the system'.

For example, every time Griffin or another of his guests brings up one of Warhol's earlier experimental films, Sedgwick reacts with unabashed shame and disgust. At the mention of *Empire*, Sedgwick fake gags, and after numerous attempts to discuss *Sleep*, Sedgwick shuts down the topic completely and says impatiently, "let me just say that those [films] are of the past", subsequently diverting the conversation to advertise what she describes as the "real movie" that she and Warhol are developing: a feature length narrative film based on Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre*, with Sedgwick starring as "Jane Heir".

³⁰ Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2012)115.

But Warhol maintains his silent act, even in response to Sedgwick's insulting comments about his work, making it difficult to gauge his position. While Warhol's films did take a more narrative and structured approach with Sedgwick's arrival in 1965, they never lost the strange and imperfect quality of his earlier work, or affected the form of what Sedgwick distinguishes as "a real movie". Ronald Tavel describes multiple instances on set of Warhol being bothered if the film looked too professional, citing a particular moment on the set of *Horse* (1965), Warhol's homoerotic take on a Western, when the level of accuracy of the film's painted rural background was a source of irritation to Warhol. Tavel recounts, "That bothered Andy because he kept saying, as he looked through the camera: 'I'm telling you, it looks exactly like a Hollywood Western.'" And he didn't like that. He kept telling me to lower the mike and the boom so we'd have that showing in the picture frame."³¹ Again, Warhol isn't interested in *exact* reproduction, but *like* reproduction, the latter of which expresses difference, and has the potential to queer the structure it represents. This is where Sedgwick and Warhol deviate creatively. Despite their shared interest and desired admittance into a higher commercial plane, Warhol wants to enter while remaining outside.

Warhol's position is made all the more clear when a cord is spotted peeping out from inside his bag. To the surprise of Griffin, the audience, and even Sedgwick, the cord is unraveled to reveal that Warhol has been taping the entirety of the interview. The behavior wasn't uncommon for Warhol, who used a tape recorder from 1965-1967 to create his book *a, A Novel*—a nearly word-for-word transcription of taped conversations with Ondine—however the action's significance in the context of the show furthers his place as an outsider, or perhaps as a double-agent, and even adds a new link to the chain of interpretation—locating the device as the

³¹ Stein, 238.

interpreter of Warhol's interpreter's interpretation. And seeing that Warhol doesn't speak during the interview, and is mostly addressed indirectly—spoken *about* rather than *to*—his presence on the tape may at times have sounded as if he weren't even in the room. There's no evidence of the recording's use anywhere, but even in the event that the device wasn't on, the mere acknowledgment of its presence is enough to create a degree of separation between Warhol and everyone else, Sedgwick included. After the news is broken, Griffin shifts his attitude towards Warhol from one of dismissal to one of slightly smug curiosity, as if he's begun to understand something essential about his silent guest, perhaps finally feeling as if he's executed an interpretation. Managing to get the most out of Warhol than any other moment on the show, Griffin begins to question him

M: You're a big television watcher aren't you?

A: uh, yes

M: Are you fascinated by the media?

A: yes

M: Are you?

A: *nods*

M: Like to do a television show sometime?

To that, Warhol smiles and nods, looking genuinely excited by the prospect. The fragment of conversation is just about all the viewer hears on the subject, however, in the 80s, Warhol did go on to create and produce three network television series: *Fashion* (1979-80), *Andy Warhol's T.V.* (1980-83), and *Andy Warhol's Fifteen Minutes* (1985-1987)—each of which appropriate the language and aesthetics of network television to develop something entirely new and unique. *Andy Warhol's Fifteen Minutes*, MTV's first talk-show program, is particularly novel

in its choice of guests and methods of interpretation. Joined by a different co-host each episode, Warhol and his rotating partner discuss a handful of preordained topics that periodically flash across the screen. For example, the first episode's agenda consists of "1. Sex, 2. Vegetables, 3. Brothers & Sisters". What does it mean that 'Vegetables' is the only subject preventing the conversation from incest? The strange, open-ended and yet fixed selection of topics parodies the structured approach of shows like *The Merv Griffin Show*, where misinterpretation can't be left up to chance—or vegetables.

3

Silver was the future, it was spacy—the astronauts wore silver suits—Shepard, Grissom, and Glenn had already been up in them, and their equipment was silver, too. And silver was also the past—the Silver Screen—Hollywood actresses photographed in silver sets. And maybe more than anything, silver was narcissism—mirrors were backed with silver.

—Andy Warhol, *POPism*

Narcissism as Narcotic

In the beginning of 1965, the roles Sedgwick played in Warhol's films reflected his fascination with her lifestyle, family history, and status as his newfound Superstar. *Poor Little Rich Girl* (1965), for example, is the first of many solo Sedgwick performances in Warhol's films, featuring sixty minutes in the life of Edie Sedgwick—documenting her as she wakes up, gets dressed, puts on make-up, smokes weed, does calisthenics, gets dressed again, and complains about being cut off from her family's finances. Borrowing its title from a 1936 musical-film directed by Irving Cummings and starring Shirley Temple (Warhol's childhood idol), the reference draws obvious parallels between Warhol's perspective on Sedgwick and the plot of Cumming's film.

In *Poor Little Rich Girl* (1936), Temple plays 'Barbara Barry', the precocious child of a wealthy and *very* busy business man. With no one to play with aside from her nannies and nurses, Barry, full of ennui at her lonely life in her father's large estate, escapes to the big city, where she is subsequently taken in by a crew of Italian immigrant street performers, and in a bizarre series of events—made the star of a successful vaudeville act. Barry's story is like a campy version of Sedgwick's, and although Warhol's *Poor Little Rich Girl* doesn't contain much plot, the film delivers a moving portrait of the girl who was frequently described as a runaway

heiress. The camera zooms in close on Sedgwick's face, sometimes out of focus, following her around her apartment, tracing the trivial moments of her existence. In what Jonas Mekas defines as surpassing "everything that the 'cinema verite' has done until now"³², *Poor Little Rich Girl* is shot from the perspective of someone very much on the outside, and yet utterly without bitterness or judgment—only fascination, and a certain kind of love.

The film was intended to be the first in a larger body of work titled *The Poor Little Rich Girl Saga*, a project set to encompass an entire 24-hour period in the life of Edie Sedgwick. However, for reasons unbeknownst, the project was never fully realized. A similar story surrounds Warhol's film, *Beauty #2* (1965), the second installment in what was meant to be *The Beauty Series*—a line of films which would document Sedgwick flirting with potential lovers while being interrogated off-screen by Chuck Wein. While these portraits of Sedgwick have the markings of 'cinema verite', a cinema of *truth*, it's possible that their intent may have been somewhat untruthful. Perhaps these films were never meant to be completed, only to be begun with an implication of perpetuity—the suggestion that *Beauty #2* might extend to *Beauty #60*—like a television series. In Roland Barthes' characterization of Pop in terms of Warhol, he writes, "it is important that things be "finite" (outlined: no evanescence), but it is not important that they be finished, that work (is there a work?) be given the internal organization of a destiny (birth, life, death)."³³ Hence these films contain something that feels *real*, *véritable*, while also suggesting an immortal-like endlessness.

But endlessness, as a theme explored in Warhol's films, is precisely endless, extending beyond just a promise, and manifesting also in content and composition. *Lupe* (1965) and *Outer and Inner Space* (1965), two of Warhol's final films starring Edie Sedgwick, achieve the feeling

³² Mekas, Jonas "Movie Journal," *Village Voice*, April 29, 1965, 13.

³³ Roland Barthes, "That Old Thing, Art..." *Post-Pop Art* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), 23.

of endlessness through an altered sense of time and the repetition of Sedgwick's image. Though through different means, both films place Sedgwick in conversation with herself, duplicating her identity into two *similar but different* parts—like the Andy/Edie phenomenon—while also implying, like the unrealized Sedgwick Sagas, that her replication might continue forever.

In *Lupe*, Sedgwick stars as the deceased Mexican actress Lupe Velez, chronicling the last day of the actress' life leading up to her suicide. The film, which runs for a little over an hour, has many features that Warhol's previous films lacked (or avoided), features that might qualify it as what Sedgwick refers to as a "real movie" to Merv Griffin. *Lupe* is shot in color, the image is in focus (for the most part), the dialogue is comprehensible (for the most part), and the film is, after all, a kind of biopic (for the most part). Slightly deviating from Velez' biography, the film maintains its Warholian flair, and negates, as Barthes suggests, the 'internal organization of destiny'. When Lupe Velez died in 1944, her body was found lying peacefully in bed beside a suicide note, and the coroner declared the cause of death to be seventy-five pills of Seconal and a glass of brandy. But Warhol's *Lupe* opts for a more mythical and degrading telling of the story, drawing from fellow underground filmmaker Kenneth Anger's book, *Hollywood Babylon*. In Anger's account of the tragedy, he describes how Velez, nauseous from the Seconal's reaction to the Mexican food she had just consumed, ran to the bathroom, slipped on the tile, and broke her neck, terminating her life with her head in the toilet bowl. This is the image that concludes Warhol's *Lupe*: Sedgwick's lifeless body draped over the john. But the scene doesn't just play at the end of the film, it plays at the end of each reel. Between the two scenes of Sedgwick acting out Velez's last night alive, the first in which she gets ready, and the second in which she picks at her last supper, the camera abruptly cuts to the suicidal aftermath that concludes Velez's life by Anger's account. Destiny, thus, is broken up—interrupted by its own ending. The choice suggests

that Warhol's interest lies in the afterlife and reproduction of the image, rather than in the linear life-span or *truthful* account of what the image represents.

And yet, the film is not necessarily *untruthful*. Sedgwick stars as Velez, but hardly any attempt is made to communicate the fact outside of the film's title and the reference to Anger's narrative. Sedgwick bears no physical resemblance to the dark-haired Mexican actress, and the "plot" consists mostly of the same banal actions Sedgwick performs in Warhol's previous films about hers. Thus, something of the actor's role in acting, of concealing identity in exchange for another, is lost in *Lupe*. Warhol once referred to Sedgwick as "a wonderful, wonderful blank" who could be "anything you wanted her to be—a little girl, a woman, intelligent, dumb, rich, poor— anything."³⁴ But the disturbing parallels between the lives of Sedgwick and Velez suggest that the link wasn't completely without reason. Both actresses struggled with substance abuse, unwanted pregnancy, and the actual events of Velez's death were eerily close to Edie's own destiny, when in 1971 she was found deceased in bed following an overdose of barbiturates. This detail isn't included to suggest that Warhol had psychic abilities, but according to Robert Heide, who was originally asked to write the script, Warhol had said to him on the eve of the film's shoot, "When do you think Edie will commit suicide? I hope she lets me know so I can film it."³⁵ Whatever Warhol's intentions may have been with that remark, it's clear that there was some connection made between Edie Sedgwick and the late Lupe Velez. In *Lupe*, Sedgwick isn't disguised as Velez, she's merged with her, representing both of their identities in all their differences and similarities. The effect is largely created through the use of physical mirrors, which visually fragment and multiply Sedgwick's identity. Like many of Warhol's early films, *Lupe* begins with a close, prolonged shot of a sleeping figure. Sedgwick, whose head nearly

³⁴ Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol* (Orlando: Harcourt), 33.

³⁵ Robert Heide, "Village '65 Revisited," *Village Voice*, July 27 1982, 3.

touches what appears to be a mirror, is reflected into two sleeping figures, conjoined by the dark roots of their blonde hair.



Figure 5

Once she wakes up, the camera zooms out, and reveals Sedgwick encased in lush pillows, lying atop an ornate bed that sits flush against a large, mounted mirror. She stretches, makes a brief phone call, and is subsequently joined by Billy Name, a fellow Factory frequenter, who proceeds to give Sedgwick a haircut (this was one of his roles in the Factory as well). All of this takes place without Sedgwick having to leave her post on the bed, and her now conscious figure remains doubled by the mirror's reflection. She spends most of the reel engaging with herself, facing her reflection head-on to periodically examine Name's work and apply make-up. At one point, she even procures a second mirror, this one small, double-sided, and circular. Holding the object in front of her with her back to the wall, she gazes at the reflection of her reflection, checking out the back of her head. Seeing Sedgwick sandwiched between both mirrors situates

her body in a kind of limbo-like space. Enclosed on either end by her own image, vanity begins to suffocate her subjectivity.

Warhol's camera furthers the feeling. Zooming in and out and panning up and down, the camera constantly reminds the viewer of its presence. It watches Sedgwick watching herself, traveling from one to the other, and then periodically pulling back to reveal both at once. The effect is almost dizzying, confusing depth with surface. But there are also strange intervals when Sedgwick is abandoned from view completely, and the camera tilts up past her head, zooms in, and traces the edges of the mirror—as if reminding us that it is indeed *just* a mirror.

In the last few minutes of the reel, Sedgwick scooches back towards the mounted mirror, aligning the left side of her body with its surface, and continues to touch up her appearance. But now she's using the smaller mirror to reflect her face, holding the object right next to its much larger model. The camera keeps Sedgwick and her walled reflection together in view, capturing both figures as they look fixedly at themselves in the smaller mirror, their hands mechanically working the makeup brush up and down each cheek. Sedgwick is again encapsulated by her own image, like she was while checking the back of her head. But this time, her disengagement with the larger mirror diminishes something of its function. She sits next to her reflection, and yet focuses her attention towards a different object with the same reflective capacity. As a result, the walled mirror loses part of its surface quality, reverting back to its state at the start of the film as a pure extension of space—and of Sedgwick.

The tensions between depth and surface, real and reflection—dichotomies which ultimately end in Sedgwick's destruction—recalls the Greek myth of Narcissus. Narcissus, as described by Ovid in *Metamorphosis*, was a teenage boy so beautiful that men and women alike pined for his love. But Narcissus was cursed, and upon catching his reflection in a still pool of

water, he too became seduced by himself, falling madly in love with his reflection. So taken was Narcissus with his own image that he died right there in front of it. The agony of unattainable love withered his body into nothingness, leaving only a single flower to sprout in his wake, and sending his soul to Hell, where he continued to gaze at himself in the reflection of the river Styx.

Like Narcissus, Sedgwick's fixation with her reflection becomes a portent of death. After staring at herself for nearly the whole of the first reel, the camera cuts to the first installment of her tragic end, where Sedgwick's motionless head rests against the toilet seat, inches away from what Anger described as "her last mirror", a different kind of pool of water. Once again, her image is doubled, this time by the floor-length bathroom mirror. But in this shot, Sedgwick and her reflection are more physically divorced from one another. The bathroom wall adjacent to the mirror acts as a visual barrier, separating both toilets not necessarily in a division of *real* vs. *reflection*, but more so in what appears like open bathroom stalls. Just as Narcissus continues to gaze at his reflection in Hell, one could imagine a line of these toilets continuing outside of the frame, each a repetition of Sedgwick's suicide. A hall of mirrors opens up.



Figure 6

Outer and Inner Space (1965) also plays with space, time, and truth through the repetition of Sedgwick's image, but through much more complex and technical means. The film boasts multiple firsts: it marks Warhol's first experiment in double projection, a feature he would revisit with *Chelsea Girls* (1966), and it's also the first of his films to incorporate video, which had just begun to enter the consumer market. By 1965, only a few models of home video cameras existed, and the medium was still largely attached to the province of television, where it stood for something public rather than personal. Norelco Company (now known as Phillips, a popular brand of electric razors), had recently released the *EL-3401A/54*—a large, boxy camera that Warhol once referred to as a “video machine.”³⁶ As part of a promotional gimmick, Norelco loaned the equipment to Warhol for a few months, making him one of the first artists with access to the medium. In *POPism*, Warhol writes: “The idea was for me to show it to my “rich friends”(it sold for around five thousand dollars) and sort of get them to buy one.”³⁷ There's no evidence that the sponsorship bore any sales, but Warhol did produce eleven half-hour videotapes, two of which feature in *Outer and Inner Space*.

Shot on two thirty-minute reels of 16mm film produced to be projected side-by-side, *Outer and Inner Space* is a film, but it is a film of and about video. In both reels, Sedgwick sits in front of a television monitor, which plays prerecorded videotapes of herself. With Sedgwick as the sole subject of both cameras, continuously situated beside herself, the film creates a similar display of narcissism as *Lupe*, but with the added dimension of video. *Outer and Inner Space* was actually shot three months before *Lupe*, but the novelty of its approach places it somewhere further ahead. Nam Jun Paik, who's often credited as the grandfather of Video Art, was still a few months away from picking up a video camera, making *Outer and Inner Space* arguably the

³⁶ Andy Warhol, *Popism*, 119.

³⁷ Andy Warhol, *Popism*, 119.

first of its kind. So, for the sake of this chapter, I've privileged technology over chronology, because what the mirror contributes in *Lupe*, video expands on in *Outer and Inner Space*.

But considering *Outer and Inner Space* on its own, chronology becomes crucial in making sense of the film's composition, which consists of four figures but stars only one. With little to no changes occurring in the film outside of the camera's occasional zoom, the four Sedgwicks, present from start to finish, make up the film's beginning, middle, and end—implying a sequence necessary in their communion. Chronology thus becomes defined by space, where the object farthest from the camera—the television—marks a kind of beginning. But the television is also the vessel of an even earlier event, pointing to a video past that precedes the film's present and future.

In The Whitney Museum's *Catalogue Raisonné* of Warhol's films, the genesis of *Outer and Inner Space*, as described by art historian Gregory Zinman, is traced back to Sedgwick's unwillingness to memorize the scripts written by Ronald Tavel. As a replacement, Sedgwick proposed to share her personal cosmology, which she claimed would make for a more interesting dialogue. Zinman describes Sedgwick's philosophy as "a sort of piecemeal theory focused on the concept that within each person resides a universe."³⁸ Situating Sedgwick's musings on space and existence within a wider cultural phenomenon, Zinman addresses the space race between the United States and the USSR, which was at that point a hot topic of discussion, as neither parties had yet to land on the moon. A kind of race occurs in *Outer and Inner Space* too, between film and video, and between Sedgwick and herself.

Reaching for the newly acquired Norelco camera rather than his usual 16mm Bolex, Warhol began by taping Sedgwick close-up and in profile, as she expanded on her theory. But the

³⁸ Warhol, Andy, Callie Angell, and John G Hanhardt. *The Films of Andy Warhol: Catalogue Raisonné*. (New York: H.N. Abrams, 2006), 387.

meaning of her speech is transformed in the video's afterlife, in which Warhol manipulates the footage and obscures the audio to create a nearly incomprehensible dialogue between two different states of Sedgwick. By filming her in front of the tape, this time on film, Warhol creates a space where Sedgwick appears outside of herself, while also inside of the television.



Figure 7

In art historian Rosalind Krauss' essay "Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism", she argues that the mechanics of video lend itself to the self. In video's ability to record and return an instant playback, the subject, Krauss writes, is "centered between two machines that are the opening and closing of parenthesis."³⁹ Like Sedgwick's performance in *Lupe*, where her body is caught between two mirrors, the Sedgwick playing on the television feeds a closed circuit of self that begins and ends in her image. The videotape embodies its own space, its own parenthesis, while also acting as the beginning of an even larger enclosure. With a television behind her and a film camera in front of her, Sedgwick is spatially centered between two separate and technologically different machines, each of which contribute their own interpretation of her image.

³⁹ Rosalind Krauss, "Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism." *October* 1 (1976) 52.

The Sedgwick born through video (who I will now refer to as “TV Sedgwick”) contrasts considerably with the one in front of her, captured only by film. TV Sedgwick is cast in a harsh, white light. She sticks out, her closely framed head nearly filling the television screen, slightly larger than that of the other Sedgwick, and yet seemingly distant. Nearly absent of shadow, her illuminated face, in contrast with the absolute blackness behind her, likens her profile to a waxing moon. Although her words can hardly be made out, she appears to speak intently, directly—as if delivering a monologue or saying grace. But the Sedgwick outside of the television, the “live” Sedgwick, is full of detail and dimension, her body turned towards the film camera, revealing the whole of her face, torso, and big dangling earrings. She speaks quickly and animatedly to someone off screen—engaged in conversation while also reacting to the sound of herself on the television. Grimacing, laughing, and all the while chain-smoking, the image of Sedgwick set forth by the film camera alone has a vulnerable quality—like the medium itself.

Situated next to each other, the Sedgwicks are *similar but different*—one person represented by the image of two different machines. Like an inverse of the ‘Andy & Edie’ effect, where two different people share one identity. But even though TV Sedgwick & Sedgwick can’t share space in the same way that ‘Andy & Edie’ can, as TV Sedgwick speaks, her mouth aligned with the ear of the Sedgwick outside of her, their different dimensions begin to flatten in an illusion of communication—appearing like Warhol’s whispered replies to Sedgwick on *The Merv Griffin Show*.

Filmed for an hour, but split into two reels, their dynamic as a double projection produces four Sedgwicks engaged in different points of speech, all at the same time. The multitude of speech, coupled with the film’s poor audio quality, makes it difficult to hear anything at all. Bits and pieces of meaning surface here and there, but hardly any complete thoughts. At times, the

sound of all four talking heads collide, overwhelming the two screens in a jangling choir of fuzzy melodies. The difficult experience of listening to *Outer and Inner Space* is addressed in Douglas Crimp's essay "Spaciousness", in which he dubs the film's sound as "a sort of ruse."⁴⁰ Initially, Crimp notes, the viewer's impulse is to decipher what's being said—"straining to listen"—but eventually, the viewer gives up, leaving spoken words as surface sound and submitting to "the shimmering mobility of her facial expressions and large dangling earrings."⁴¹ This may be what Sontag was hoping for in her call to replace interpretation with a more sensory experience of art. But the film's sensuousness is less erotic than it is erratic, and interpretation, as seen before in Warhol and Sedgwick's appearance on *Merv Griffin*, isn't necessarily negated so much as it's altered, and sent through a loop.

But this loop consists only of one fragmented individual. Sedgwick & TV Sedgwick(& Sedgwick & TV Sedgwick) is more schizoid, more troubling, than 'Andy & Edie' who, despite their similarities, are still two different people. And where Warhol and Sedgwick on *The Merv Griffin Show* share responsibilities—one to whisper and inform, and the other to speak and perform—the four Sedgwicks and their babble appear organized to be disorganized.

In obscuring the 'inner universe' TV Sedgwick is said to be explaining, the film becomes less about Sedgwick's expression of her theory and more about Warhol's response to it. But the meaning of his response, like the audio, is somewhat unclear. On one hand, there's a distinct juxtaposition of the technologies of film and video, where both machines are turned toward each other as if in a face off. Video is telling Sedgwick's story, and film, in its poor audio and double projection, is obscuring it—multiplying it to transform the content into something else. But on the other hand, *Outer and Inner Space* feels intensely personal to Sedgwick, even more so than

⁴⁰ Douglas Crimp "Spaciousness," *October* 132 (2010) 13.

⁴¹ Crimp, 13.

Lupe. By forcing her to face herself, not as a mirror reflection, but as a video—an image independent of her speech or movement—Warhol seems to be asking something of her.

In Georges Bataille's book *Inner Experience*, he writes

Anyone wanting slyly to avoid suffering, identifies with the entirety of the universe, judges each thing as if he were it. In the same way, he imagines, at bottom, that he will never die. We receive these hazy illusions like a narcotic necessary to bear life. But what happens to us when, disintoxicated, we learn what we are? Lost among babblers in a night in which we can only hate the appearance of light which comes from babbling.⁴²

Considering *Outer and Inner Space* as a psychological portrait, the image created out of TV Sedgwick speaking in Sedgwick's ear is akin to a self-supplied narcotic used to cope with suffering. But also, a kind of disintoxication. Perhaps removing Sedgwick from her 'inner experience' and placing her outside of herself is Warhol's method of intervention.

Literal narcotics, such as barbiturates, play a role in many of Warhol's films surrounding Sedgwick, because they played a role in her life. But the presence of drugs is hardly a point of emphasis, and they don't appear to be intentionally included by Warhol, who claims, "whatever anyone may have thought, I never gave Edie a drug, ever."⁴³ Even in *Lupe*, where drugs are the implied source of the subject's death, the first reel makes no mention of pills, focusing instead on Sedgwick's obsession with her reflection, which cuts directly to her demise. Warhol seems to point instead towards an immaterial narcotic, identifying a deeper psychological disturbance which the drugs are likely symptomatic of.

In his chapter about Sedgwick in *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, written a few years after her death, Warhol offers a straightforward, and at times even brutal account of his

⁴² Georges Bataille, *Inner Experience* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), xxxii.

⁴³ Andy Warhol and Pat Hackett, *Popism*, 136.

perspective on Sedgwick, who he refers to as “Taxi”. Warhol writes, “At first I thought Taxi only hoarded drugs. I knew that hoarding is a kind of selfishness, but I thought it was only with drugs that she was that way...But I finally realized that Taxi was selfish about absolutely everything.”⁴⁴ He goes on to enumerate many of Sedgwick’s lies and faults, providing anecdotes of her selfish behavior, but his account is not without a strange suggestion of care, and possibly even of regret, as if repeating all the stories might help make sense of where things went wrong, or free him from guilt. In one instance, Warhol juxtaposes the countless hours spent by Sedgwick applying makeup with her unwillingness to bathe. He recounts encouraging her to take a bath, even running one for her:

I’d yell, “Are you in the tub?” “Yes, I’m in the tub.” Splash splash. But then I’d hear her tiptoeing around the bathroom and I’d peek through the keyhole and she’d be standing in front of the mirror, putting on more makeup over what was already caked on her face.⁴⁵

Maybe *Outer and Inner Space* is Warhol’s alternative way of running Sedgwick a bath. He bathes her in her own image, also bathing the image itself, and its sound, washing and washing until something new is realized. And *Lupe*, made right before their split, in which Warhol foreshadows Sedgwick’s fate, is the frustrating reality that lies behind the keyhole: self-obsession in place of self-care. In both films, there is a consistent theme of *narcissism* as a *narcotic*—words that share the same Greek root, *narkē* “numbness”. But where *Lupe*’s dose is fatal, the numbing agent in *Outer and Inner Space* administers more of an open-ended, weightless quality—how one would imagine the body to feel without gravity.

In Krauss’ essay, she writes, “even if it is agreed...that the medium of video art is the psychological condition of the self split and doubled by the mirror-reflection of synchronous

⁴⁴ Andy Warhol, *Philosophy* 35.

⁴⁵ Andy Warhol, *Philosophy*, 36.

feedback, how does that entail a ‘rift’ between video and the other arts?”⁴⁶ This is where the difference between *Lupe* and *Outer and Inner Space* takes shape: in the distinction with which Krauss answers her question—*reflective* vs. *reflexive*. In *Lupe*, when the camera zooms in, erasing the boundaries of the mirror, the alternate spaces of Sedgwick and her reflection are truly collapsed. Defining reflectiveness as an “external symmetry”, Krauss writes, “The agency of reflection is a mode of appropriation, of illusionistically erasing the difference between subject and object.”⁴⁷ Warhol acknowledges the illusion, tracing the mirror’s border with his camera, but it’s precisely Narcissus’ realization of the illusion that kills him. Reflectiveness is what causes Narcissus, upon first seeing his reflection in the water, not to recognize the image as his object.

Reflexiveness, however, which Krauss comparatively defines as “a strategy to achieve a radical *asymmetry*, from within”⁴⁸, is the driving force of *Outer and Inner Space*, where space is always two contradictory things at once, one thing *and* another, not a binary of either/or. When the camera zooms in, erasing the boundaries of the television, the alternate spaces of TV Sedgwick and Sedgwick do collide in their visual illusion of communication, but still, their obvious differences and the independent agendas of their speech keep them independent from one another. This is part of what characterizes their reflexiveness— what Krauss describes as the “fracture into two categorically different entities which can elucidate one another insofar as their separateness is maintained.”⁴⁹

The elucidation comes fleetingly, though, experienced like a shock with every glitch of the television’s display. In some moments, TV Sedgwick’s face is pulled towards the other Sedgwick in a static wave, as if wanting to merge into this more dimensional copy. And then

⁴⁶ Krauss, 55.

⁴⁷ Krauss, 56-57.

⁴⁸ Krauss, 56.

⁴⁹ Krauss, 56.

there are times when the television contorts her face beyond recognition—so much so, that when the image settles, it can no longer be trusted. Like it had never been more than a Sedgwick-shaped mask. But most of the time, when the television glitches, the image just twinkles, emptying itself of white pixels and threatening to disappear completely.



“What is left?” asks poet and art critic David Antin in contemplation of Warhol’s celebrity portraits.⁵⁰ The images of Jackie Kennedy and Marilyn Monroe, which Warhol processes and repeats until they too seem to glitch, are reflexive and not reflective of their original. Sedgwick’s performance leaves both herself and the viewer in a position similar to Antin’s, who describes the feeling as “the sense that there is something out there one recognizes and yet can’t see.”⁵¹ He writes, “before the Warhol canvases we are trapped in a ghastly embarrassment...the nearly obliterated image and the persistently intrusive feeling. Somewhere in the image there is a proposition. It is unclear.”⁵²

The proposition is unclear, but in Antin’s essay, there is also a suggestion that the proposition *is* itself unclear, that what is being proposed in Warhol’s work, or what is left, is

⁵⁰ David Antin “The Silver Tenement.” In *Radical Coherency: Selected Essays on Art and Literature* (Chicago: University Press, 2011), 18.

⁵¹ Antin, 18.

⁵² Antin, 18.

precisely the uncertain feeling that Antin describes. When space becomes outer *and* inner, not either/or, the formation of the self as a private, unique identity exists separate but in conversation with the endlessness implied by the universe. The viewer is humbled, forced to reckon with their insignificance, but also encouraged to float somewhere within it, to embrace the heterotopic kind of queerness described by De Lauretis as “the space of a transit, a displacement, a passage and transformation.”⁵³

⁵³ Teresa De Lauretis, 243.

Conclusion

The initial idea for this project began when Alex Cooper, host of the podcast *Call Her Daddy*, asked the actress Julia Fox, her guest, “What is a muse?” Without having to pause, Fox replied, “I was Josh Safdie’s muse when he wrote *Uncut Gems*. Things like that.”⁵⁴ Following the interview, I was for a time haunted by this seemingly archaic word. I tried my hand at Homer and Ovid, wandering through Mount Olympus where the Muse was conceived, searching to no avail for the elusive spirit that was allegedly alive and well in Julia Fox. But it was all Greek to me. In an effort to find some deeper meaning, my mind kept replaying Cooper’s simply structured question and Fox’s delphic, unsatisfying answer on loop. The loop echoed on my phone too, where the fifteen-second clip went viral—spiraling down a memetic circuit, multiplying itself across platforms, and eventually finding new life on TikTok. There, the video’s audio was extracted so that users could record and upload themselves lip-syncing to Fox’s reply. Judging by the exaggerated facial expressions made in most of the videos, the sound’s popularity is likely due to Fox’s distinct vocal fry, and her pronunciation of the film’s title as “uncah jahmz”. With over 50,000 videos surfacing from *one* copy of the audio byte, I could potentially scroll for days. I didn’t do that, but I was hypnotized by the capacity for “what is a muse” to loop forever on my phone. Somehow, that felt relevant to the question’s answer.

In Koestenbaum’s biography of Warhol, he writes, “[Warhol’s] desire for female doppelgängers was not the usual story of a male artist seeking his anima: he used these women not to consolidate his masculinity but as his accomplices in taking it apart. Edie was the most sensational of these foils.”⁵⁵ Warhol’s use of the repeated image, whether that be of himself, Sedgwick, or Marilyn Monroe, creates a rupture in the subject’s exterior that reveals the

⁵⁴ Alex Cooper, interview with Julia Fox. *Call Her Daddy*, Feb. 2022.

⁵⁵ Koestenbaum, 90.

potentially empty space of its interior. Taking apart masculinity requires the admission that it was only ever a construction to begin with. Hence when Warhol says “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”, he fully assumes his mask, celebrating surface as the only known substance of his identity. In studying Andy Warhol and Edie Sedgwick, a seemingly limitless void opens up— Sedgwick becomes an infinite muse. Her infinity appears in Warhol's films, where her repeated figure spans across mediums and mirrors until the viewer is no longer certain which Sedgwick is the “original”, but also off-screen, where, upon the end of her story with Warhol, Sedgwick was replaced and reconstructed in another.

Somewhere around the end of 1965, Sedgwick began to feel like she wasn't being taken seriously at the Factory, and left Warhol for a superstar of her own, Bob Dylan, who had promised to take her name to Hollywood. In response, Warhol replaced Sedgwick with a woman found in a bar who bore a slight resemblance to her: Ingrid von Scheven. Brought back to the Factory, Scheven was adorned with large dangly earrings and painted with heavy makeup to further her likeness to Sedgwick. Her new identity was deserving of a new name, and the Factory christened her “Ingrid Superstar”.



Ingrid Superstar looks a bit like an Edie Sedgwick drawn from memory. And in a way, she is. Superstar's presence represents an impression left by Sedgwick, but also, in the variations produced by her translation, a reconstitution of her meaning. Replacement (re-placement) is Warholian in its effect, but also by definition, where the act itself signifies the emptying and filling of space in one gesture.

One Factory goer recalls: "and you had to feel sorry for [Ingrid] because she didn't really know they were making fun of her all the time. Then after a while she became so acceptable that they weren't making fun of her; they really started to consider her as a human being and someone they liked."⁵⁶ At a certain point, the copy takes credence over the original, and the new translation of the text, despite its difference, is cited as the new text. It's a phenomenon that's not unique to Superstars.

The eleven videotapes that Warhol shot on the Norelco camera—all preserved and in possession of the Warhol Film Archive—are impossible to watch. As one of earliest models of

⁵⁶ Stein, 282.

home video recording, the Norelco camera used a format called “slant-scan video”, which differed from the helical scan video recorders developed by Sony and most other video companies that followed. Working slant-scan players are now completely obsolete, limiting the existence of Warhol’s tapes to mere material artifacts, or worse: misfit objects awaiting reinterpretation.

In the 1960s, obsolescence catapulted in the wake of American post-war consumerism. Cars, clothing, appliances...everyday objects were no longer designed to last. Mass production and expendability became an integral part of culture, and of art. Baudrillard writes

The logic of consumption eliminates the traditional sublime status of artistic representation. There is, strictly, no longer any privileging of the essence of signification of the object over the image...Whereas all art up to Pop was based on a ‘depth’ vision of the world, Pop regards itself as homogenous with this *imminent order of signs*: homogenous with their industrial, mass production and hence with the artificial, manufactured character of their whole environment.⁵⁷

In a similar vein as Benjamin’s argument that “that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art”, Baudrillard characterizes Pop Art as the dissolution of the sign in favor of the image. The ‘depth’ vision of the world is replaced by one of surface, where it becomes impossible to say what is “real” anymore.

But when theorist Frederic Jameson considers the death of individualism, he asserts that there are two positions to take: one to assert that the individual, or perhaps the *aura*, once existed, but was killed by corporate capitalism, and to light a candle at its shrine, and the other is to contend that the coffin is empty, and that such an aura never existed in the first place. But then

⁵⁷ Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2012).115.

Jameson proposes that neither positions are necessarily relevant, arguing instead that “what we have to retain from all this is rather an aesthetic dilemma: because if the experience and ideology of the unique self, an experience and ideology which informed the stylistic practices of classical modernism, is over and done with, then it is no longer what the artists and writers of the present period are supposed to be doing.”⁵⁸

Hito Steyerl, an artist, filmmaker, and theorist, writes of the twenty-first century’s proliferation of a new kind of image, the “poor image”, which is defined by its low resolution, compressed file size, and endless circulation and recapitulation on the internet. Steyerl writes

The poor image has been uploaded, downloaded, shared, reformatted, and re edited. It transforms quality into accessibility, exhibition value into cult value, films into clips, contemplation into distraction. The image is liberated from the vaults of cinemas and archives and thrust into digital uncertainty, at the expense of its own substance. The poor image tends towards abstraction: it is a visual idea in its very becoming.⁵⁹

Steyerl’s essay, titled “In Defense of the Poor Image” might be considered in the aesthetic dilemma outlined by Jameson, and in the afterlife of Warhol’s work. Steyerl argues that in reproduction and the loss of definition, a new kind of aura is born which is “no longer based on the permanence of the “original,” but on the transience of the copy.”⁶⁰ When Andy Warhol and Edie Sedgwick emerged as a media couple, media outlets were forced to forfeit the mode of interpretation that relies on a fixed definition, and submit to the transient, queer, and heterotopic space of their coupling.

⁵⁸ Frederic Jameson “Postmodernism and Consumer Society” *Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*. (New York, 2002) 132.

⁵⁹ Hito Steyerl, “In Defense of the Poor Image” *e-flux*, 10 (New York, 2009) 1.

⁶⁰ Steyerl, 8.

Initially, I was disappointed in myself when I realized that I had committed to contributing *another paper on Andy Warhol*. There have probably been as many, if not more papers written on Andy Warhol than there have been TikToks that answer the question, “what is a muse?” in the voice of Julia Fox. But what I’ve learned in studying Warhol’s work, and his “muse” Edie Sedgwick, is that with each iteration, we grow further from the impulse to interpret, and perhaps closer to what my advisor Alex Kitnick describes as “the work art has always asked us to do... consider the conditions of our world and help carve out the requisite space for contemplation.”⁶¹ I think that space must be outer and inner.

⁶¹ Alex Kitnick, “No Resolution: Video Art In and Around The Contemporary” *Artforum* (New York, 2023).

Figures

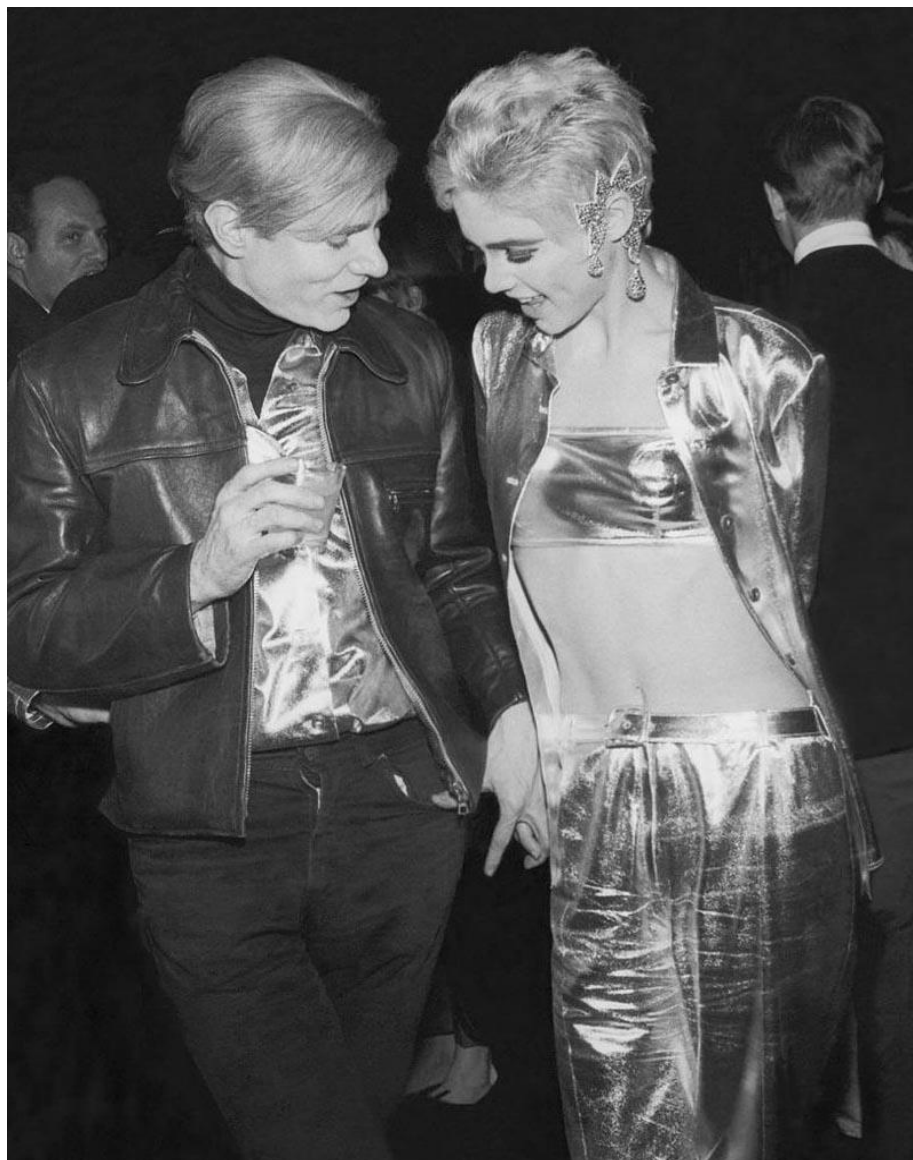


Figure 1

Andy Warhol And Edie Sedgwick at The Rainbow Room, 1965. Courtesy of *Fairchild Archive*

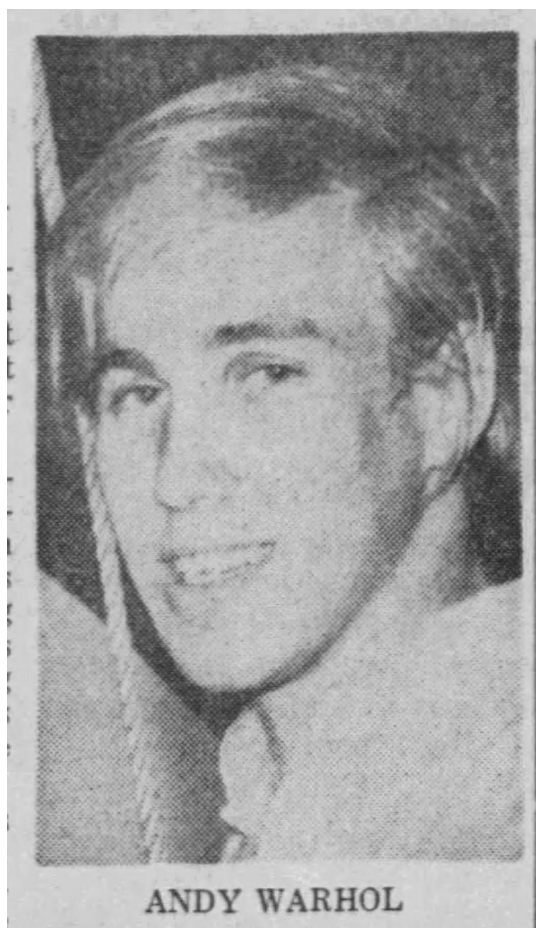
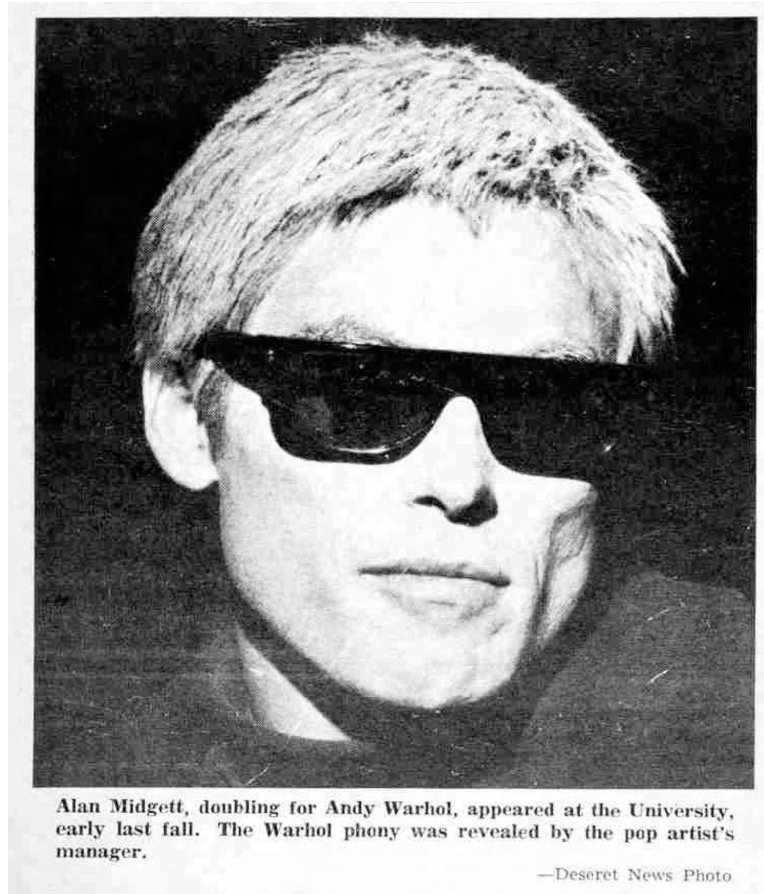


Figure 2

Ed Hennessey mistaken for Andy Warhol in *The Record*, (New Jersey, Feb. 8, 1968)



Alan Midgett, doubling for Andy Warhol, appeared at the University, early last fall. The Warhol phony was revealed by the pop artist's manager.

—Deseret News Photo

Figure 3

Allen Midgett in *The Daily Utah Chronicle* (Salt Lake City, Feb. 8, 1968)

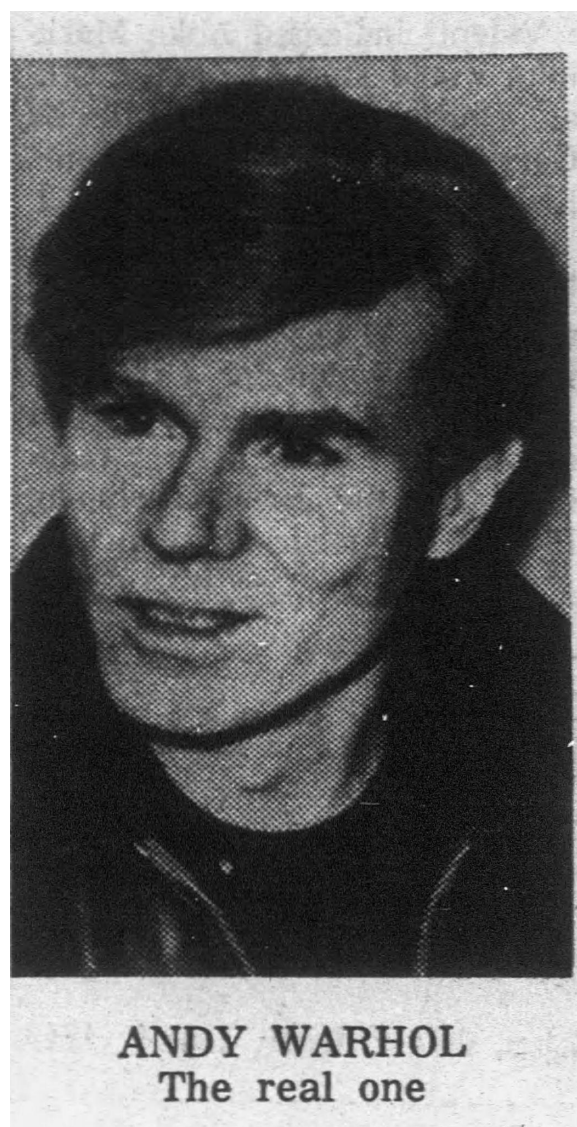


Figure 4

Andy Warhol in *The Capital Journal* (Salem, Feb. 9, 1968)



Figure 5

Andy Warhol, *Lupe*, 1965, 16 mm, color, sound, 72 minutes; double-screen projection, 36 minutes. *Lupe* (Edie Sedgwick). © The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA



Figure 6

Andy Warhol, *Lupe*, 1965, 16 mm, color, sound, 72 minutes; double-screen projection, *Lupe* (Edie Sedgwick). © The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA

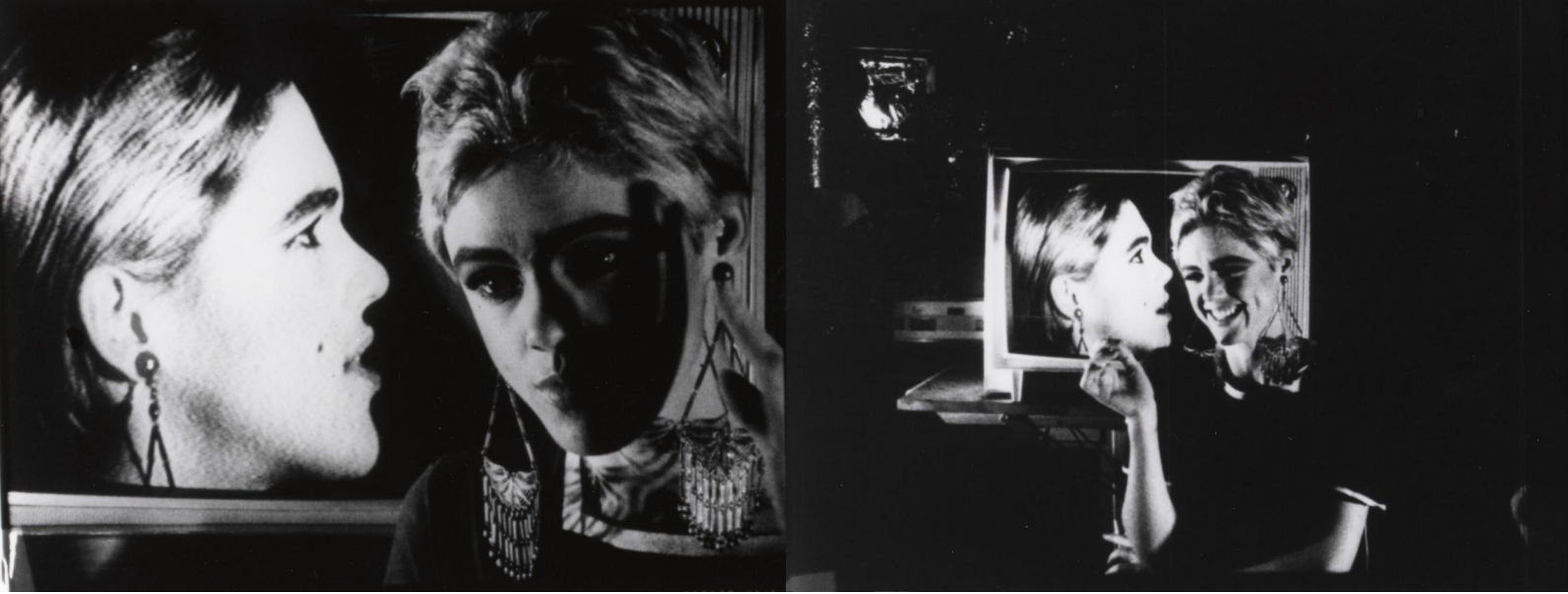


Figure 7

Andy Warhol, *Outer and Inner Space* 16 mm, b & w, sound, 33 minutes; double-screen projection, 36 minutes. Preserved 1997 by MoMa.

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