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EDITOR'S NOTE

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American culture is trash culture. (Hamelan 2004: 3)

Introduction

BECAUSE HE INVESTED his energies in that promiscuous cultural intersection where Pop Art met both underground film and the methods of mass production, the artist Andy Warhol might be regarded as the king, or indeed queen, of the trash aesthetic. The fact that he also engineered a space in which an alternative language of rock and roll could be devised and dispersed through the medium of a band known as the Velvet Underground further places him in the vanguard of this potent counter-narrative to the history of art-making and art appreciation. This chapter will attempt an overview of the influences that shaped the rise of a trash aesthetic; the meanings that are attached to, and generated by, such an anti-philosophy; and the ways in which we might identify evidence of its style and expression within the world of Warhol and his Manhattan working environment the Factory, his house band the Velvet Underground and his 1966 live, multi-media presentation *Exploding Plastic Inevitable*.

Through image, sound and movement, Warhol's quixotic coven of artists, poets, film-makers, photographers, actors, dancers and musicians developed a stream of creativity that tested the tenets of several millennia of received wisdom about the nature of, the making of and the function of art. The Warholian 1960s, in fact, proved to be a kinetic crucible in which the boundaries were pushed and many rules re-written. At the heart of this process was the establishment of an aesthetic credo which disrespected, disrupted and dismissed, dismantled even, earlier conceptions of what art should comprise, communicate or represent, what Cagle has referred to as 'haute kitsch' (1995: 5). The philosophers who, over so many epochs, had debated art's founding and enduring principles – the towering pillars of truth and beauty, justice and morality – were challenged, perhaps fatally, by this fervent dissident wave. Warhol's part in this project, this aesthetic re-ordering and re-evaluation, places him, I would argue, at the heart of one of the key countercultural gestures of the era. By stressing surface and the superficial over depth and substance and by rejecting traditional motivations – issues of moral purpose, social conscience or political ethos, for instance – the artist and his disciples created an enclosed aesthetic universe that was profoundly alternative to both the mid-1960s mainstream and also those who would challenge it in more conventional ways.

Not that Warhol was the only figure in this aesthetic revolution – he was merely a link in a chain that had seen a number of twentieth-century artists, ideologues and cultural mavericks attack the citadel of orthodoxy and conceive fresh perceptions of the creative milieu itself: what it might do, what it might say, how it might say it. In short, this small, but influential, breed cultivated a system of thought built, at least substantially, on aspects of shock value. That Warhol was present in an era when both mass communication and social democratisation cross-fertilised so strikingly and effectively was serendipitous. It meant that his radical ideology became familiar not just to a narrow intellectual elite but to the global billions.

The result was that this flaring, this flowering, of productivity in the heart of, arguably, the most dynamic decade of the epoch, would not be confined in its impact to merely a few short years. Instead, the final quarter of the century would be infused and infected, influenced and affected, by the practices and preachings of this paradoxical figure – strange isolate and socialite scenester – whose most remembered quotation is that 'in the future everybody will be world famous for 15 minutes' (Fineberg 2000: 256) (even if it tends to be misquoted as 'in the future everyone will be famous for 15 minutes'). Within this argument rests a significant contradiction. Warhol's identification of ephemerality as a key feature of what we might describe as the postmodern condition was insightful. But his legacy has, ironically, seen transience become a sustained and repeating state. The flashing, flickering, fleeting focus of the lens, as the second millennium merges into the third, has become the norm, not the exception.

So how might we identify a trash aesthetic? First, we may perhaps think of the rise of a transient and high impact culture in the post-Second World War period, broadly an era of relative material plenty in the West which saw us enter times in which the art interests of the elite and the folk practices of ordinary people were essentially marginalised, if not superseded in many instances, by the powerful presence of a democratised experience, one constructed on the premise of mass production and mass consumption aided by the power of mass promotion. Not all mass or popular culture, as it became broadly known from the mid-twentieth century, could be designated trash but much of it was based on extravagant display and featured a strong note of the

temporary. Richard Keller Simon, who is most interested in the relationship between popular and high culture in the realm of literature, claims that in his chosen field of enquiry '[m]any of the differences between trash culture and high culture show only that storytelling adapts to changing economic, social, and political conditions' (1999: 2). As he compares great literary texts and contemporary accounts in film and TV, magazines and newspapers, he argues: 'The connections between high and low are extensive and systematic ... trash culture replicates *all* of the major genres of literature' (ibid.: 3). For Hamelan, American trash culture embraces:

> Natural rights, baseball, apple pie, huge gas-guzzling cars, guns, blockbuster movies, strip malls, Disney/Pixar cinema, talk shows, billboards, theme parks, fast food, superheroes, superstars, little pink houses, Andy Warhol's prints of Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley and Campbell soup cans. Rock and roll music. The music of the Velvet Underground too. And garbage ... heinous beyond description, heavy beyond statistical calculation, beautiful beyond belief. American culture, American garbage, American art. (2004: 82)

And, within his sweeping overview, he cannot ignore the central paradox of the ugly, the throwaway, the transitory, as appealing, valuable even, despite its negative associations. Even more helpfully, he includes both Warhol and his protégé musical act of the mid-1960s in his long list of indicators. More pertinently, too, I would suggest that while Hamelan can place in line a sequence of representations which he feels stand for the culture of trash – and his book plays both freely and astutely with the literal meanings of throwaway materials and the term's metaphorical connotations linked to products of low artistic value – the only elements in the list which may be usefully associated with a trash aesthetic are the artworks by Warhol and the musical output of the Velvets.

For, even if we may claim that versions of trash culture have subsequently become almost ubiquitous in the capitalist world and beyond – in, for example, junk food and junk mail, reality television and celebrity obsession, scandal sheets and news-stand pornography, slot machines and stretch limousines – it does not follow that a trash aesthetic, as such, also exists. Rather, for such an aesthetic to establish its presence requires an artist or a movement to knowingly and self-consciously take the materials of a cultural moment and re-conceptualise those materials in such a way that they represent or comment upon that moment. Then, we may argue still further, that authoritative critical voices are then needed both to identify and to contextualise what the artist or movement have done, a process not dissimilar to the chain needed in the creation of myth that Barthes describes (2000: 113). The symbols have to stand for something else and there has to be recognition of what they stand for by the viewer before this form of signification effectively occurs. As Hunter and Kaye have proposed:

> Recent cultural criticism has explored more deeply than ever before the undergrowth of literature and popular film, shifting attention away from what ideal audiences should be reading and viewing to what real people actually enjoy. As well as discovering unexpected complexity in 'trash culture', the result has been a heightened awareness of the differences between audiences, and of the importance of specialised constituencies such as fans and cultists. (1997: 1)

The decoding skills and mediation of informed commentators and insightful interpreters – figures like Robert Hughes and Lawrence Alloway – to guide reception of this work were therefore particularly relevant as Warhol and his allies tended to present their work blankly and without explanation. While they frequently drew on and depicted the more excessive and controversial components of trash culture – confronting the taboos of sex, money and celebrity, drugs, violence and death – they

did so non-judgementally. Furthermore, we need audiences capable of digesting this chain of information.

Subsequent disciples of the model have demonstrated a similar lack of sanctimony, a sustained moral ambivalence, to the sensitive topics they address and the materials they manipulate to make their statements. As an artistic practice or creative ethos, the trash aesthetic has taken a wide range of forms and shapes but so many of its features owe a debt to the work of Warhol and his cohorts, including the Velvet Underground. It has been linked to the cracking of sexual bounds through ambivalent gender display on screen and on stage; it can be perceived at once as feminised and effete and also macho and aggressive; it may be recognised in its pared down primitivism and its over-blown glamour; it may be linked to material and narcotic excess; it may be recognised in adornment – from piercings to tattoos – or even body modification; or we might perceive it in its adherence to low production values, which reject ideas of polish and professionalism and pursue, instead, the rough, the raw and the unrefined. In short, such transgressive cultural expressions, symbols which have become associated with notions of poor taste, the cheap and the lewd, the crude and the gross, have become cornerstones of this alternative aesthetic, infringing those boundaries familiar to mainstream social codes and traditional conceptions of artistic value. In this piece, I want to consider how the seeds of trash were sown in the first half of the last century and later blossomed; locate the ways in which Warhol and his brigade of creative mercenaries adopted, encouraged and adapted those new visions in the work they produced at the height of their powers; and touch briefly upon the legacy of those subversive adventures.

Dada and Duchamp's Urinal

> It is essential to grasp that Dada was never an art style, as Cubism was; nor did it begin with a pugnacious socio-political programme, like Futurism. It stood for a wholly eclectic freedom to experiment; it enshrined play as the highest human activity and its main tool was chance. (Hughes 1980: 61)

As the mud of Flanders and the wastes of the Eastern Front were churned and reddened by the guts of several million young soldiers, the members of Cabaret Voltaire,[1] an arts cell lodged in Zürich and residing in a neutral state but inflamed by the destruction choreographed by the feuding super-powers of that early-century, dreamt up their creative responses to the sanctioned madness of the trenches: they fired arrows of protest through disorientating performances, chaotic poetry randomly construed and unorthodox art statements. The sires of Dada, the Cabaret Voltaire would also later be the catalyst to the European Surrealists. While the latter were fascinated by the unconscious and Sigmund Freud's faith in the power of dreams and the painting of pictures which tapped into the tangled psychological briar patch of the brain, figures like Marcel Duchamp, semi-detached from both these streams of activity in New York, went still further.

With his 1917 sculpture, *Fountain* – a commercially-produced, porcelain urinal signed enigmatically by the artist as 'R. Mutt' – he produced and exhibited his first readymade in New York, arguing that the artist simply by displaying such a piece – domestic, quotidian, banal – imbued it with the aura of art.[2] Robert Hughes, long-time art critic of *Time*, said: 'Such things were manifestos. They proclaimed that the world was already so full of "interesting" objects that the artist need not add to them. Instead, he could just pick one, and this ironic act of choice was equivalent to creation – a choice of mind

rather than of hand' (Hughes 1980: 66). The fact that he selected an object associated with pissing and the evacuations of bodily function might legitimately lead us to identify this, retrospectively, as the premiere act in the history of the trash aesthetic. There were others, too, who would break moulds by recycling or re-manipulating what appeared to be mere detritus – Kurt Schwitters and his *Merz* collages, John Heartfield and his disruptive, cut-up photo-montages – to make social commentaries or political critiques. Yet, while these groups and individuals with quite unconventional visions did not entirely turn the art world on its head, all these threads would feed into the avant-garde impulse of the 1920s and 1930s. All brought taboo components to the table: sex, desire, madness, psychosis, junk reclaimed and re-positioned as art. These expressions, these gestures, would rattle the cage of artistic normality as the Second World War loomed without breaking its bars.

That said, the principal thrust of modern art, as the interwar years drew to their end, remained locked in a determined cycle of abstraction – a significant counter, in itself, to earlier aesthetic notions of art as a form of imitation – rather than representation. Abstraction even became an ideological weapon, too, an intriguing emblem of the free world, a perfect antidote to Hitler's pre-war assaults on degenerate[3] – that is, essentially, modern – art. As the global centre of art innovation moved from Paris to New York in the 1940s, the avant-garde was embraced as a sign that capitalism could freely nurture pioneering artist-visionaries while fascism would crush them under its heel. But the mood of the US art scene was ripe for transformation in the decade that followed the second great conflict. Pop Art's arrival from the mid-1950s would resist that prevailing, non-figurative form of extemporisation – typified by the abstract expressionist Action painters like Jackson Pollock – and celebrate instead the imagery and artefacts of the high street and the mass media.

Pop Art, Postmodernism and New Aesthetic Bearings

> Here was a realism that thrust itself knowingly in the face of a society that liked its garishness larger than life; a society ineluctably drawn to cartoon romance and tabloid scandal, to that particular species of glamour – in parts lurid, sexual and tragic – that was embodied by Elvis and Marilyn and Jackie. (Madoff 1997: xiv)

Pop Art, a movement that enjoyed separate and then eventually inter-mingling lives in the US, UK and Europe, did not, however, draw upon the usual devices of representational mimicry which may have returned the artistic project to a pre-avant-garde understanding of the aesthetics of art. Instead, this post-war form, originally dubbed New Realism (Livingstone 1991b: 12), utilised familiar signs and symbols of the mass marketplace in a literal manner, incorporating them into collages and constructions. These assemblages appeared simultaneously to celebrate *and* to question a new age of rampant consumerism: the absence of a clear line between endorsement and critique was a disorientating, even unsettling, experience for many. We might also propose that this adoption and adaptation of such recognisable features from the popular cultural landscape sabotaged the assumed certainties of abstraction, by then the accepted core of avant-garde thinking.

The US had enjoyed a consumer boom in the decade or so after the conclusion of the Second World War. It would take longer for Britain and other Western European nations to cast off the shadowy pallor of war and assume a role of free-spending bridesmaid to the glamorous American bride. But artists on both sides of the Atlantic, in independent gatherings, had begun to reflect on the impact and power of

commercialism and the expanding media, both of which found common platforms in, for example, TV, radio, newspaper and magazine advertising. Cars, soap powders, soft drinks, cigarettes and the increasing range of convenience goods for the home were just part of this explosion of mass production and mass purchasing. While most Americans were quickly seduced by this pattern – to be followed by others in the West – sections of the arts community found the formula tasteless, crass and ultimately empty.

The Beat writers and black jazz musicians found themselves at the margins of this glossy American dream and wrote novels, poems and music which resisted the white hegemony of spend, consume, dispose and spend again. Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, Charles Mingus and Miles Davis set themselves against the presiding *Zeitgeist*: material indulgence, anti-communist paranoia, a terror of imminent nuclear annihilation and belief in continuing racial division. As the 1950s declined, other notable creative innovators, with New York City their prime crucible, would also confront the gleaming sheen of US prosperity, adopting a variety of media to spread their original and often oblique visions. Photographer Robert Frank, an immigrant heir perhaps to the Ashcan School,[4] those American painters who had created early-century, and considerate, portraits of the city's underbelly, brought a gritty Beat aesthetic of his own to a series of monochrome images and, in *The Americans*,[5] displayed pictures that eschewed glamour and prosperity and pursued the ordinary and often beaten-down characters he randomly located in the national landscape. Painter Allan Kaprow's 1959 work *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* would christen a radical new art form – the happening – a multi-media format in which performance and art-making were merged into one environment and even the lines between production and audience were blurred. Artists Jim Dine and Claes Oldenburg, both connected to the Pop surge of the time, would also be associated with this development. This ground-breaking form of presentation would be adopted, too, by the art group Fluxus, further re-defining notions of visual art in live settings. Says Banes:

> Both Happenings and Fluxus developed out of ideas from John Cage's class in 'Composition of Experimental Music', which he taught at the New School for Social Research from 1956 to 1960. Various members of the class, in which students made performances and discussed them, attributed the beginnings of Happenings to their experiences there. Influenced by the Italian Futurists, Dadaists, Zen Buddhism, and the theatre theories of Antonin Artaud, Cage's notion of music had expanded to become a nondramatic ... form of theatre ... Cage himself had organised a precursor to Happenings at Black Mountain College in 1952, but, for the most part, his performances remained classified as music. (1993: 52)

Additionally, the New American Cinema Group, led by Jonas Mekas[6] and including Stan Brakhage among its members, also developed challenging film-making formats presenting visions which ran counter to the establishment projections of mid-century US life. True to the edginess of the street and engaged with the activities of subterranean outsiders, these movies were also fervently committed to testing the limits of the law in respect of censorship. Speaking of an early 1960s wave of new cinematic works by his members, Mekas said that

> these movies are illuminating and opening up sensibilities and experiences never before recorded in the American arts; a content which Baudelaire, the Marquis de Sade, and Rimbaud gave to world literature a century ago and which Burroughs gave to American literature three years ago.[7] It is a world of flowers of evil, of illuminations, of torn and tortured flesh; a poetry which is at once beautiful and terrible, good and evil, delicate and dirty .... (quoted in Banes 1993: 165)

All of these novel approaches had a bearing on Warhol's rapidly emerging milieu. Furthermore, the fact that large numbers of these creative players stood outside the apparently omnipotent WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) hegemony – by nationality and politics, ethnic background and religion – makes their disruption of the smooth narrative of an immaculately back-lit American Dream all the more compelling. Many of these writers and artists employed radical tools of engagement, the fractured tropes of modernity – dissonance, distortion, derangement – to provide elliptical yet revealing statements. Sometimes the work possessed an underlying social commentary and a strain of the redemptive to it; much exhibited a critical consciousness that was also, on occasions, tied to serious political intent.[8]

The Pop artists were more ambiguous: for a start, they shared no filial unity, no clear manifesto;[9] and second, many of the painters and sculptors actually found inspiration in the brash electric steeples of the ever-rising city, the neon capitalism of the high street, the possibilities proffered by the multi-lane highway and the proliferation of goods on the supermarket shelves. Pop's mission was obsessed less with issues of beauty than matters of irony and paradox: the commercial directness and garishness of the ubiquitous trademark or the movie still, the cartoon frame or the urban billboard, appeared to be both flattered and questioned by their appropriation into works by Anglo-American artists of the 1950s and 1960s. As Sarat Maharaj asks: 'Do Pop Art signs replay the scene of consumerist desire, or do they prise open a critical gap in it?' (1991: 22). There was frequently, for sure, a cold disengagement from the materials at hand, which provided a perplexing counterpoint to what critics and audiences had previously expected of the artist – expressions of feeling, emotion and connection with the subject matter.

Andy Warhol, once of Pittsburgh but by now based in New York City, emerged as one of the prime practitioners of Pop Art, leaving behind the purely commercial world of shoe illustration – where his adept draughtsmanship had made him a valuable cog in the post-war, promotional rollercoaster and a lucrative earner[10] – to create a new art of his own. His paintings and silkscreen prints from around 1962 paid attention instead to the products of the food store – Coca Cola, Campbell's soup and Brillo pads – and the iconic emblems of the mass entertainment business – Mickey Mouse, Marilyn Monroe and Elvis Presley. As we have stated, fellow artists, loosely corralled under the heading Pop, also utilised the output of the mass media. But no one quite took on the trappings of mass culture so readily nor adopted its methods – reproduction on a huge scale, commercialism on industrial principles – like Warhol.

Writes Robert Hughes: 'What he extracted from mass culture was repetition. "I want to be a machine", he announced, in memorable contrast to Jackson Pollock, who fifteen years before had declared that he wanted to be nature: a mediumistic force, unpredictable, various, and full of energy' (1980: 348). He says that 'Warhol loved the peculiarly inert sameness of the mass product: an infinite series of identical objects – soup cans, Coke bottles, dollar bills, Mona Lisas, or the same head of Marilyn Monroe silkscreened over and over again' (ibid.: 348). By drawing on the most recognisable of conveyor-belt commodities and then replicating them in a near-parody of the principle of art as one-off, unrepeatable talisman, Warhol enraged the traditionalists of the inner art circle and outraged conservative gallery goers who knew what art should stand for and what it ought to look like.

However, by initially alienating the intellectual bastions of art past and the middle-class wardens of art present, Andy Warhol – alongside other Pop artists like Robert

Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, Roy Lichtenstein and Claes Oldenburg, and their British equivalents David Hockney, Peter Blake and Richard Hamilton – appeared to carve out a new domain for art and the artist. What Warhol initially lost in credibility found compensation in instant fame; then credibility also followed. A young generation alienated by antiquity and the classics, dissatisfied by abstraction, disenfranchised by the musty silence of museums, found, within this novel movement, a super-charged portrait of their times: paintings and sculpture which commented on television and movies, rock and roll and teen fashion. Warhol's images had the flash of the clothes they wore, the energy of the records they played, the Technicolor vibrancy of the cinema they watched, the streamlined swish of the futuristic automobiles they drove. It is little wonder that Pop Art and popular music, which despite their common adjective enjoyed a somewhat contrasting genealogy, should eventually share a bed in the shape of numerous high-profile album sleeves for the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and Cream.[11] The fact that these various objects of desire, in which the new viewers revelled, had a built-in obsolescence, linked them intrinsically to the throwaway age and drew them to Warhol's operating methods and selected media. His work had an immediacy and transparency that appealed to the times. It also inevitably became associated with concepts of ephemerality and disposability. Some also regarded his oeuvre as empty and vacuous and the artist did little to deflect those attacks, content to ignore – even enjoy – such ambiguities rather than address them.

Out of such connections the concept of an 'anti-aesthetic', made concrete some little way down the line by thinkers such as Hal Foster (1993a: xiii), began to take shape. Thus art, previously considered absolute and ever-lasting, became rather, in this feckless re-configuration, instantaneous and passing. And out of this would emerge, in time, the more general notion of a trash aesthetic, a virulent sub-branch of the larger arts tree, an oxymoronic concept which was oppositional and subversive, not as a consequence of any radical programme or revolutionary dynamism, but rather through its determinedly shallow posturing and limp, world-weary listlessness.

Yet, in the fertile testing ground of the 60s, Warhol's approach – and that of his sidemen and women, his lieutenants and his foot-soldiers – was about more than just depicting everyday iconography. He was keen also to explore art subjects and art practices that moved beyond facile – if skilfully crafted – portraits of soda, soup and soap or Hollywood royalty. He was interested, too, in the darker realms of the psyche – death through execution or car crash, for instance – which he included in his print series but also cultural taboos – drugs and sex, generally, homosexuality and sexual perversity, more specifically – which he considered through a series of films created under his own name and also via the recordings that the Velvet Underground laid down and which, in each case, Warhol nominally supervised.[12]

By presenting those taboo-breaking devices within the context of the artwork – either moving picture, stage event or sound recording – Warhol further helped to engineer the break from conventional ideas of what art should contemplate or stand for, by inference a split from the Greco-Roman, Jewish and Christian codes on which aesthetics – truth, beauty, morality and, by very strong implication, *good*, as in worthwhile, valuable or improving – had been ultimately, and until this moment, generally founded. But we should also draw attention to wider philosophical shifts of the 1960s of which Pop Art and Warhol could be regarded as both trigger and mirror: the general move towards an aesthetic framework, based on relative value rather than rigid and incontrovertible certainty, and the dismantling of the barriers that separated high art

from low, elite art from the popular, art itself from the ancient straitjacket that fixed ideologies had wrapped around it.

The reception of Pop Art may be regarded as an excellent example of this changing basis of artistic analysis and assessment. Considered radical at first, the movement was not long in the cold. It speedily became a feature of the accepted circle of fine art exchange – absorbed into that establishment network built on galleries and dealers, buyers and critics – while simultaneously drawing its materials from the activities of mass culture, the antithesis on which that long-founded institutional nexus had been built. Scant surprise then, that John Storey should dub Pop Art 'postmodernism's first cultural flowering' (1998: 148) and Fredric Jameson include it in a long list of artistic, architectural and literary movements of the 1960s that were 'specific reactions against the established forms of high modernism, against this or that dominant high modernism which conquered the university, the museum, the art gallery network, and the foundations' (Jameson 1993: 111). Sylvia Harrison offered a more focused view of Pop's postmodern specificities. She explained that this style possessed features that 'resisted accommodation within existing formalist or realist critical canons'. Among these characteristics were 'anonymity' and 'a lack of "authorial presence"' evident in its 'depersonalised technique' and 'obscure or uninterpretable "message"' (Harrison 2001: 11).

This dispassionate distance from the artwork – apparent in various media he selected – which Warhol embraced, an almost Brechtian alienation from the subject matter, might also be regarded as a sign of the trash aesthetic: if the blandly mundane is transposed or the darkly dangerous is depicted, it is barely engaged with, nor commented upon, a kind of degradation through banality. If there is ambivalence in the piece on show, there is also an equivocal morality behind its construction.

Underground Movies and the Music of the Velvets: The Trash Aesthetic and the Factory Shift

> Even those who would hesitate to classify the arts as holy often feel that they form a sanctified enclave from which certain contaminating influences should be excluded – notably money and sex. (Carey 2005: ix)
>
> Warhol's autistic stare was the same for heroes and heroines as for death and disaster. (Hughes 1980: 351)
>
> [The Velvet Underground] became the model for an avant-garde within rock and roll, the source of a self-conscious, intellectual trash aesthetic. (Frith and Horne 1987: 112)

In what ways can we illustrate the trash aesthetic, this creative impulse that would benefit from its early tending by Warhol and his followers to recur in various artistic disciplines – music, fashion, film, theatre, dance, art and more – in the subsequent decades? We might start by reiterating Warhol's desire to be machine-like. It is surely no coincidence that, given his interest in the man as mechanised android, he should have christened his art studio in Manhattan, the Factory.

Today, our ability to see art as both cultural artefact and product with commercial potential – a sliding signifier, if you like – renders the chosen name of the artist's workspace, in retrospect, quite comprehensible. In the heart of the 1960s, when manufactories and art-making would have been most definitely viewed as mutually incompatible, Warhol confused his audiences with this tactic. The naming of the Factory reduced his art, by implication, to the equivalent of a component on a Detroit

assembly line, subverting the language in aid of his strategy of aesthetic disinformation. In fact, we might even speculate that Warhol was striking at the very soul of the Romantic notion – the compact artists had previously made with the forces and fruits of nature was symbolically rejected within the cold, dark recesses of an abandoned industrial complex. Simultaneously he jettisoned the comfortable intellectual environment of the art establishment, which inhabited the rarefied and protective environment of the salon and the academy.

It is not without irony either that since then, in these post-industrial times, artists have flocked to disused mills and redundant factories to create their loft spaces, their studios and their galleries. Following Warhol's prescient example, the reclaimed factory has, in the present era, become a birthing-pool for art that is the offspring of the urban postmodern experience. But the artist's move to the building located in East 47th Street at the end of 1963 was only part of his re-making of the art experience. Jonathan Fineberg summarises the ethos – both unfamiliar and ground-breaking – that would infuse the place and his gathering circle. He comments: 'Andy Warhol's devotion to the aesthetic of television, society columns and fun magazines was opposed to the European model of the struggling avant-garde artist which the abstract expressionists had emulated' (2000: 250).

The Factory, Fineberg explains, 'evolved into an environment lined in silver foil and filled with drag queens, listless "beautiful people", chic fashion personalities, and the rock music underground, many of them wasted on drugs or engaged in bizarre behaviour' (ibid.: 256). But, amid these strange conjunctions, these decadent social experiments, the heartbeat of trash was evident in a wide array of Warhol's art and artefacts. If the power of the previous prevailing aesthetic code had been sited in joy, humanity and emotional involvement, the ambience of the Factory was premised on something else: detachment, distance and emotional disengagement.

On the canvases and in the movie reels that were produced there was a deliberate attempt to reduce the human component, drain the life-force, the pleasure, the humane pulse, the signs of the soul, that had formerly been the expected keynotes of an artwork. The value of felt life to legitimate art, explored and commemorated by such modernist literary philosophers as F.R. Leavis, was absent here. In the silkscreens and the film scenes, feelings and the felt were essentially excised.

What we can assert is that within this curious scene – a crossroads where upscale high life convened with degraded low life – the core of the trash aesthetic was hardened: a postmodern meeting of wealth and the gutter, of the famous and of freaks, of stars both genuine and *ersatz*, of flash and flesh, of the bright lights and the twilight, of the glamorous and the grotesque, of adulation and addiction, of uptown and downtown, a mingling of aspiring and even expiring, of the treasured and the trashy of the isle of Manhattan.

Although initially Warhol continued to make paintings and prints, conventional products depicting unconventional subject matter, and build his career as 'the decade's leading art star' (Fineberg 2000: 256), he eventually announced his retirement from painting and, from 1966, dedicated his principal output to film, performance and the celebrity scene which engrossed him. His films tended to embody the low-production values that would come to characterise our sense of trash, too: grainy, black and white footage concerned less with narrative than with visual texture, unscripted tributes to the lives of those at the edge who managed to escape the alienation and ostracism of

society and the grime of the street to find a receptive cocoon within the Factory walls. Watson outlines the artist's film aesthetic saying that he

> found his signature cinematic style very quickly: an emotionally uninflected camera that neither panned nor zoomed, the use of real time instead of edited time, and a frame dominated by tightly cropped parts of the anatomy, usually a face. It is customary to think the movies sprang full-blown from the mind of Andy Warhol and that they were all the same. Saying something was a like a 'Warhol movie' became shorthand for saying it was boring, blank and long. (Watson 1995: 132)

Early cinematic ventures included 1963's *Sleep*, a six-hour depiction of a sleeping poet called John Giorno, and the following year's *Empire*, an eight-hour, single view study of the Empire State Building in which only one piece of action, the switch-on of the skyscraper's lights, enlivened the plot, reflected Warhol's concern with the minor, inane details of life. Many dozens of similar pictures would follow. *The Chelsea Girls*[13] released in 1966, which starred Nico and was filmed at the celebrated bohemian haunt the Chelsea Hotel under the direction of Paul Morrissey who would oversee many of the Factory films, was characteristic. In Calvin Tomkins' summary, it was 'a three-hour, twin-screen examination of assorted freaks, drugs and transvestites' (Tomkins quoted in Fineberg 2000: 257). But he pointed out that the superficial sensationalism of these pieces was quite misleading. Warhol, claimed Tomkins, subtracted 'movement, incident and narrative interest from his movies, grinding out epically boring, technically awful films that failed signally to live up to their sex-and-perversion-billings' (ibid.).

These were hardly films for mainstream movie theatre viewing, but conceptual escapades, installations in celluloid – auguries of the manner in which film would become as integral a feature of art's lexicon as oil paint as the century came to a conclusion – funded by the most acclaimed and successful artist of his day and, fiscally, quite capable of indulging his every creative whim. Later film-works like *Flesh* (1968) and the significantly titled *Trash* (1970) were a bizarre weaving of hedonism and nihilism, superficially sexual extravaganzas but so coldly and dispassionately delivered that they were frankly drained of their erotic charge, a contrapuntal quality that would have probably pleased the curiously asexual Warhol.

His aim, we might say, was to socially engineer a playground in which division – by class or cash, by sexual deviation or narcotic reliance – was dispelled. However, the ringmaster of this exotic mélange was not a liberal meritocrat or a fevered reformer: he was a mischief-maker extraordinaire who revelled in the contradictions and juxtapositions he was able to manufacture in the varied dramatic scenarios he dreamt up, on screen or in life. Period interviews, like an example from 1964, in which his monosyllabic 'yes'/'no' retorts to a reporter's questions, suggest a powerful inclination to undermine the conventional, critical discourse: is he robot or clown as he deflects his interrogator's queries, his automaton persona only just capable of masking the adolescent smirk? (Warhol 1964b). Yet Warhol's sponsorship of one of the more interesting art experiments of the period is worth more attention – the rock act the Velvet Underground, their recordings and their involvement in the greatest multi-media show of the era, *Exploding Plastic Inevitable* (*EPI*).

So what can we say of the band? Ellen Willis believes that 'the Velvets were the first important rock and roll artists who had no real chance of attracting a mass audience' (Willis 1996: 74). They made music that was 'too overtly intellectual, stylised and distanced to be commercial'. Their output, the status of which she linked to Pop Art, was 'anti-art art made by anti-elite elitists' (ibid.). Matthew Bannister reflects on the group's relation to the anti-philosophy that so intrigued their powerful sponsor. 'The

trash aesthetic', he says, 'functions not so much as a democratisation of culture as a testament to the superior taste of a discerning elite who can find sublimity in abjection' (2006: 44). Hamelan states: 'To separate the Velvet Underground and trash would be to separate the nervous system and the skeleton. It can't be done' (2004: 80). To take the two key artefacts that would engage the Velvets' time and energy in 1966, let us reflect on the pair in roughly chronological order – the unveiling of the *EPI* and the making of the debut album. The two projects would overlap and interweave with composed material common to each context, though the record itself would not see the light of day until well into the following year.

The musical ensemble that had taken shape in 1964 and 1965, operating under several guises and with various personnel, had finally taken the name the Velvet Underground in tribute to a paperback of the same title by Michael Leigh, a volume which had charted the recent sexual activities of post-Kinsey subterraneana (1963). Drawn to Warhol's attention by his aide and adviser Morrissey and brought into the Factory fold, the band would comprise original members Lou Reed, John Cale, Sterling Morrison and Maureen Tucker but now joined, at Warhol's insistence, by the German model, screen actor and would-be singer Nico.[14] Although the introduction of a leggy Teutonic chanteuse was not universally welcomed by the group, they could see the value of compromise. As Richard Williams states of their new bond with a high-profile Pop artist: '[T]he most significant part of the relationship was this: if the Velvet Underground were going to pursue a career based on demolishing the unwritten rules and conventions of rock and roll, then Andy Warhol would be the last person in the world to discourage them' (2009: 189).

The band, according to Wayne Koestenbaum, actually made their live debut under Warhol's aegis with the name Erupting Plastic Inevitable (2001: 100) in a show called *Up-Tight* for the New York Clinical Psychiatry Society banquet in January 1966, before *Exploding Plastic Inevitable*, now re-titled, began its run at the Dom in St Mark's Place in April. *EPI* was a piece that drew on all of the managed anarchy of Warhol's universe: his movies – *Couch* (1964) and *Vinyl* (1965) in this case – became the backdrop to the installation; his house band became the musical performers and soundtrack providers; his aides and superstars its *dramatis personae*. At the Dom, says Williams, 'Around four hundred people made it upstairs on opening night to be confronted by the Velvet Underground and Nico, plus lights, films ..., the onstage dancing of "superstars" Gerard Malanga and Mary Woronov, and – between sets – a sound system that occasionally played three records at once' (2009: 190). Koestenbaum comments:

> The theatrics enveloping Nico and the Velvets were jubilantly sadomasochistic. The decibel level of the Velvets tortured the audience's eardrums. Gerard's whip was a token punishment. Nico's lack of relation to the band ... was another kind of torture: she was a bane to the band, the band a bane to her .... (Koestenbaum 2001: 101)

The show itself had much of the trash quotient with which Warhol had become almost eponymous – sex, violence, noise, mystery and menace – and Ronald Nameth's film, a record of a later Chicago production in June of that year, captures the essence of these ingredients, framing the chaotic disorder of the live performance. Neither Reed, absent through illness, nor Nico appear in this version. Although Nameth's documentary is shot in colour rather than monochrome, it distils the show's shambolic spirit: the jumble of swirling light – the gel projections akin to blazing flames – and the frenetically gyrating bodies, indistinctly identified and almost hermaphrodite, are the main points of visual concern (Nameth 1966).

In fact, the movie portrays a scene that evokes, somewhat ironically, something closer to the abstractions of a Pollock drip painting come to life than the bare, spare, flat representations of the Warhol printing press. It is interesting though that this mélange of disorientating light and shadow, dancers enacting sinister sexual games, and the sensory disturbances of music played at high volume were in keeping with the anti-aesthetic values that the Factory clan had so energetically pursued. *EPI*'s 'swirl of sound and sensation epitomised a nascent genre', says Koestenbaum (2001: 101) and the songs that formed the musical component within the multi-media enactment would, in due course, enjoy a second life on a debut record that would become one of the most pervasive collections of all time. Eventually released in March 1967, *The Velvet Underground and Nico*, proved initially to be a slow-burner but one that would, over the next decade, have an infernal impact.

The material it presented was a considerable way from the musical fare which would characterise the period as the Summer of Love approached, a sunny optimism that stretched from the southern California sands to the psychedelic jams of San Francisco and the acid-drenched and dandy stylings of London – represented by artists like the Beach Boys, the Mamas and the Papas and Jefferson Airplane, Pink Floyd, Jimi Hendrix and the Beatles. The hippy haven of Haight-Ashbury was in bloom, the Monterey Festival was soon to be enacted and the arrival of the classic album of that year, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, was imminent.

But the Velvets' debut had little of the airy brightness, the upbeat sense of personal liberation, that those other artists would share with the rock public over these hyperactive weeks and months. Instead there were darker trends at large – the hard drugs of 'Heroin'[15] and 'Waiting for the Man' – and discomforting themes in play – the sado-masochist hints of 'Venus in Furs' – and the reflections on the mysteries of the Factory terrain – 'Femme Fatale', a tribute to doomed Warhol superstar Edie Sedgwick, and 'All Tomorrow's Parties', sometimes thought to be about the painter's controversial Manhattan commune but actually pre-dating Lou Reed's attachment to that scene.

There was no specific or unifying musical style that connected the 11 tracks but there was a monochromatic grain to the record that eschewed the multi-tracking ambition, the multi-layered vocal pyrotechnics of Brian Wilson, John Phillips, Syd Barrett or John Lennon and Paul McCartney. If those composers were bringing a kaleidoscopic, possibly chemically-induced, glee to the technological playground, the Velvets were more introspective, amphetamine expressionists exploring the psychic disturbances within rather than the phantasmagoria without. New York City, a frenetic, hard-wired East Coast metropolis, seemed out of step with the West Coast's mellow flavours and the nostalgic eclecticism of Carnaby Street. Cagle believes that the prevailing trends 'fostered sentiments against the alienated, nihilistic visions of the Velvet Underground. Perhaps their songs seemed too jaded and barbaric for a generation that was rallying against nihilism and despair' (1995: 92).

Although rock and roll had been regarded as a rough and ready amalgam of black and white musical forms since the mid-1950s, a symbolic miscegenation that threatened to further inflame the intense racial tensions of the time, by 1967, the rock vanguard had entered a new and mature phase. McCartney had acknowledged an interest in avant-garde Italian composer Luciano Berio and, as Gendron reports (2002), the US critical community, just like its hundreds of thousands of hysterical adolescents, had been seduced by the ever-burgeoning inventiveness of the Fab Four. The artistic *modus operandi* of the group and other leading players was becoming apparent: the adoption of

an art method coupled to the dynamic possibilities promised by advanced studio facilities. At odds with this general inclination, the Velvets' album had been recorded around a year before, concurrent with the various *EPI* premieres, with Warhol nominally cited as producer but it seems his essential role was merely in funding and green-lighting of the project. It was the only LP release to see the light of day while the artist and the band shared a professional association.

If the Velvet Underground did not reject an art method *per se*, the one they pursued unquestionably ran counter to the creative ambience of the time. Centrally, the band avoided a policy of re-recording, re-mixing and re-touching the tracks to manicure and polish their sonic canvases. The principle of 'first thought, best thought', an existential belief borrowed from Buddhist sources that had informed the writings of the Beats, appears to be a key driver here. And it was really in this frayed unrefinement – the first engineer who worked with the Velvet Underground advised that single takes were the best way to capture the spirit of the pieces, though a more experienced producer in Tom Wilson also shaped some of the cuts – that set it apart from the competition of the day and set it up as such an influential example, in the years that followed, to a plethora of subsequent acts.

Distorted? Dissonant? Dishevelled? Amateurish? Unfinished? Ugly? There is scant doubt that the material that made up *The Velvet Underground and Nico* met standards that were quite out of step with the dominating ethos of the moment, one that was moving in the direction of refined sophistication and cerebral stimulation and away from notions of the three-minute pop song and the ephemeral teen anthem. Reed, Cale and co. rejected both the new art rock and the old trite pop, marrying instead elements of the high and the low, the cultural leftfield and the arts underground, harsh rhythms, repetitive drones and minimalist arrangements with stories of low-life transgression: drug use and abuse, sexual deviance and perversion, the thrills and spills of a dangerous palace of delights. Beauty thrown overboard; the sublime displaced by the degraded; traditional morality skewed by a libertarian abuse of the brain and body and undermined by a dismissal of accepted sexual mores. An anti-aesthetic, the trash aesthetic indeed, was surely embodied in this parade of distortion, discordance and contortion: radio friendly this was not. The Velvet Underground rejected the simmering, summery optimism of psychedelia and immersed themselves in a dystopian downtown, evoking a scene through their words and music that was neurotic and hyperactive, numbed and anaesthetised[16] by turn, conjured, at least in part, by the toxic charge of speed and heroin.

But what of truth, that other critical pillar in the temple of the older aesthetic? Well, yes, there was a truth intrinsic to and reflective of the Velvets' own experiences, even if they were only dramatising individuals, scenes and events they knew, but it was a truth that spoke not of enlightenment and salvation and goodness. On the contrary, here was a world-view something akin to hell fire on God's Earth, an authentic depiction of a Boschian place perhaps, a land recognisable to Sade and Baudelaire maybe, but one that was utterly antipathetical to those notions of truth as the philosophers had historically understood and described the concept. Ugly was not the new beautiful but it may have been considered, from the perspective of the subversive art-makers, the new true. The Velvets and their wider family played out their baser instincts on a strange cusp between life and art, leisure and creativity, whether at the Factory or Max's Kansas City or the various cities where *Exploding Plastic Inevitable* went on tour, the West Coast and

Mid-West included. Where dubious pleasures ended and artistic work commenced was never entirely clear.

The record drew on a number of important influences: Beat poetry's stream of consciousness; Cale's affinity with and US avant-garde composers such as La Monte Young; the fraught dissonance of Ornette Coleman's free jazz; Bob Dylan's spoken vocal mannerism; the swing-free pulse of Tucker's drumming; and Reed's rejection of the conveyor belt pop of New York City's Brill Building,[17] a world that the singer-lyricist had briefly – and unsatisfyingly – engaged with before forming a Velvets prototype called the Primitives in 1964. Williams sees the band as 'a natural fit' with the artist who had mentored them. He explains:

> The Velvet Underground were the only possible group for Warhol. First came songs reflecting their interest in the sort of transgressive activities that characterised the activities at the Factory. Second came the use of repetition and the acceptance of what the straight world would see as boredom, ennui or *la noia*: an existential angst apparently stripped of meaning. The incessant hammered piano figures and unvarying rhythm beds, not so distantly related to the pulse of *In C*,[18] could be seen as analogues of the multiple versions of the same image (Elvis, Marilyn, car crashes, electric chairs, etc.) churned out by the silkscreen printers working at the Factory. (Williams 2009: 189)

Ultimately though, for all its rule-breaking posturing, and maybe even because of that, the group's debut LP, wrapped eye-catchingly if perversely, in its Warhol-designed Pop Art banana sleeve,[19] had scant commercial impact and faded from the very lower reaches of the *Billboard* album chart speedily. Yet it was heard by an important coterie of musicians, critics and scenesters on both sides of the Atlantic. The fact that its genesis was so closely entwined with the machinations of a world-renowned visual artist hardly hindered the attention it garnered from those in the know. However, the seeds sown in the humid haze of that Summer of Love would lie dormant only to prosper, Triffid-like, as a rampant, mutant crop some years on, throttling the more delicate flowers of the abandoned hippy garden.

The Velvet Underground had been not just been set against traditional cultural values; they would also reject the protocols of the counterculture itself, that broad-based movement which sought to test society's bounds through energetic engagement, employing political activism and preaching a utopian ideology in a campaign of confrontation and resistance, street demonstration and soapbox rhetoric. In that sense, therefore, we might see Warhol's band as doubly transgressive – disrespecting both the conventional mainstream and the radical reaction to it as well. In doing so, they shaped another countercultural position, subterranean in spirit and outsider in character, one that would help sustain an enduring assault on social and artistic norms long after the hippies and their anti-Vietnam protests had been largely laid to rest. In fact, the band's subversive behaviour and aesthetic stance would have a much more profound and lasting effect on subsequent popular music practices, certainly those linked to notions of an alternative or independent ethos, than the peace and love inspired psychedelic sounds of the time.[20] The Velvets' style became the seedbed of wave after wave of rock that leant towards minimalism over decoration, raw noise over manicured manipulation, economy and brevity over ornate and laboured indulgence. In contrast, the more baroque manners of the LSD surge became the subject of only occasional and quaint re-visitations and revivals in the decades that followed.

By the time the Velvets moved on to their second studio set, *White Light/White Heat*, at the end of 1967 with Tom Wilson now fully installed in the producer's seat, the band

had severed their links with Warhol not to say their imposing – and imposed – female vocalist Nico, who would go on to a solo career. The group's project to make jarring music that was at odds with the contemporary canon – both in style and content, texturally and textually – was not de-railed but the group's post-Factory output had little more mainstream acclaim than the original release itself enjoyed. It would take the band's final and disorderly dissolution in the early 1970s – by which time Reed and Cale had already departed – before the Velvet Underground's fractured sound and vision became the blueprint for a thousand Anglo-American acts who would trigger a string of crucial rock manifestations in the 1970s and 1980s: glam and glitter, punk and new wave, industrial, goth and grunge.

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DISCOGRAPHIE

The Velvet Underground, *The Velvet Underground & Nico (Verve, 1967).*

FILMOGRAPHIE

The Exploding Plastic Inevitable, directed by Ronald Nameth, 1966. http://www.jonbehrensfilms.com/experimental005.html [Consulté le 13/07/2011].

Andy Warhol, 'Andy Warhol on Pop Art', interview, 1964, YouTube, http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=endscreen&NR=1&v=deRMRh8Zjgg [Consulté le 10/03/2012].

NOTES

1. Artists Hugo Ball and Jean Arp and poet Tristan Tzara and were among the group's members. Dada was 'a verbal alibi for inanity' and Tzara insisted that 'DADA DOES NOT MEAN ANYTHING' (Note: author's capitals) (Conrad 1998: 112).
2. British gallery curator Julian Spalding has claimed that Duchamp never actually put forward the item for display. He says that 'recent research has shown that the urinal was actually submitted by Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven. Her gesture was an early feminist attack on a male society. She didn't claim the urinal was a work of art. She was taking the piss' (cf. Spalding 2012).
3. A Nazi-sponsored exhibition showcasing – and attacking – modernist trends and abstraction in art, *Entartete Kunst* ('degenerate art'), opened in Munich in 1937 and then toured Germany and Austria.
4. This name of this school, forged in 1908, referred to 'the group's gritty urban subjects, general preference for a dark palette, and roughly sketched painting style. Ashcan realists rebelled against feminine prettiness and academic correctness to express a masculine, virile energy, primarily symbolised by the teeming humanity of an increasingly urbanised America' (Bjelajac 2000: 293).
5. Robert Frank's 1959 photography collection included a preface from Jack Kerouac. Frank would make films, too, including *Pull My Daisy* with Kerouac in 1959 and the unreleased *Cocksucker Blues*, a highly charged account of the Rolling Stones' 1972 tour of the US.
6. Mekas would engage with the Warhol community. He filmed the audience, alongside Barbara Rubin, when Warhol presented a controversial presentation, including the Velvet Underground, to the New York Society for Clinical Psychiatry at the Hotel Delmonico in New York City in January 1966 (Cagle 1995: 1).
7. We must assume that Mekas was referring to Burroughs' experimental novel *Naked Lunch*, first issued in France in 1959, and subsequently the target of an obscenity case in the US.

8. The Beats' 'New Vision', a manifesto of artistic intent, dated back to the mid-1940s (Watson 1995: 38–40) while the anti-censorship commitments of the new film-makers was central to their creative campaign (Banes 1993: 171–3).
9. In the UK, proto-Pop painters like Richard Hamilton and Eduardo Paolozzi as members of the Independent Group did present statements offering explanations of their work from the mid-1950s (Alloway 1974: 27–66).
10. By 1959, Warhol was earning around $65,000 a year (Fineberg 2000: 251).
11. Blake and Hamilton designed, respectively, the Beatles covers *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967) and *The Beatles* (1968); Jim Dine did *Best of Cream* (1969); and Warhol created *Sticky Fingers* for the Rolling Stones (1971).
12. Paul Morrissey, Warhol's manager, was both adviser to the artist and a key figure in physically realising various of his movie and music ventures (Watson 2003: 221–3).
13. The film is also referred to as simply *Chelsea Girls*.
14. Nico's real name was Christa Päffgen (Koestenbaum 2001: 100).
15. Lou Reed commented of the song and the wider LP: 'I'm not advocating anything ... It's just we had "Heroin", "I'm Waiting for the Man" and "Venus in Furs" all on the first album, and that just about set the tone. It's like we had "Sunday Morning" which was so pretty and "I'll Be Your Mirror", but everyone psyched into the other stuff' (Bockris and Malanga 2003: 117).
16. Anaesthesia – 'insensibility', 'loss of feeling' (*Chambers English Dictionary* 1988) and, by extension, without an aesthetic.
17. The crucible of much teen-aimed pop of the late 1950s and 1960s, the Brill Building was located at 1619 Broadway and provided a composing base for Carole King, Neil Sedaka and many others (Clarke 1990: 157).
18. Terry Riley's composition, conceived in 1964, was a ground-breaking piece, 'a series of fifty-three short musical figures to be performed in sequence by a group of players – any number of them, using any kind of instruments – who could choose their moment of entry and the number of times they repeated each motif before moving on' (Williams 2009: 171).
19. The cover's stuck-on banana image could be peeled back in early editions, revealing beneath a flesh-coloured fruit with the obvious phallic connotations. Paul Morrissey: 'The cover was one of the many obscene suggestions put forward ... No one remembers who suggested it, but everyone agrees that it was dirty enough' (quoted in Thorgerson and Powell 1999: 149).
20. The acid rock bands of San Francisco – the Grateful Dead and Jefferson Airplane, Quicksilver Messenger Service and Moby Grape – and the psychedelic acts launched in London – Syd Barrett's Pink Floyd, the Crazy World of Arthur Brown and even Jimi Hendrix – all distilled the spirit of the time but their legacy was limited after the 1960s drew to a close. Hoskyns claims that, by 1973, San Francisco was 'all but dead as a music town' (1997: 217). In England, Barrett's mental decline and departure from the group in 1967, the dissolution of Brown's band in 1969 and Hendrix's death in 1970 all symbolised the fleeting nature of the moment.

ABSTRACTS

The American 1960s has become closely associated with moral crusades that strove for Civil Rights for the black community and protested against the conflict in Vietnam, with the peace and love gestures of the hippies to the fore, particularly in the latter part of the decade. This essay argues, however, that the seeds of a more subversive underground movement would be sown during the period and a new approach to art creation, centred on an emerging trash aesthetic, would not only challenge the psychedelic utopianism of the organised counterculture but actually leave a longer-lasting mark on left-field creative activity in the final quarter of the century. As Andy Warhol's art and film projects were re-shaped as multi-media experiences, the importance of the Velvet Underground, the rising house band at the artist's Factory headquarters, was magnified. The *Exploding Plastic Inevitable*, a performance work inspired in part by early-decade Happenings, would be unveiled in 1966, combining Warhol's underground cinema projections, light shows, dancers and the cacophonous sound of the Velvets. This radical piece of stage art was filmed by the director Ronald Nameth and his account remains a key document of the live venture. The article proposes that while Warhol and the band built on traditions from Dada to the Beats to build a form of anti-art, it was during this key time that the ideas of trash – from the Pop Art celebrations of mass cultural forms to the darker delvings of his movies, and his adopted rock group, into the decadent realms of drugs and sexual perversity – took crucial shape. This anti-aesthetic would have an enduring impact beyond the subterranean avant garde of New York City in the years that followed as music and cinema, art and literature were all shaped by this brand of expression and examples of its legacy are suggested.

Les sixties américaines sont associées aux luttes pour les Droits Civiques de la communauté noire, aux protestations contre la guerre au Vietnam et aux gestes de paix et d'amour des hippies, notamment à la fin de la décennie. Cet article affirme néanmoins que des graines d'un mouvement underground plus subversif furent semées à l'époque, et une nouvelle approche de la création artistique, centrée sur l'esthétique trash qui commençait à émerger, allait non seulement défier l'utopisme psychédélique de la contre-culture, mais aussi, au final, laisser une emprunte bien plus durable sur l'activité créative des mouvements de gauche, dans le dernier quart du XXe siècle. Au moment où le travail artistique et cinématographique d'Andy Warhol prenait le chemin d'expériences multimédiatiques, l'importance du Velvet Underground, le groupe en résidence à la Factory de Warhol, fut d'autant plus mise en lumière. *Exploding Plastic Inevitable*, une performance inspirée par les happenings du début de la décennie, fut présentée en 1966. Elle combinait les projections video underground de Warhol, des spectacles son et lumière, la participation de danseurs et le son cacophonique des Velvets. Cette œuvre radicale fut filmée par le réalisateur Ronald Nameth, et sa captation constitue une source considérable sur l'événement. Cet article soutient que, alors que Warhol et le groupe puisèrent dans toute une tradition allant de Dada aux Beats, afin d'élaborer une forme d'anti-art, c'est précisément à ce moment que mûrirent et prirent forme les idées du trash : des célébrations Pop Art de biens de consommation de masse aux expériences plus sombres de ses films et de son groupe de rock adoptif, et jusqu'à la décadence dans la drogue et la perversion sexuelle. Cette anti-esthétique allait avoir un impact durable dans les années suivantes, au-delà de la culture marginale et souterraine de l'avant-garde new-yorkais : la musique et le cinéma, l'art et la littérature furent tous informés par cette nouvelle expression.

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