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Performing the Artist:
The Role of Gender in Understanding Pollock and Warhol

by

Louisa Lee

C. Ondine Chavoya, Advisor

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Jackson Pollock and Andy Warhol are two of the most studied U.S. American artists of the past century. They have been written into the art historical narrative as examples of the changing cultural perceptions of art and artist. Warhol's mechanized printing press and pop-culture references directly confronted the individual and emotional expression of Pollock's drip method. Two photos – Hans Namuth's *Jackson Pollock painting one and Lee Krasner (1950)* and Billy Name's *Andy Warhol at the Silver Factory (1966-67)* help to illustrate this narrative (fig. 1 and fig. 2). Though both photographs are equally informative of the artists' production methods, Namuth's picture has entered the canon of Pollock's scholarly inquiry while Name's stands outside the commonly evoked rhetoric. The fact that these photographs have faced such different responses despite their formal similarity reveals how we as viewers define each of them as 'artist.' What these photographs fail to contrast, and thus why they fail to be popularly contrasted, is the role gender performativity played in the history of the reception and interpretation of each artist.

From Behind the Camera

In the summer of 1950, a photographer from *Harper's Bazaar* magazine arrived at Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner's house just outside of East Hampton, NY to take pictures of Pollock at his studio.¹ The couple informed the photographer, Hans Namuth, that Pollock had just finished painting and that there was nothing to shoot. They went out back to the barn that doubled as Pollock's studio to look at the still-wet canvas. After a few moments of silence, Pollock reached down, picked up a bucket of paint, and began to move around the canvas. Namuth recalled the way Pollock reached for his brush, "as if

¹ Boxer, Sarah. *Critic's Notebook; The Photographs that Changed Pollock's Life*. New York Times: December 15, 1998.

he suddenly realized the painting was not finished.”² His movements built into a dancelike trance as the otherwise quiet and stiff man transformed into the artist whom *Life* magazine called the “the greatest American painter of the 20th century.”³ Over 500 black and white stills later, a legend had been crystallized (fig. 3).

Of the 500 stills Namuth snapped over the next three months, a selection of the series was first published in *Portfolio*, an arts magazine, in 1951 and then in *ARTNews* later that year.⁴ This photo in particular was also made into postcards and other media for mass distribution.⁵ After Pollock’s death, Namuth’s photos were published more often than photographs of Pollock’s actual art.⁶ Massachusetts Institute of Technology Professor Caroline Jones argues, these photographs, which “brought the probing eye of the camera into the studio,” were more influential than Pollock’s canvases as they offered a voyeuristic view into the artist’s isolated studio and a glimpse of his painting process. With the ubiquity of Namuth’s photos and the fame of what was considered the first American school of art, Billy Name and Andy Warhol were both well-aware of *Jackson Pollock Painting one and Lee Krasner (1950)* when Name snapped *Andy Warhol at the Silver Factory (1966-67)* 16 years later.

Taken together, Namuth’s photograph of Pollock and Name’s photograph of Warhol bear a striking formal resemblance while highlighting the vastly different modes

² Namuth, Hans and Barbara Rose. *Pollock Painting*. (Agrinde Publications, 1980). n.p.

³ “Jackson Pollock: is he the greatest living painter in the United States?”. *LIFE* Magazine. August 8, 1949.

⁴ Coddington, James and Jennifer Hickey. “MoMA’s Jackson Pollock Conservation Project: Insight into the Artist’s Process.” Museum of Modern Art. (April 17, 2013). https://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2013/04/17/momas-jackson-pollock-conservation-project-insight-into-the-artists-process

⁵ Jones, Caroline. *Machine in the Studio: Constructing the Postwar American Artist*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. 37.

⁶ Boxer. *New York Times*. (as in n. 1)

of production used by the painters. As visual evidence of artists at work in their studio, the photographs in question replicate a narrative that creates a progression from the Abstract Expressionism of the 1940s and 50s to the Pop Art of the 1960s and 70s. Pollock came to embody the post-war rise of the New York School, an essentially all-male club of artists living in Manhattan and working in the abstract style. His splatter and drip method and its reliance on movement across the canvas symbolized a newly empowered and virile United States dependent upon metaphors of masculinity. His style – abstract and springing from the subconscious – is uniquely his own.

Warhol, on the other hand, denies the assertion that art comes solely from the artist's hand. Many of the Pop Artists of the 1960s, Warhol included, started out in commercial careers creating advertisements, brand labels, window displays and sign paintings. Pop Art's mechanized and serial modes of production were an affront to the individualism of the New York School. Pop Art subject matter was no longer illegible, emotion-laden and private, but reflected the commonly experienced world of mass production and consumption. Pollock and Warhol contrast each other's artistic practice and identity. Pollock's abstract lines could only emanate from Pollock's hand whereas Warhol's prints could in theory be serially reproduced by anyone.⁷ These photographs – one with artist central and looming over the canvas and the other with artist bending over print after print of the same subject – reflect this popular narrative. They illustrate and make visible Pollock's painting versus Warhol's printing.

⁷ In fact, as will be discussed later, Gerard Malanga was responsible for much of the labor involved in manning the printing press. The reproductive nature of Warhol's work also continually calls into question the authenticity of a Warhol print, a judgment that the Warhol Foundation has controversially taken upon itself (Shnayerson, Michael. "Judging Andy" in *Vanity Fair* 519 (November 2003): 196-204; 211-220).

Inside the Studio

The photo I have chosen from Namuth's series is one the photographer himself favored: *Photograph of Jackson Pollock painting one and Lee Krasner (1950)*. While the sheer number of photographs taken that day suggests a diverse arsenal from which to draw evidence, they almost all center around the same theme – Pollock in action over his canvas. This photograph in particular, however, was singled out by the photographer as having “greater significance than any other taken during the six years of collaboration and friendship” for it showed what Namuth went on to write and then self-consciously cross out, a “manifestation of genius”⁸ (fig. 4).

In the picture, Pollock is caught lunging over his canvas, arm outstretched with a brush in one hand and a can of paint in the other. The camera angle peers up at the artist as he leans forward with his legs spread to stabilize his stance. He watches the effect of his dripping brush with his brow furrowed in concentration. The entire gesture gives the impression that his movement has slowed for just this moment, as paint leaves his hand and falls into the massing of color below. The painting sprawls in front of Pollock and dominates the bottom third of the photograph, cut off by Namuth's framing choice. What *is* included shows the residue of past movements- lines, drips, and streaks- engulfing the surface of the work. Namuth focuses the camera's gaze on Pollock's arm, and in doing so obscures the borders of the painting, thus negating the viewer's ability to envision an end. Pots, cans, and brushes line up behind Pollock, effectively limiting the available floor space to a thin perimeter around the un-stretched canvas.

⁸ Hans Namuth: Letter from Namuth to Albright-Knox Gallery. (August 31, 1984).

The setting adds another layer of signification. It is daytime as evidenced by the sun streaming through the window and washing out the top left corner of the picture. The clapboard walls in the background suggest a rustic wooden structure, known to many as Pollock's barn studio. Krasner and Pollock moved to this property on Long Island in 1945 to escape Manhattan, where many of Pollock's fellow Abstract Expressionists lived, in the hopes that country life would alleviate Pollock's alcoholism.⁹ The artists' raucous jaunts to the testosterone-charged Cedar Tavern in Greenwich Village fueled artistic and physical debate. Most nights, a crowd of artists would make the trek from Robert Motherwell's studio in the same neighborhood, drink themselves into a stupor and trade art criticisms and theories. Pollock was banned for kicking in the bathroom door. Jack Kerouac was kicked out for peeing in a sink.¹⁰ The atmosphere was boisterous to say the least.

The time and setting of Billy Name's photo, *Andy Warhol at the Silver Factory (1966-67)*(Figure 2), is more ambiguous than Namuth's photograph. The primary light source is a bare bulb in the upper left hand corner and the setting appears to be urban. In fact, the photo was taken in Warhol's first official studio, the Silver Factory, on 47th Street in Manhattan.¹¹ Warhol is center leaning over eight identical prints of a banana and pulling two more into the ever-growing line. Silk-screen prints cover the floor around him: bananas on the concrete floor in front and behind him, and a portrait series to the

⁹ Harrison, Charles. "Jackson Pollock" in *Varieties of Modernism (Art of the Twentieth Century)*, ed. Paul Wood. (Yale University Press, 2004). 123.

¹⁰ Zimmer, Lori. "Cedar Tavern." *Art Nerd New York*. (July 31, 2013). <http://art-nerd.com/newyork/cedar-tavern/>

¹¹ Hickey, Dave and Collier Schorr. *All Tomorrow's Parties: Billy Name's Photographs of Andy Warhol's Factory*. 15.

left.¹² The prints are not exactly identical, but vary in exposure and saturation. The lowest banana on the picture plane, for example, has fewer dark spots than the one directly above it. In many of Warhol's prints, these variations were a result of sloppiness and often an intentional neglect to clean his press. Warhol printed silk screens serially and utilized visual repetition to reflect and comment on the image-saturated world of consumer culture.¹³ For instance, grocery stores, a phenomenon of the 1950s, rely on the appearance of abundance and repetition to sell items. In contrast to the abstracted curves, splatters, and lines of Pollock's subconscious, Warhol uses the technology of mass production to offer images pulled directly from a communally experienced world of consumption. The eponymous Pop Art movement got its name from the popular imagery from which it derived much of its subject matter.

Directly behind Warhol in the picture is a pole covered in aluminum foil. Its metallic surface adds to the industrial and urban feel of the studio. Aluminum foil lends the pole a reflective surface and rough texture. Name, in fact, helped Warhol paint the entire room silver and cover almost everything else in aluminum foil.¹⁴ A figure leans against a printing press in the background, looking on at Warhol crouched over his prints. Many personalities strolled through Warhol's studio, from his homegrown, underground superstars like Viva to later-mainstream names like Lou Reed. In contrast to Pollock's boisterous outings with the boys, Warhol's crowd was more about mingling, drugs, and

¹² For more information on Warhol's self-portraits see, *Andy Warhol: Self Portraits*, ed. Dietmar Elger. Exh. cat. Kunstverein St. Gallen Kunstmuseum. (Stuttgart: Hatje Cantz Verlag 2004). This series of self-portraits in oil and silkscreen on canvas were printed 1966-67.

¹³ Mamiya, Christin J. *Pop Art and Consumer Culture: American Super Market*. 68.

¹⁴ "Silver Factory, 1964-1968." *The Warhol*. 3/11/13.

dressing up. Billy Name called the Silver Factory a “world of creative artists.”¹⁵ While the paint and aluminum foil make silver an obvious choice in naming the studio, factory referred to the collaborative production methods Warhol employed. Factory staples like Gerard Malanga and Brigid Berlin became skilled in silk-screen printing and would help print, if not completely undertake the process himself. Warhol even outsourced signing his work to his mother, Julia Warhol.¹⁶ Malanga, always on hand, is the figure posed behind Warhol.¹⁷

The Photographs and the Narrative

When viewed side-by-side, the formal and ideological juxtapositions of the photographs become clear. Both Namuth and Name offer a snapshot of the artist, his subject matter, studio, and production method. The photograph of Warhol in his urban ‘Factory’ studio with an assistant and printing press confronts the photograph of Pollock at work in his barn. This comparison illuminates the ways in which Pop Art reconsidered the artist’s function and labor in the studio.

By the 1960s, the heyday of Warhol’s Silver Factory, the rhetoric surrounding Pollock’s work was definitively in place thanks to the publicity of Namuth’s photo. Although Pollock began his infamous drip paintings in 1947, the term “New York School,” which collectively described the Abstract Expressionists of the area, wasn’t

¹⁵ Name, Billy. Interview with Collier Schorr. *All Tomorrow’s Parties: Billy Name’s Photographs of Andy Warhol’s Factory*. 27.

¹⁶ Zuromskis, Catherine. “Photographic Relations.” *The Factory*. 11.

¹⁷ This information was confirmed by James Dagan via e-mail correspondence. At the year of publication, Dagan represents Billy Name professionally.

coined until 1950, the same year that Namuth first visited the studio on Long Island.¹⁸ Many have argued that this photograph, and others by Hans Namuth, created the legend of Jackson Pollock.¹⁹ Barbara Rose, an influential American art historian and critic, goes so far as to claim that critics were not writing about Pollock's paintings at all, but were instead describing Namuth's pictures of Pollock. By mirroring *Jackson Pollock Painting one and Lee Krasner (1950)*, Name and Warhol were confronting the legend of a studio-bound, labor-intensive art; an idea that was perpetuated every time Namuth's photo was reprinted.

Other photographers had attempted to capture Pollock's movements to no avail. He only simulated his famous drip technique with a stiff result.²⁰ In relation to the sensational *Life* story "Is he really the greatest living painter in the United States?" Dorothy Sieberling followed up with an interview, which both interviewer and interviewee found to be a painful experience.²¹ Pollock was a man of action, not adept at expressing himself through words.

Action and labor performed by an individual in the studio became recurring themes in interpretations of Pollock and his work. In Namuth's photograph this is evident as Pollock dominates the focus of the camera with a sweeping gesture and introspective consternation. His deep-set eyes and angular features contribute to his air of seriousness and the mystery of his silent personality. This almost constant expression caused one

¹⁸ The term School of New York came about as a result of an exhibition organized in 1951 by Robert Motherwell, but may have been influenced by the Studio 35 conference in 1950. (Sandra Sitch. "The Cultural Climate in America after World War II." 7.)

¹⁹ Boxer. *New York Times*.

²⁰ Landau, Ellen G. *Jackson Pollock*. 182.

²¹ *Ibid.*

friend to remember him as always looking into a hard-driving rain.²² In review articles, critics chose words like “violent,” “savage,” and “romantic” to describe Pollock’s work and ultimately the cult of his artistic personality.²³ The fascination with his paintings went beyond the product to the artist himself, whom Clement Greenberg dubbed a “demiurgic genius.”²⁴ Greenberg, prominent critic and modernist theorist, reinforced the idea that Pollock was creating a new world on his canvas. As a creative power in Namuth’s photograph, Pollock asserts himself over the canvas and is contrasted by his wife sitting passively in the corner. By including a sedentary Krasner, Namuth confirms that art necessitated an active male to create it.

Jackson Pollock painting one and Lee Krasner (1966-67) was canonized because it aptly represents the artistic authority Pollock was meant to embody. In Pollock’s post-WWII period, the United States’ economy grew to establish itself as a world player.²⁵ With the new economic spotlight came the need for a new, uniquely United States’ culture to compete with European modernism. As focus began to converge on the New York art scene, critics like Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg attempted to vindicate art making by couching it in the same rugged, labor-intensive words in which the country was being described.²⁶ Greenberg exulted that, thanks to the Abstract Expressionists, “the main premises of Western art have at last migrated to the United States, along with the center of gravity of industrial production and political power.”²⁷

²² Landau, Ellen G. *Jackson Pollock*. 12.

²³ “Jackson Pollock and His Art”. *Jackson Pollock: Biography, Paintings, Quotes*. 2011.

²⁴ Landau, Ellen G. *Jackson Pollock*. 11.

²⁵ Stitch, Sandra. “The Cultural Climate in America after World War II.” 6.

²⁶ Cresap, Kelly M. *Pop Trickster Fool: Warhol Performs Naivete*. 66.

²⁷ Greenberg, Clement. Quoted in Harrison, Charles. “Jackson Pollock.” in *Varieties of Modernism*. 117.

The artistic ideal they promoted reasserted the artist as worker and his creations as produced through rigorous work. Harold Rosenberg famously employed this rhetoric in his 1952 essay, “The American Action Painters”:

At a certain moment, the canvas began to appear to one American painter after another as an arena in which to act... What was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event. The painter no longer approached his easel with an image in his mind; he went up to it... to do something to that other piece of material in front of him. The image would be the result of this encounter... What matters always is the revelation in the act.²⁸

To Rosenberg, painting was about an interaction between artist and canvas. The resulting lines of paint were just evidence of that interaction.²⁹ The act of painting, then, was an intensely personal one in which the authorial hand of the artist was key. Abstraction and an action-oriented method allowed the artist to exert control. Authority was so integral to Pollock’s conception of artistic creation that he frustratingly responded to *Time* magazine’s descriptions of his work: there is “no chaos, damn it.”³⁰

While process was integral to Pollock’s innovation, Namuth’s photograph also evidences the requisite isolation proper to a modern artist’s studio. The bars of light cracking through the barn wall and the almost airless clarity of focus on Pollock’s face have a nostalgic quality. While Pollock is not technically alone, Krasner is watching from a corner and out of Pollock’s view. As the American scholar and museum director Lisa Philips highlights in her review of 20th century American art, the “premium [the Abstract Expressionists] placed on originality, autonomy, and individual actions led to one of the most enduring myths of the decade – the idea of the artist as the romantic, alienated

²⁸ Rosenberg, Harold. “The American Action Painters” in *The Tradition of the New* (New York: Grove Press, 1961), pp. 25, 26-27.

²⁹ Landau, Ellen G. *Jackson Pollock*. 15.

³⁰ Pollock, Jackson. Quoted in Perchuk, “Pollock and Postwar Masculinity.” 38.

genius.”³¹ Greenberg described their work as “the ferocious struggle to be a genius... Their isolation is inconceivable, crushing, unbroken, damning.”³² Because each artist has his own artistic authorship, Rosenberg described their experience as a “unique loneliness” that nevertheless ensured the individuality of their expression.³³ Modern art in the United States was supposed to be hard, isolating, and intensely personal.

The United States in the 1960s turned a fascination with the individual into an obsession with mass consumerism. When Pollock was urged to look outside of his own head for subject matter, he famously responded, “I am Nature.”³⁴ Warhol, alternatively said, “I want to be a machine.”³⁵ It was this culture and his reaction to the cult of Abstract Expressionists before him that ultimately inspired him to claim that he “wanted to take away the commentary of the gestures.”³⁶ As Pollock’s gestures were his famous process of painting, Warhol’s first attempt to dismantle the cult of the artistic genius is rooted in his production method. Silkscreen printing allowed him to make print after print of the same image, often with the help or complete direction of one of his “factory workers.” In direct contrast to the idea that Pollock’s unconscious was relayed onto the canvas, Warhol attempted to make his prints as impersonal as possible. In his *Philosophy of Andy*

³¹ Phillips, Lisa. *The American Century Art & Culture 1950-2000*. 17.

³² Greenberg, Clement. “The Present Prospects of American Painting and Sculpture.” *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*. Ed. John O’Brian. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986. 170.

³³ Rosenberg, Harold. “Introduction to ‘Six American Artists;’” *Possibilities* 1, no 1 (Winter 1947-48): 75.

³⁴ According to Lee Krasner, when Hans Hoffman urged Pollock to look outside himself for inspiration, the painter replied, “I am nature.” Although the capitalization is inconsistently used in varying references, the quote has remained the same and is a staple in the scholarly discourse surrounding Pollock. (Quoted in Caroline Jones. *Machine in the Studio: Constructing the Postwar American Artist*. 36.)

³⁵ Warhol, Andy. Interview with G.R. Swenson. *Art News*. November 1963. Quoted in Kelly Cresap. *Pop Trickster Fool*. 71.

³⁶ Warhol. *Popism*. 7.

Warhol, Warhol stated, “you should always have a product that’s not just ‘you’,” so “you don’t get stuck thinking your product is you, and your fame, and aura.”³⁷ By allocating ‘painting’ to machines and assistants, Warhol decentralizes the artistic process and eliminates the autographic presence so integral to Pollock’s work.

Through Warhol’s media-based subject matter he called attention to the changing consumerist world and the potential to change the definition of ‘artist.’ Pollock’s labor-intensive work makes no reference to the world outside his studio walls or even the world outside his head. In contrast, not only did Warhol not want to get his hands dirty – he constantly and playfully insisted that “Gerard” or “Brigid” was doing his printing³⁸ – but his pop-culture subject matter is derived solely from the outside world. Instead of the mythic response of claiming to be nature, Warhol insisted he was “a mirror” – an enigmatic and superficially vapid response. Warhol claimed to reflect rather than project.

Name’s photograph works against the rhetoric surrounding that of Namuth’s through interesting formal choices. Both artists are positioned over their art; Pollock looms over his abstracted lines and Warhol bends over his prints of bananas. Instead of peering up at Pollock, Name distances the camera from Warhol and angles it down from above. Instead of a woman looking on from the background, Malanga stands by a printing press watching Warhol lay out prints.

The isolated genius discourse was an integral part of making the Abstract Expressionist’s gestures legitimate, so by turning the studio into a social space, Warhol further questioned the author-function of the artist. Pollock’s barn studio, removed from the city, was a private space. Visitors today even remove their shoes before crossing its

³⁷ Warhol, Andy. *Philosophy of Andy Warhol*. 36.

³⁸ Jones, Caroline. *Machine in the Studio*. 234.

boundaries as if it was “a holy place.”³⁹ Granted the function of this ritual is to preserve the paint-splattered floor, its implications are nonetheless reverential and are hard to imagine replicated in Warhol’s factory. Unlike the interiority of Pollock’s barn, the Silver Factory’s first iteration was a semi-public place.⁴⁰ There was no logic to its floor plan. The floor was used as a stage, a seating area, a place for mingling and of course a work area for silk screening as seen in Namuth’s photograph. The bathroom doubled as a darkroom and Warhol’s first workers would work for room and board.⁴¹ So while both Pollock and Warhol use the floors of their studios, Pollock does so through an unmediated dance around an unprimed canvas whereas Warhol lays out a machine-printed image to dry. Taking away “the commentary of the gesture” via the printing press and factory assistants did not just result in a new style, it was a new definition of how to make art and what it meant to be an artist.⁴²

Complicating the Narrative

If these photographs evidence the contrasting characterizations of the two artists by scholars and critics, why was one image canonized and not the other? The marked contrast in popularity between the two photographs reflects what we want to see of each artist. Although there are many ways to interpret a work, historical forces and social contexts are an irreducible part of an artist and painting’s acceptance by a culture. The context of masculinity is an irrefutable context for viewing Pollock’s work. When we view Namuth’s photo of Pollock painting, it invokes the legend built around his process,

³⁹ Maguire, Ellen. “At Pollock’s Hampton House: A Life in Spatters.” *New York Times*.

⁴⁰ After Valerie Solanas’s assassination attempt, Warhol moved his factory to Union Square, where the atmosphere became much more regulated and business-like.

⁴¹ Jones, Caroline. *Machine in the Studio*. 196.

⁴² Jones, Caroline. *Machine in the Studio*. 52.

one that required a man's body unleashing his innermost emotions onto a canvas in the privacy of his studio. It was not so much what was put on the canvas as to how it was put on the canvas. For a picture to capture the public's imagination and illuminate the newest artistic trend, the photograph would have to show the body behind the action.

Pollock's process, centered on his body and its ability to take action, was encoded in masculinity. During the course of the Second World War, women were called from the kitchen to perform a new patriotic duty – to take up the industrial jobs left vacant by their war-bound husbands. In the post-war years, the trend uneasily reversed. With men back from the war, many expected women to return from manufacturing jobs to domestic life. Gender roles were in a state of transition. In Namuth's photo, Pollock's wife, Lee Krasner, sits on a high stool to the right of Pollock, contrasting his action with a contemplative stare. She watches him, not the painting, with a bent arm and concentrated look. Her seated pose, dress and crossed legs prevent her from actually moving in the way her husband does. Of Namuth's photographs from that day, this still captures the juxtaposition of active Pollock and passive Krasner particularly poignantly. The dialectic of male action and female inaction highlights the difference between feminine passivity and the masculine action of the "Action Painters." Although most of Namuth's photos caught Pollock in action, not many of them included Krasner. Her motionless, sedentary presence juxtaposed with Pollock's movement might have motivated Namuth to single this photograph out as that particular "manifestation of genius."

Namuth suggests Pollock's genius by capturing the gendered nature of his gestures. Pollock himself perpetuated this imaging with quotes like, "When I am in my painting, I'm not aware of what I'm doing. It is only after a sort of 'get acquainted'

period that I see what I have been about.”⁴³ Between his dance around the canvas, his introspective personality, and quotes like these, the idea developed that Pollock was in a trance and that his art was emanating from some mythic store of artistic power. Pollock, and subsequently scholars and critics talking about Pollock, extrapolated from this dance-like trance to the idea of being enveloped and one with the canvas. This quickly transmuted into undeniably sexual innuendos that added to the power and intrigue of his interpretation. Contemporary reviews of his work described his paintings as created in “the throes of nearly ungovernable passion.”⁴⁴ Another contemporary critic described Pollock as “emerging from his studio limp as a wet dishrag.”⁴⁵ Photos abound of Pollock, and many of his fellow Abstract Expressionists, coolly smoking a cigarette, the implications of which were post-coital. The mass of critical review leads modern reviewers like William Feaver to describe Pollock’s work as “casting paint like seed... on to the canvas spread at his feet. This was no sissy... It was, demonstrably, the real thing... painting composed of ejaculatory splat.”⁴⁶ This was not an art form for women, or sissies, or communists, or anyone without a brooding soul and a penis. Pollock’s gestures, with or without phallic intent, became an enactment of masculinity. The myth that was built up around his body, the physical and often sexual presence gallery-goers purported to see on his canvas, elevated Pollock above the masculinity crisis occurring outside the gallery and studio walls. It was a cultural as much as an internal struggle for Pollock to surmount. The indeterminacy of meaning that ended up on the canvas was like

⁴³ Friedman, B.H. *Jackson Pollock: Energy Made Visible*. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1972) 100.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Andrew Perchuk. *The Masculine Masquerade*. 32.

⁴⁵ “Beyond the Pasteboard Mask,” *Time*, January 17, 1964, 69.

⁴⁶ Feaver, William. Review of *Jackson Pollock: Drawing into Painting*. 36.

a Rorschach test for its viewers – they projected and created the power Pollock used to control the artistic forces through his brush, his cigarette, his hands, his stick, or whatever his subconscious compelled him to use to direct paint onto the canvas.⁴⁷

Attempts to intellectualize Warhol's enigmatic responses and contextualize them in the art world of Pollock before him abound. When Warhol was asked why he sometimes printed blank canvases to accompany his works, he said, "It just makes them bigger and mainly makes them cost more."⁴⁸ MoMA's current wall label for *Orange Car Crash Fourteen Times*, which includes a blank orange canvas, justifies this quote as an ironic response.⁴⁹ Warhol's process and part-naïf, part-trickster persona, however, were really an intellectual affront to the pressure the Abstract Expressionists had placed on emerging artists. Compared to Pollock who "ingested paint and peed onto the canvas,"⁵⁰ Warhol's mechanically screen-printed Campbell Soup cans were radically different. Warhol's process calls attention to the changing society of consumerism and its changing effects.

To focus on Warhol's process and studio without considering the very gendered nature of his predecessor, however, forgets the historical and personal contexts in which he was working. The most successful attempt to dismantle the Abstract Expressionist

⁴⁷ Freud in *Civilization and its Discontents* says man controls fire by peeing on it; Thomas Hart Benton and others accused Pollock of ingesting paint then peeing on the canvas. In fact, Peggy Guggenheim remembered Pollock as sitting in front of one work for weeks and then finishing it in the span of three breathless hours. The frustration of those preceding weeks, however, would lead him to drink. In one such state, Pollock got "piss drunk" and walked naked into a party before waltzing over to the fireplace and peeing onto the flames. Pollock apparently told Krasner that great art needs a pecker. (Andrew Perchuk. *The Masculine Masquerade*. 32).

⁴⁸ Museum of Modern Art. Gallery Label Text. 2008.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Perchuk, Andrew. *The Masculine Masquerade*. 32.

legacy would be to attack its fixation with and confounding of gender and artistic identity. While Pollock's painting might have been effortful, his performance of gender was as unconscious as the Jungian stores from which he pulled inspiration. His performance of gender was enacted on the canvas as "an event"⁵¹ and played out by a "laconic cowboy,"⁵² which protected him from critical argument under the veil of masculine genius and the enormity of the American West. The heroization of masculine display prescribed a certain type of artistic production created by a certain type of artist.⁵³ Warhol was reacting against this definition.

The assumptions of what an artist is and can be are intimately tied to our cultural ideas of what a person is and can be. They are systemic and largely invisible. Warhol had to actively subvert them while still acting within the boundaries of the artistic label. His performance, therefore, is not him acting "in an arena" on "that other piece of material," but is enacted upon himself and his appearance. His performance is centered on himself in pictures – self-portraits, media stills, snapshots from the heyday of the Factory social life.⁵⁴ Warhol co-opted artistic identity by making himself into the image of a new artistic movement. Factory-goer, Nat Finkelstein pinpoints this making, when he said, "Andy Warhol's greatest work of art was Andy Warhol."⁵⁵ U.S. American scholar Kelly Cresap takes this a step further: "With his trademark silver-blond wig and cool, expressionless

⁵¹ Rosenberg, "The American Action Painters" (1952) in Harrison and Wood, *Art in Theory 1900-2000*, VA14, p. 581-82.

⁵² Rosenberg, Harold. "The Mythic Act." 131. Quoted in Fiona Barber. *Varieties of Modernism*. 154.

⁵³ Perchuk, Andrew. *The Masculine Masquerade*. 42.

⁵⁴ For pictures, see Dave Hickey and Collier Schorr's book *All Tomorrow's Parties: Billy Name's Photographs of Andy Warhol's Factory*.

⁵⁵ Finkelstein, Nat. *Andy Warhol: The Factory Years 1964-1967* (New York: Powerhouse Books, 2000). n.p.

gaze, Andy was seen as the very physical embodiment of pop.”⁵⁶ So whereas Pollock’s body was the locus of discourse on Abstract Expressionism, Warhol was Pop personified.

Andy Warhol’s overt performance of personality is better understood in terms of the Camp aesthetic. Susan Sontag pioneered critical debate on the topic when she asserted that, “the whole point of camp is to dethrone the serious”⁵⁷ by making a “metaphor of life as theater.”⁵⁸ Warhol bought into Sontag’s idea of “Being as Playing a Role,”⁵⁹ as a brief survey of media images reveals. In contrast to Pollock’s stable imaging, Warhol wears wigs, makeup, and props to vary his look and challenge the conventional link between gender and artist.⁶⁰ In comparison to playing a role, Rosenberg and Greenberg’s urgent patriotism and the seriousness of the Abstract Expressionists no longer looked like a profound artistic endeavor so much as self-important machismo. Other popular published images of Warhol show him in gallery settings with his work, where the finished product bears no trace of the process that produced it (fig. 5). Showing Warhol in a commercial setting with his art already completely and up for sale further erases the rhetoric of labor that Greenberg and Rosenberg produced.

For both artists, their biographies and their art necessarily become intertwined.⁶¹ But the nature of their performances – Pollock’s intense fear of being “a phony” by

⁵⁶ Cresap, Kelly. *Pop Trickster Fool*. 70.

⁵⁷ Sontag, Susan. *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*. New York: Delta/Dell, 1966. 329.

⁵⁸ Sontag. “Notes on Camp.” *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*. New York: Delta/Dell, 1966. 288.

⁵⁹ Butt, Gavin. “Chapter 10: How New York Queered the Idea of Modern.” *Varieties of Modernism*. 329.

⁶⁰ “Transformers” in *Rose is a Rose is a Rose: gender performance in photography*. Exh. cat. (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1997). 71.

⁶¹ It should be noted that biographies can be a very normalizing phenomenon especially in their attempt to treat sexuality as a binary of public and private or heterosexual and

performing his painting for the camera versus Warhol's conscious modeling in front of the camera – reflect the gendered ways in which they took up the identity of artist. As a mimetic form, the photographic medium has inherent claims of veracity. It purports to capture the facts of whatever is in front of the lens. Because of these claims, it is the perfect medium for gender performance. Pollock uses the photographic medium traditionally in that he affirms that the camera is capturing something real. Though poses change, the camera verifies that the Pollock you see in one photograph is the same in another. Photography is used to maintain a consistent impression. When Warhol steps in front of the camera, however, he reminds the viewer that the camera is catching him for but an instant. The Warhol of one magazine cover, with glasses and tie, is barely recognizable as the same Warhol on another cover in mascara and a wig. It is impossible to capture one true, authentic Warhol. Just as in his collaborative and mechanical production method, he uses portraiture to subvert the idea of one true, authorial artist.⁶² Comparing more images of the two men makes this clearer.

Constructed personality and bodily expression both connect and differentiate Pollock and Warhol's relation to their works. Pollock's dress, actions, and insistence on the role of the unconscious propagate a conventionally masculine form of creativity of the late 1940s and 50s. Namuth's picture, and other promotional images similar to the one accompanying the *Life* magazine title, "Is he the greatest living painter in the United

homosexual. Sexuality as a concept and practice is much more complicated. Nicholas de Villiers explores the relationship between biography and sexuality in *Opacity and the Closet: Queer Tactics in Foucault, Barthes, and Warhol*. (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis). 2012. In it, he uses the idea of "queer opacity" to complicate the assumptions and stereotypes that accompany gay and queer biographical subjects.

⁶² James, David E. "I'll Be Your Mirror: Warhol in the Cultural Imaginary" in *Pop Out: Queer Warhol*. 37.

States?" shows Pollock in a defensive pose (fig. 6).⁶³ His arms are crossed, he stares forward with a furrowed brow and cigarette jutting out between his pressed lips. Pollock in essence presents himself as a wholly male, working class, artistic type who has renounced sartorial desires in order to see rather than be seen.⁶⁴ His supposedly non-conventional, Marlon Brando, rebellious masculinity is nonetheless conventional in its stereotype and works on the assumption of heterosexuality. If we once again consider Namuth's photograph, this observation is especially poignant when Krasner, an artist herself, seated in the background is juxtaposed with Pollock's active stance. While Pollock's gestural art is performative in a sense, it emanates from Pollock's personality in a dominating, abstract, and unconscious form thus reasserting the masculine creative ideal. Only Pollock can create a Pollock painting. Moreover, Pollock's self-expression must be shrouded behind abstracted form, crossed arms, or intense action.

The *Life* magazine picture also shows Pollock clothed in working jeans, a dark shirt, and paint splattered sneakers.⁶⁵ Pollock could be counted on to wear the same variation of t-shirt and jeans in almost all of his photos. In the words of his contemporary, his dress, demeanor and way of life was thoroughly "no chic, no chi chi."⁶⁶ Clothes express identities and how we relate to cultural norms.⁶⁷ Pollock's identity was an enactment of a certain definition of gender in a certain historical moment. The black t-shirt and working jeans Pollock wore in so many photographs had a specific post-WWII significance. The t-shirt was a standard issue for the United States Navy but came to be

⁶³ Jones, Amelia. "Clothes Make the Man: The Male Artist as a Performative Function." 24.

⁶⁴ Ibid. 22.

⁶⁵ "Is he the greatest living painter in the United States?" *Time Magazine*. 1949.

⁶⁶ Quoted in Caroline Jones "Film, Gender, Management: From studio to Studio." 244.

⁶⁷ Jones, Amelia. "Clothes Make the Man." 18.

associated with heavy industry as men returning from war re-entered the workforce.⁶⁸ T-shirts represented the re-masculinization of the American labor.⁶⁹ When worn by artists, it suggests the same labor applied to painting. When working on her own art, Lee Krasner donned a t-shirt, but in Namuth's photo she watches Pollock while wearing a dress, emphasizing her gender and non-artist presence.

If photography attempts to fix the elusive,⁷⁰ Pollock's stable sartorial choices are of little interest. What Namuth's photograph fixes was the elusive nature of Pollock's process and performance in the studio. The gestural movements of Abstract Expressionism removed figural representation and thereby effaced all recognizable signifiers of the outside world. Pollock's abstract work catered to an art world elite and created a barrier between the art intelligentsia and the masses. It required a layer of interpretation to unearth its content. Its illegibility only adds to the mystery of Pollock's romantic cult. As evidence of his inner workings, manliness thus becomes part of the fascination as well. Viewing a reserved man's inner thoughts is a sort of voyeurism only allowed to those in the know. Ironically, bringing the spying eye of the camera into the studio simultaneously perpetuates the idea of isolated genius while breaking the same isolation it purports to record.⁷¹ These photographs popularized the trend of looking at Pollock as that intense and physical artist.

⁶⁸ Barber, Fiona. "Abstract Expressionism and Masculinity" in *Varieties of Modernism*. 165.

⁶⁹ Ironically, the same t-shirt style and its muscle-defining cut eventually worked its way into gay and Bohemian cultures (Fiona Barber. "Abstract Expressionism and masculinity" in *Varieties of Modernism*. 166.)

⁷⁰ "Transformers" in *Rose is a Rose is a Rose: gender performance in photography*. Exh. cat. (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1997). 71.

⁷¹ Jones, Caroline. *Machine in the Studio*. 52.

In Warhol's case, photography attempts to define his elusive personality. Warhol's studio was a space for both work and socializing and his mechanical process was clearly evident in his serial prints. In Warhol's life, his dress threatened to sublimate artistic creativity into a personal style.⁷² He could not be depended upon to make any particular impression, a far cry from Pollock's stable sartorial choices. In a series of photographs taken of Warhol by Christopher Makos entitled *Altered Image*, Warhol dons wigs, makeup, and an assortment of clothing in a tribute to Man Ray's *Rose Selavy* (fig. 7).⁷³ Judith Butler revolutionized gender theory when in the 1990s she posited that gender was simply repeated performance.⁷⁴ The *Altered Image* series materializes this concept. Rather than crossed in front of his chest like Pollock, Warhol awkwardly shifts his hands in front of his genital area, which has a very different defensive connotation that calls attention to his half-drag dress.⁷⁵ The obvious difference between his made up face and his tie comments on the performative nature of gender. Warhol's half-drag costume takes work to put on and take off, especially when compared with Pollock's t-shirt. This photograph is just one example in the oeuvre of his constructed personality.

Warhol's self-presentation indicates that gender and sexuality are more complex than the Brando-model Pollock presented and the public tacitly accepted. Warhol instead is obvious in his insistence that identity is performance. Another frequent personality of the Factory, Edie Sedgwick, was often touted around as a replica of Warhol himself. The pair would dress identically at social gatherings while Warhol whispered commands to

⁷² Jones, Amelia. "Clothes Make the Man." 30.

⁷³ A publication of the series can be found in Makos, Chris. *Andy Warhol*. (Milano, Charta, Zürich). In collaboration with B. Bischofberger, 2002.

⁷⁴ Blessing, Jennifer. "Introduction." *Rose is a Rose is a Rose: gender performance in photography*. Exh. cat. (New York: Guggenheim Museum), 1997. 7.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

pose and walk around in Sedgwick's ear.⁷⁶ Dressing alike not only encroached on conventional gender models, but also brought into question the nature of fame and constructed personality. His serialized prints of Marilyn Monroe, Liz Taylor and Elvis Presley used ready-made public images. Their identities are commodified through magazine covers and 'inside' stories and then commodified once again by Warhol's printing press.⁷⁷ In this way, Warhol simultaneously calls attention to his and our own obsession with fame and performance.

Just as the two artists' historical contexts and individual performances differed, so did their effects on the artists themselves. For Pollock, the unease of being looked at unwound him. For Warhol, it led to his fame. As mentioned previously, the evidence of Pollock's reluctance to sit in front of the camera was not only present in his uncomfortable photo sessions, but in his gestures as well – crossed arms, distancing cigarette, and hard stare. Pollock suffered from alcoholism throughout most of his adult life. During 1948-1951, the years in which he created his famous drip paintings, however, Pollock remained sober. Sequestered in East Hampton, with his wife and his studio, Pollock channeled his energies into creating art. As his fame accrued and his method was publicized, its publication allowed others to question his artistic identity as well. The day Hans Namuth returned to film Pollock painting on glass – the iconic film with a mythic and monotone voiceover from Pollock – was the day that he once again took to the bottle. The same day Namuth filmed *Pollock Painting*, Pollock reportedly repeated, "I'm not a

⁷⁶ Doris, Sara. *Pop Art and the Contest over American Culture*. 179.

⁷⁷ "Transformers" in *Rose is a Rose is a Rose: gender performance in photography*. Exh. cat. (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1997). 72.

phony,”⁷⁸ to Namuth and anyone who would listen. He died in a drunken car crash just a few years later.⁷⁹ Authenticity was so integral to the contemporary idea of ‘artist’ that the societal pressure of masquerading and performing, both feminine acts, eventually proved too much.

Warhol, on the other hand, consciously constructed his personality and artistic identity in front of the camera. His masquerading and comfort in this regard does not make him the feminine to Pollock’s masculine, however. Warhol instead queers the idea of artist and introduces the idea of queerness in art. The danger of de-gayng Warhol by focusing on his subversive production methods is losing the real power of his subversion, his questioning of heterosexual assumptions. In MoMA’s exhibition catalogue for a retrospective on Warhol, Marco Livingstone clearly draws the line between the private and public artist by claiming that, “in [Warhol’s] essentially private drawings of boys, it was the blotted line technique that offered him the greatest scope for his more public art.”⁸⁰ When Livingstone calls these erotic and intimate drawings of boys ‘private,’ he negates their value as finished works or public art and consequently pushes Warhol into the privacy of the closet. In fact, these drawings were also meant for public display. They were exhibited as early as 1956 at the Bodley Gallery in California but then rejected by the Tanager Gallery a few years later. The Tanager Gallery’s rejection is further evidence that they sensed the homoeroticism of the drawings. Warhol desired visibility and

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Perchuck, Andrew. *Masculinity as Masquerade*. 41.

⁸⁰ Livingstone, Marco. *Andy Warhol: A Retrospective* (exh. cat., ed. K. McShine, essays K. McShine, R. Rosenblum, B. H. D. Buchloh and M. Livingstone; New York, MOMA, 1989). 64.

publicity and was confronted by homophobia and a culture that could not yet accept an artist divorced from traditional masculine identity.⁸¹

Although Andy was elusive, enigmatic, and strait up eccentric, many knew he was gay but most avoided it as a topic of intellectual inquiry. To do so, however, misses out on the “interesting, sexy, and political aspects of his work.”⁸² More importantly, it stunts our understanding of what makes Warhol so fascinating. Billy Name’s series of Warhol in the studio never entered our accepted canon because it is not how we choose to remember the artist. For Warhol, it was not the act of making art that was so challenging but the acting and performativity surrounding it. This is why hundreds of stills of Pollock painting and hundreds of portraits of Warhol have affixed themselves onto our collective imagination.

⁸¹ Doyle, Jennifer, Jonathan Flatley, and José Esteban Muñoz. “introduction” in *Pop Out: Queer Warhol*. (Duke University Press, Durham and London, 1996). 1.

⁸² *Ibid.* 2.

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Figure 1:



Hans Namuth, *Photograph of Jackson Pollock painting one and Lee Krasner*, 1950, Albright-Knox Art Gallery (Buffalo, New York) K1976:4.40 . Available from: CAMIO: AKAG.K1976:4.40.

Figure 2:



Billy Name, *Andy Warhol at the Silver Factory*, 1966-67. Andy Warhol Museum (Pittsburgh, PA) Available from: <http://www.canadianart.ca/see-it/2008/11/20/warhol-live/>

Figure 3:



Hans Namuth. *Jackson Pollock at work in his studio*, 12 images, 1950. University of California, San Diego.

Figure 4:

NAMUTH

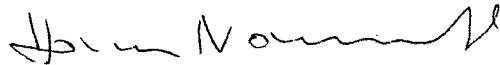
August 31, 1984

Ms. Leta K. Stathacos
Albright-Knox Art Gallery
Buffalo, New York 14222

Dear Ms. Stathacos,

I have photographed Jackson Pollock many times. We collaborated on two films. This picture, however, has greater significance than any other taken during the six years of collaboration and friendship that ended only with his death. We had met July 1st, 1950, at Guild Hall, East Hampton. A few days later I found myself in his studio in Springs, bewildered and shy, and overwhelmed when, contrary to what he had announced earlier, he took hold of a paint can and brush and covered an already "finished" canvas with fresh liquid paint, thus creating a new image over a first that he suddenly rejected. I believe that even Lee Krasner who rarely, if ever, was present when her husband worked, was astounded and moved by ~~this manifestation of genius.~~

Sincerely,



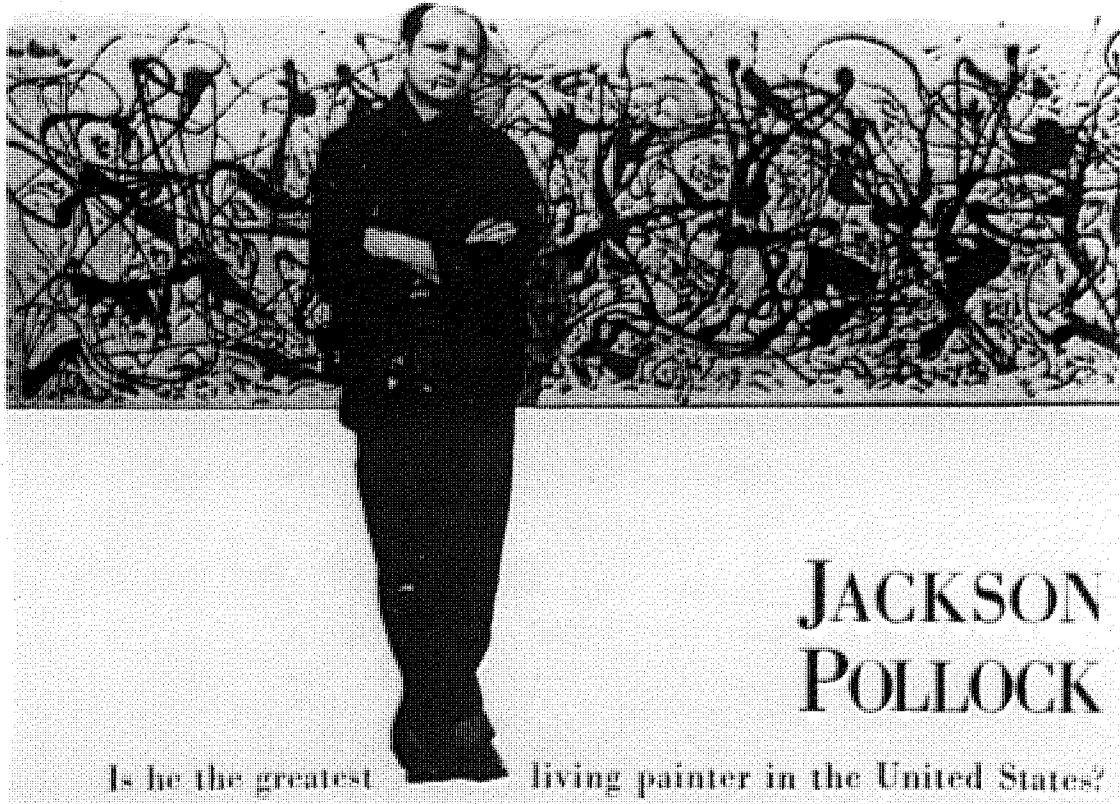
Hans Namuth, letter to the Albright-Knox Art Gallery on the occasion of it receiving *Jackson Pollock painting one and Lee Krasner (1950)*. (August 31, 1984).

Figure 5:



Andy Warhol at the American Supermarket Exhibition, Bianchini Gallery, New York, 1964.

Figure 6:



“Jackson Pollock: is he the greatest living painter in the United States?” spread from ‘Life’ magazine. 8 August 1949. Accessed at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1360550?seq=7>.

Figure 7:



Chris Makes: 'Altered Ago (Andy Warhol in Tribute to Rose Selavy)', c. 1960s.
Accessed at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1360550?seq=7>.