

THE ARTIST IS NOT PRESENT: ANDY WARHOL'S  
1967 UTAH 'HOAX' AS PERFORMANCE AND  
SELF-PORTRAITURE

by  
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## ABSTRACT

My thesis recounts Andy Warhol's 1967 controversy at the University of Utah, in which the artist sent actor Alan Midgette to lecture in his place. My first chapter incorporates critical source material from the University's student newspaper the *Daily Utah Chronicle*, including articles, eyewitness testimony and photographs, to reconstruct a narrative of the event. Challenging the prevailing interpretation of Warhol's Utah lecture as a 'fraud' or 'hoax,' my thesis considers the entire episode through the lenses of performance and self-portraiture.

My second chapter reveals the degree to which Warhol's performance reveals both absence and presence. Sending Midgette to lecture in his place reaffirms Warhol's career-long obsession with masking. Additionally, the *Chronicle's* photographs of Midgette emphasize this polarity rather than dissolving it.

My second chapter also describes self-portraits from various stages in Warhol's career. His inclination to declare, repeat, and conceal is apparent in his Utah performance and throughout his catalog of self-portraits. My thesis reveals how these themes indicate a history of performed identity. This clarifies Warhol's evasive self as subject, providing insight into his performative self-portrait. Throughout his career, Warhol uses self-portraits to reveal his many guises. Warhol's aversion to 'realistic' self-representation exposes a psychological inability to confront his self- image.

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## INTRODUCTION

Imposters succeed *because* not in spite of their fictitiousness. They take wing with congenial cultural fantasies. Imposters persevere because any fear they may have of being discovered is overshadowed by their dread of being alone.  
-Hillel Schwartz<sup>1</sup>

The artist is present. In fact, he is on his hands and knees. He sheepishly crawls inside of a giant Campbell's soup can (renamed "Can-Bull") egged on by a crowd of angry spectators. His shame echoes the soup's flavor, "Rotten Tomatoes." The artist wears a suit and tie with black sunglasses. The sunglasses once used to conceal the artist's face, are now useful in his dark isolation. [Figure 1] This scene is a cartoon by a staff writer for the *Utah Daily Chronicle* in the October 4, 1967 edition of the newspaper. The cartoon epitomizes the disappointment surrounding Andy Warhol's University of Utah lecture the day previous. As students were about to discover, Warhol's "presence" was more than just confusing, it was feigned.

On Monday, October 2, 1967, a highly anticipated Andy Warhol lecture was delivered at the University of Utah. In the hours and days following the presentation, attendees expressed disappointment at the quality of the lecture, which they found lackluster at best, confusing at worst. As students and faculty were about to discover, Warhol's presence was not simply lacking, it was feigned. Rather than attend the four scheduled appearances on his tour of Western colleges, Warhol had sent actor Allen

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<sup>1</sup> Hillel Schwartz, "Chapter 1: "Vanishing Twins," *The Culture of the Copy: Striking Likeness, Unreasonable* (New York: Zone Books, 1998), 71.

Midgette to perform in his guise. The faux-Warhol's stop in Utah sparked an investigation over the ensuing months. Initially, attendees did not suspect fraud, merely poor showmanship. While some students and faculty were simply disappointed in the presentation, others had strange suspicions of fraud that remained unverified. Ultimately, this suspicion gained momentum and catalyzed an investigation regarding the identity of the lecturer and the intent of his action. It was then revealed—by Warhol's manager Paul Morrissey—that the lecturer they had received was in fact an actor. Why would Warhol send someone else in his place? Was it a prank on eager students or an act of pure laziness? These and other questions floated around as students and faculty attempted to make sense of the event. What they could not or neglected to see was that Warhol's so-called "prank" was of a piece with his other artistic practices.

The outsourcing of self via body double is a highly significant act within Warhol's aesthetic practice. Warhol's gesture serves as a premeditated self-portrait. This event is best described as performance. For Warhol, self-portraiture disavows the revelatory properties associated with the genre. Warhol's self-portraits construct multiple guises rather than reveal the *true* self.

As a historical genre, self-portraiture is often believed to be an intimate practice, which forces the artist to confront the *real* self. Warhol scholar Richard Rosenblum elaborates on this idea:

Artists' self-portraits are usually believed to reveal the private side of a public profession, the visual equivalents of reading the intimate letters or journals of a famous writer. In a way, reading self-portraiture often parallels the techniques of the psychoanalyst. What artists consciously choose to present as a physical or an emotional reality about themselves



may be a lie, but the lies they invent may also cast light on hidden truths.<sup>2</sup>

Rosenblum emphasizes the myths inherent to self-portraiture. In opposition to this, Warhol's self-portraits disavow autobiographical revelation, in favor of an explicit aesthetic of masking and surface. Visually, this propensity is evoked by repetition and process. In the case of the Utah performance, by duplicating his own body and assigning his physical traits to an actor, Warhol treats *himself* as consumer product, a duplicate with no original.

Warhol's obsessive inclination to repeat, inherent to his silkscreen paintings, sculptures and film, is reiterated by his performative self-portrait. With Alan Midgette as his body double, Warhol elevates detachment over presence.<sup>3</sup> Warhol's continual use of oppositions is aesthetically pertinent to his self-portraiture. Two such theoretical oppositions, consistent throughout Warhol's career, are essential to his Utah performance. Warhol's work reveals the opposition between presence and absence, rendering his imagery intangible. His body, while present, is often concealed from

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<sup>2</sup> Richard Rosenblum, "Andy Warhol's Disguises," *Andy Warhol Selbstportraits, Self-portraits:* (Edinburgh: Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art and Hannover: Sprengel-Museum, 2004), 21.

<sup>3</sup> From January to May of 2010, the artist Marina Abramovic staged a performance as part of her retrospective exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMa). Within the museum's multiple galleries, actors re-created Abramovic's most iconic performances. The headlining performance, *The Artist is Present*, saw Abramovic sitting silently in a chair, gazing across a small wooden table. An additional chair is placed at the other end of the table, inviting museumgoers to sit across from the artist for a length of their choosing. Abramovic remained seated during the museum's hours of operation on each day of the exhibition. Over the course of the exhibition, thousands of visitors sat across from the statuesque artist. Her silent presence evoked numerous responses from visitors, ranging from excitement to fear and discomfort. Her title reinforces the self-imposed immobility of her body. Abramovic's presence demands contemplation. Her powerful title asks that viewers recognize her declaration. The artist is present to reveal her authentic *self* to a procession of viewers who marvel at her endurance. A certain spiritual fortitude delineates Abramovic as an artist. Her personal strength defines her artistic identity. The once private traits of resilience, contemplation and fortitude shape her public persona. As viewers, we follow from Abramovic's lead, studying her gestures as if to understand her identity. Each gesture reveals to us her intent. By declaring her presence, she creates a context for viewing and interacting with the *self*. As she stoically sits within her career retrospective, Abramovic embodies the role of artist.

recognition. He additionally stages an antithesis between authenticity and replication. The authenticity of bodily presentation is downgraded by constant repetition.

Rather than following the predominant categorization of Warhol's lecture as "hoax" or a "fraud," the following chapters will reexamine the event in two ways: performance and self-portraiture. In the following thesis, I explain my designation of performance and self-portraiture respectively by describing the details of the event, clarifying performance as Warhol's *medium* of self-portraiture, and revealing how Warhol's Utah performance is equally relatable to his other self-portraits.

## CHAPTER 1

### WARHOL'S UTAH LECTURE AND THE INVESTIGATION OF FRAUD

“We just hope you look upon it as an experiment. We didn't mean to upset you. We just thought it was an interesting idea.”  
-Paul Morrissey

On October 2, 1967, Andy Warhol sent an actor to impersonate him at the University of Utah. That autumn, Warhol booked four stops on a college lecture tour of the western United States. The University of Oregon at Eugene, Linfield College in McMinnville, Oregon and Montana State University in Bozeman accompanied the University of Utah in Salt Lake City on the tour. By 1967 Warhol was an international celebrity, recognized as one of the key figures of the pop art movement. Entitled “Pop Art in Action,” Warhol's speech was marketed as an ‘illustrated lecture’ with discussion following the visual material. In the month preceding the lecture, flyers of excitement filled the school's hallways and the University of Utah's student newspaper, *The Daily Utah Chronicle*. The day of the event, *Chronicle* writer Sylvia Kronstadt's article, “Pop Founder Warhol to show Cows, Soup” adorned the paper's front page. Devoid of excitement, Kronstadt quipped, “If you leave a pile of junk unguarded long enough, Andy

Warhol will come along and sign it.”<sup>4</sup> This statement embodies the air of skepticism that preceded the lecture. The archival record of the event indicated a pre-determined disappointment in Warhol. The terms “fraud” and “hoax” were imbedded in the *Chronicle*’s vernacular even before the lecture occurred.<sup>5</sup> In an article published a week before the lecture, Sylvia Kronstadt’s headline asked, “Andy Warhol: Praise or Damn Him?” The article’s content matches the provocative headline, with Kronstadt describing Warhol as, “one of the most controversial men in the world.”<sup>6</sup> These statements foreshadow the controversy that follows. This inherent distrust in Warhol from the beginning seemingly contradicts the public uproar over his non-presence. Utah’s reaction indicates an anticipation and investment in the artist’s presence that is rejected by the occurrence that ensued.

At eight pm on Monday evening, a sold-out crowd formed inside the Ray Olpin Union Ballroom. Despite Kronstadt’s suspicions of Warhol’s legitimacy as an artist, 1,110 students, staff and faculty purchased tickets to the lecture.<sup>7</sup> Forty-five minutes after the lecture was to begin, the speaker finally arrived, alongside manager Paul Morrissey exhibiting a visibly strange demeanor. While his clothing was formal, his messy hair and sunglasses shielded his face. The disheveled speaker neglected to introduce himself or to explain his tardiness and promptly began screening a film. From the beginning, something was off with Warhol.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> “Pop Founder Warhol to Show Cows, Soup,” *The Daily Utah Chronicle*, 2 October 1967, no. 7, 1.

<sup>5</sup> The *Chronicle*’s first article about Warhol entitled, “Andy Warhol: Praise or Damn Him?,” asks whether the artist is a “saint or a crook?.” The day of the lecture, Kronstadt’s “Pop Founder Warhol to Show Cans, Soup” questions whether Warhol is a “talent or hoax?”

<sup>6</sup> “Andy Warhol: Praise Him or Damn Him?,” *The Daily Utah Chronicle*, 27 September 1967, 2.

<sup>7</sup> A flyer describing the event was distributed on campus and in the *Chronicle*. The ticket prices were available in three categories: reserved seats \$2, General Admission \$1.50 and Students \$1.00.

<sup>8</sup> This description was first detailed in “Warhol Flops, ‘Fans’ Demand Refund,” *The Daily Utah Chronicle*, 4 October 1967, no. 8, 1.

A question and answer session followed the screening. After seeing a 30-minute section of a 24-hour film, audience questions were met with resistant and abrupt answers.<sup>9</sup>

Warhol's manager Paul Morrissey answered most of the inquiries. The lecturer refused to speak about pop art or artistic process.<sup>10</sup>

Those familiar with Warhol's public appearances would have understood this strange display. His public persona was one of distance and detachment. When interviewed, Warhol's statements were devoid of emotion or inflection. Descriptions were abrupt and deliberately dispassionate.<sup>11</sup> His Utah lecture appeared no different. Yet Andy Warhol remained in New York City, while the University of Utah's speaker was in fact, actor Alan Midgette. Warhol selected Midgette as his doppelganger, training him to exhibit the detachment and physical markers of his public identity.<sup>12</sup>

After the lecture, Midgette attended a University sponsored reception dinner. His demeanor at the event was similar to the lecture. According to witnesses, he kept his sunglasses and jacket on while refraining from socializing with other attendees. Some faculty members from the art department, suspected that Midgette was not Warhol. Two weeks later a New York-based photographer arrived in Salt Lake to work with the

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<sup>9</sup> The title of this film remains unknown. It is most likely *24 Hour Film* (1967). The University of Oregon described the illustrated lecture as a compilation of different films. Kronstadt describes the film as "an erotic film that was vivid in the thick, liquid sense of blood. A sleepy, drugged or slightly psychotic broad that looked like Julie Christie clutched her brow and wailed, and chewed her lip, while an Oriental striptease slithered through her "blown" mind. The film merged the "Puff the Magic Dragon" folk element with the blatant raggedness of the psychedelic, and the sophistication of the "intimate" movie. It was sensual in the "peach juice dribbling down the chin" tradition, with the velvet richness of bohemian harpsichords, Hindu wailing, and incensed, dar eastern mysticism."

<sup>10</sup> Sylvia Kronstadt, "Warhol Flops 'Fans' Demand Refund," *Daily Utah Chronicle*, 3, October 1967.

<sup>11</sup> Perhaps the most definitive statement to come from Warhol is "If you want to know all about Andy Warhol, just look at the surface of my paintings and films and me, and there I am. There's nothing behind it." Gretchen Berg, "Andy Warhol: My True Story," *The East Village Other* (1 November 1966). This remark embodies Warhol's career-long refusal to elaborate or provide concrete answers to interviewers' questions. By the mid 1960's Warhol had a reputation as being someone particularly difficult to interview.

<sup>12</sup> Alan Midgette described the origins of his impersonation beginning in (1965) in an interview with Sharon Nichols entitled, "Being Andy Warhol," *Chronogram Magazine*, <http://www.chronogram.com/issue/2007/1/Community+Notebook/Being-Andy-Warhol> (January 2007)

University's Repertory Dance Program. Students showed the photographer photographs of Midgette. His response confirmed the suspicion of the students and faculty. "That's not Warhol" he asserted, "He's too young and too good-looking."<sup>13</sup>

The first article following the lecture was Kronstadt's "Warhol Flops, 'Fans' Demand Refund."<sup>14</sup> Kronstadt's describes the events of the previous night, including a synopsis of the film and student reactions to the lecture. Kronstadt's distaste for Warhol is apparent, as her article is more editorial than objective.<sup>15</sup> A slew of editorials accompanied Kronstadt's article. Nick Snow's "Warhol Puts On," set the tone for editorials that followed.<sup>16</sup> In his dismissal of the lecture, Snow wrote, "Warhol makes no pretenses of being a great lecturer: refreshingly, he makes no pretense of being a great artist with a message to the world...marvelous!" The reportage continued describing the event as a "hoax" or a "fraud."<sup>17</sup> Along with several editorials, the remaining months of 1967 saw three articles devoted to the subject.<sup>18</sup> These sources reiterated the disappointment felt among the student body.

Two days later, the *Chronicle* published a follow-up to Kronstadt's account. In a sloppy misspelling of the artist's name, "Warhal in Character," gives an official statement from the Lectures and Concerts division of the University. The article introduces the

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<sup>13</sup> Sylvia Kronstadt, "Phony Warhol Suspected, Film Reveals Hoax on U," *Daily Utah Chronicle*, 31 January, 1968

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Kronstadt's "style" of reporting was criticized by editorials following her reportage. "Warhol Gets the Can, The Chronicle Mailbox," 4 October 1967, 8.

<sup>16</sup> "Warhol Puts On," *The Daily Utah Chronicle*, 3 October 1967, no. 8, 4.

<sup>17</sup> The first article to use the term was "Andy Warhol: Praise or Damn Him?," *The Daily Utah Chronicle*, 27 September 1967, 2. In total, the word "hoax" was used three times in headlines and dozens of times within the articles themselves. The word quickly became the most recognizable way of referring to the incident.

<sup>18</sup> Editorials: "Warhol in Character," *The Daily Utah Chronicle*, 5 October 1967, no. 10, 1., "Mailbox: Chronicle Blunder," 6 October 1967, no. 11, 3. and "Warhol Lecture not a Fake," 25 October 1967, 2. Articles: "Pop Founder Warhol to Show Cows, Soup," 22 October 1967, no. 7, 1, "Warhol Flips, 'Fans' Demand Refund," 4 October 1967, no. 8, 1-5. and "Warhol Does Lecture," 11 October 1967, no. 14, 1.

director and spokesperson of Lectures and Concerts, Mr. Paul Carcroft, whose insight would shape the *Chronicle*'s reporting. In the article, Carcroft addresses the disappointment in Warhol's lecture, stating, "People may have expected something different, but Warhol was in character."<sup>19</sup> This statement is ironic, as Carcroft is speaking only of the lecture, and not Warhol's identity. Carcroft also reveals that the Lectures and Concerts department booked Warhol through the Boston –based American Program's Bureau (APB), which handled all of the artist's speaking engagements.

Carcroft confirmed that the Bureau paid Warhol \$1,000 for his Utah lecture. In the days following the lecture, the department of Lectures and Concerts received two requests for refunds from ticket holders with reserved seating.<sup>20</sup> In addition, the *Chronicle* reported that a list of names was compiled from "hordes of 'fans' demanding their money back."<sup>21</sup>

A small blurb in the October 27, 1967 issue of the *Chronicle* is the first mention of the possibility of Warhol not being physically present at the University. Citing proof from the American Program's Bureau, the one-paragraph article states, "Relax. The guy in the dark glasses in the gray-blue hair was Andy Warhol. Confirmation of the pop artist's appearance on campus Oct. 2 was received Monday by Paul Carcroft."<sup>22</sup>

Three months later, the *Chronicle* finally accused Warhol of forgery outright. On January 31, 1968, Sylvia Kronstadt once again authored a front-page story on the event, entitled "Phony Warhol Suspected, Film Reveals Hoax on U."<sup>23</sup> The article placed particular emphasis on the \$1000 fee. The issue of money seems to have been an outlet for "duped"

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<sup>19</sup> "Warhol in Character," *The Daily Utah Chronicle*, 5 October 1967, no. 10, 1.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> "Warhol Flops, 'Fans' Demand Refund," 1.

<sup>22</sup> "Warhol Lecture not a Fake," *The Daily Utah Chronicle*, 25 October 1967, 2.

<sup>23</sup> "Warhol Comes in Pairs?," *Daily Utah Chronicle*, 2 February, 1968.

students looking for legal recourse. The article pairs student suspicion with Paul Carcroft's insight as director of the Lecture and Concerts department. As a figure responsible for bringing Warhol to the University, Carcroft worked as liaison between the University of Utah, the American Program's Bureau and Warhol's representatives. Kronstadt's article describes Carcroft's attempt to solve the mystery of Warhol's Utah lecture.

Carcroft began by comparing photographs of Midgette in Utah to documentary films of Warhol. The striking difference in each man's appearance was obvious. Carcroft then took his investigation even further. On a business trip to New York, he arranged a meeting with Warhol through Paul Morrissey. After agreeing to meet, Warhol ignored the appointment completely.

Photographs taken of Midgette at the University became crucial evidence in the *Chronicle's* investigation. While Warhol's manager Paul Morrissey strictly forbade any visual recording devices, student photographer Joe Bauman secretly captured the paper's most coveted image. Bauman's was one of a small group responsible for transporting Midgette from the airport to the University. Bauman snapped a candid shot of Midgette reading the newspaper on the bus. Defying Morrissey's instructions, Bauman snapped a shot of Midgette en route to the University, at the podium and at the reception dinner.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> The following is a transcript of my interview with Joe Bauman, conducted on January 6, 2008:

*Scotti Hill:* Thank you for your time, I read that you and another University student picked up the man you thought was Andy Warhol from the airport. Since Paul Morrissey shot down your request for photographs, your images were taken in secret. Was your decision to take these photographs based on any initial suspicion?

*Joe Bauman:* I didn't suspect anything at that time. I took the photo because I was striking out in the interview department and I was determined to get a photo for the paper.

*S.H.:* How would you describe the lecture?

*J.B.:* I was surprised that the lecture was so poor. I had expected better. I decided Warhol had not prepared adequately and had grabbed a few reels of film to show.



Two days later, in the February 2 edition of the paper, Junior Editor-in-Chief Angelyn Nelson's headline asked, does "Warhol Comes in Pairs?" Including more photographic evidence, the article invited students to enter the debate. Two striking images were placed beneath the headline. The first was a picture of Warhol taken from the December 21-27 issue of New York's *Village Voice*. The second was Joe Bauman's now familiar image of Alan Midgette en route to the University. The chronicle compared two images in order to accentuate Warhol and Midgette's physical dissimilarity. As if the images weren't sufficiently convincing, the photograph's caption explained how, "[Warhol's] prominent cheek bones, a bulbous nose, attached ear lobes and much longer hair indicate the pictures are of two different individuals."<sup>25</sup>

This article is the first to utilize visual evidence in an attempt to unmask the event. While previous accounts were more journalistically informative, Nelson's account appeared taxonomical, allowing the facial features of each man reveal their difference. In considering the *Chronicle's* visual evidence, readers were invited to make judgments based on each man's *attractiveness*. As a way of debasing Warhol, the attractiveness of Midgette was emphasized. Ironically, this disparity in physical appearance wasn't immediately recognized at the lecture.<sup>26</sup>

This article also recounted the dialogue between the University of Utah and the other colleges on the tour. The correspondence between Utah and the University of Oregon was given particular attention. The *Chronicle* wrote to Oregon's student newspaper *The Emerald* to inquire as to whether they'd had similar suspicions. Utah staff writers directed their inquiries to Chris Hougam, entertainment editor for the *Emerald*.

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<sup>26</sup> "Warhol Comes in Pairs?" *The Daily Utah Chronicle*, 2 February 1968, no. 74, 1.

Their questions attempted to measure student reaction at each lecture. Israel asked Hougam: “At the University, we’ve had quite a question whether Andy Warhol actually came or not. Has there been any question of the same nature there?” To which Hougam replied, “There hasn’t been too much question as to that, no. We had a number of photographs released to us from a number of channels before his arrival so that we could identify him assuming they did show up. When he did appear, he looked exactly like he did in his picture.” Israel pushed further, asking, “Did his pictures match?” Hougam confirmed, “yes, they did.” Hougam’s reply baffled those immersed in the Utah investigation.<sup>27</sup>

While Oregonians shared Utah’s disappointment in the lecture, attendees never questioned Warhol’s identity. Hougam’s testimony indicates an even greater level of premeditation than the Utah lecture. The “photographs released from a number of channels” implies that Warhol’s representatives distributed pictures of Midgette-as-Warhol before his scheduled lecture.

A week later, on Thursday, February 8, Kay Israel and Angelyn Nelson confirmed the fraud in their front-page article, “Hoax Confirmed!”<sup>28</sup> The article stated that early Thursday morning, Paul Carcroft received confirmation from the American Program’s Bureau. Paul Morrissey was finally willing to discuss the event, and confirmed Alan Midgette’s presence to the APB directly. With Morrissey’s admission, the *Chronicle* reached out to speak with him directly. The article contained new information transcribed from Kay Israel’s exclusive interview with Morrissey. From this interaction, a motive emerged. When Israel asks, “Was there any reason why you did it?” Morrissey replies:

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> “Warhol Hoax Confirmed!,” *Daily Utah Chronicle*, 8 February, 1968, 1.

Andy Warhol thought that his substitute would be better for public consumption. Like a person that was younger and better looking and better spoken. He used the medium of the lecture circuit you might say, in an original way. We thought that the creative person was a better thing for the stage and appearances, but it did seem like the people really didn't care what they were seeing as long as they thought they were seeing the real thing. We know that you knew very quickly after.<sup>29</sup>

Morrissey's response exposes an interesting social critique. The lecture is equated to an artistic medium, similar to the artist's canvas. As a medium, the lecture circuit validates society's obsession with celebrity. In this way, attendees commodify the artist to suit their desires. Yet the conceptualism of Warhol's action was not widely appreciated by his University audience. Rejecting an aesthetic interpretation of the event, Utah viewed Morrissey's explanation as dismissive.

Accentuating this sentiment was the money funding the lectures. By paying for an absentee artist, the University thought of themselves as victims of a swindle. The investigation compiled multiple opinions for nearly six months. One person glaringly absent from the discussion was Warhol himself. After Morrissey's confirmation, Warhol finally issued a statement justifying the incident. To Warhol, the event was justified, "Because I don't really have that much to say, he was better than I am. He was what people expected. They liked him better than they would have me because I have been going on tours since then, because they would rather have someone like that than me."<sup>30</sup> Warhol's detached tone did little to alleviate Utah's anger. In reality, these statements accentuated their disdain.

Aside from the remaining letters to the editor, the *Chronicle's* final article on the subject, "Buy Tomato Soup: What to Do with 'Warhol's' Pay?," was again co-authored

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

by Kay Israel and Angelyn Nelson.<sup>31</sup> As the closing chapter on a long and tumultuous narrative, this article looked to the future. Israel and Nelson speculated on Warhol's prospective relations with Utah and the possibility of legal action for his violation of contract. The predominant concern once again was the money lost on the transaction. In the end, the University did not demand a refund or file a legal suit against Warhol.<sup>32</sup>

Both Warhol's camp and representatives from the other colleges recognized the University of Utah's role in uncovering his action.<sup>33</sup> The *Chronicle's* coverage supersedes any other publication or biographical text on Warhol. Though the student newspaper monopolized local coverage, Utah's largest paper, *The Salt Lake Tribune* devoted four articles to the event. The *Tribune* ran two articles in 1967 anticipating the lecture. On Thursday, February 8, the *Tribune* ran two additional articles, "Andy Warhol Was the Man Who Was 'Not' there" and "3 Other Schools Feel the Sting of the Warhol who Wasn't."<sup>34</sup> These short entries are the *Tribune's* only mention the event, and simply restate the information compiled by the *Chronicle*.

The "fake Andy Warhol lecture" remained part of University lore for decades following the event. Utah historian Will South's book *Andy Warhol Slept Here? Famous and Infamous Visitors to Utah* (1998) revisited the event twenty years after its occurrence. The book provides a brief account of the event as reported by the *Salt Lake Tribune*, but neglects the *Chronicle's* specific details. Likewise, the Utah Museum of Fine Arts' 2007-08 exhibit *Andy Warhol's Dream America: Screenprints from the*

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<sup>31</sup> "Buy Tomato Soup: What to Do with 'Warhol's' Pay?," *The Daily Utah Chronicle*, 9 February 1968, no. 79, 1.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> "Warhol Hoax Confirmed!," *The Daily Utah Chronicle*, 8 February 1968, no. 78, 1, 8.

<sup>34</sup> "3 Other Schools Feel Sting of Warhol Who Wasn't.," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 8 February 1968, 2B. and "Andy Warhol Was Man Who Was 'Not' There," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 8 February 1968, 2B.

*Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Family Foundation*, exposed a new generation of Utahns to Warhol's non-visit. A short section of the exhibition described Midgette's appearance, including text panels, Joe Bauman's images and facsimile flyers.

Midgette's impersonation of Warhol on the college campus tour is seldom mentioned within Warhol literature. When discussed, the event is referenced anecdotally, and without detail. Warhol's 'outsourcing' is commonly seen as one manifestation of his ambivalent persona. Scholars have yet to scrutinize Morrissey's explanation of the event as conceptual experimentation. Nor have Warhol scholars investigated the role of performance deeply embedded in Midgette's impersonation. Warhol's action deserves greater attention than the humor and ambivalence often assigned to it.

As one of the few scholars recognizing this discourse, biographer Wayne Koestenbaum sees the event as a continuation of Warhol's superficial aesthetic. To Koestenbaum, Warhol's substituted body reflects his obsession with the ideal. He reads the incident erotically by stating,

Today we might think Warhol lazy or dishonest for inserting someone else's body in place of his own, and yet this self-erasure harmonizes with Andy's career-long conduct; forging a more attractive body was among his art's highest purposes. Warhol savored the sexual dimensions of substitutions: casting Allen Midgette's body in the Andy role, and watching the replacement occur was an erotic act.<sup>35</sup>

Midgette is just another example of Warhol's desire for public recognition. Idealized bodies are more apt for what Morrissey labels, "public consumption." Fame is contingent on the bodily expression of beauty.

As an actor and artist, Alan Midgette has frequently been associated with Warhol. While initially reluctant about this association, Midgette has since embraced the

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<sup>35</sup> Wayne Koestenbaum, *Andy Warhol*, (New York: Penguin Lives, 2001), 131.

connection. Decades later, Midgette explained how his impersonation began. Midgette met Warhol in 1965, at which point the two began an artistic correspondence. As a young actor, Midgette was not initially interested in starring in Warhol's films. In early 1967, Warhol asked Midgette to impersonate him for a college lecture in Rochester, New York. This spontaneous event was the catalyst for the upcoming tour. To resemble Warhol, Midgette applied white face makeup, a grey wig and donned Warhol's signature leather jacket and sunglasses. With the guidance of Paul Morrissey, Midgette conducted the first of his illustrated lectures. He described the event, saying,

I'd never seen this movie that I was supposed to have made and was now going to talk about. The movie was called...I forget...it was a very stupid movie. So, the movie ends and I go to the podium for a question-and-answer session. The first question was, 'Mr. Warhol, are you gay?' And I said, no. And the whole place was silent. Then somebody said, 'Why do you wear so much makeup?' And I said, 'Oh, I never think about it.' And it went on kinda like that. One student stood up and said, 'Mr. Warhol, when I saw that movie I thought it was a piece of shit, but after hearing you talk about it, I think it's great.'<sup>36</sup>

Midgette's account describes how Warhol and Morrissey relished the Rochester forgery, which inspired the idea for future lectures. Since the lecture tour, Midgette has made a career out of imitating Warhol. At present, his impersonations have taken him from the streets of New York to galleries and nightclubs.

Midgette is just one example of Warhol's fondness for creating replicas. Of his many public guises, perhaps the strangest is the Andy Warhol robot. Warhol came to the idea for a mechanical double after the college lectures, and outlined his design in the book, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again)*. The robot would perform as Warhol in a play entitled, "Andy Warhol: A No Man Show." This title is a humorous spin on Warhol's penchant for absence. Animator Alvaro Villa designed the

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<sup>36</sup> Sharon Nichols, "Being Andy Warhol," *Chronogram Magazine*, <http://www.chronogram.com/issue/2007/1/Community+Notebook/Being-Andy-Warhol> (January 2007)

robot, yet plans to complete it were scrapped following Warhol's death in 1987.<sup>37</sup>

Warhol's gradual self-obliteration is apparent in the switch from body double to mechanical automaton.

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<sup>37</sup> The Andy Warhol robot came at an estimated cost of \$400,000, equipped with 54 bodily movements and preprogrammed commands. Plan for this invention was outlined in Andy Warhol's, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol: from A to B and Back Again* (New York: Harcourt, 1977).

## CHAPTER 2

### WARHOL'S UTAH LECTURE AS PERFORMANCE AND SELF-PORAITURE

“You know, people want to see you.  
Your looks are responsible for a certain part of your fame, they feed the imagination.”  
Ivan Karp to Andy Warhol<sup>38</sup>

This chapter questions the prevailing interpretation of Warhol's Utah lecture. Instead of seeing his non presence as a “fraud” or “hoax,” performance and self-portraiture serve as theoretical methods of rethinking Alan Midgette's enactment of Warhol. As separate yet interrelated practices, performance and self-portraiture each serve as critical themes within much of Warhol's work.

Analyzing the visual material accompanying Warhol's Utah lecture supports a critical reading of the event. Joe Bauman's “secret” photograph becomes the *Chronicle's* evidence of forgery, a symbol of wrongdoing. Yet Bauman's photographs can serve not only to reveal the “hoax,” as happened in the various investigations, but also support an interpretation of the Utah event as performance and self-portraiture.

Joe Bauman's first image of Midgette dressed as Warhol [Figure 1] emphasizes his role as idealized substitute. The photograph depicts Midgette with cropped hair and

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<sup>38</sup> Andy Warhol and Pat Hackett, *Popism: The Warhol '60s* (New York: Mariner Books, 1980) 7.



sunglasses, reading a newspaper against a large window. The bright outdoor light accentuates Midgette's rigid profile. His large sunglasses capture the reflection of the white newspaper. Contrasting with the horizontal window frame, Midgette's body cuts diagonally through the composition. Gazing at his left side, Bauman presents his subject from the shoulders up. Bauman captures Midgette in what appears to viewers as an ephemeral, private moment of personal reflection. His movements emphasize the act of reading and taking personal time to reflect while commuting from place to place. In this image, the viewer becomes a voyeur to Midgette's daily ritual. The fact that Bauman was strictly forbidden to take any photographs of Midgette accentuates the supposed "authenticity" of the captured moment. Although this photograph is not staged in the traditional sense, the resulting image reveals Midgette's performance. That is, in the delicacies of his actions and gestures, the image captures his *lived* experience as Warhol.

The *Chronicle's* photographs of Midgette emphasize this disguised presence. Of the many articles devoted to the lecture, the same few images of Midgette-as-Warhol are used. With one exception, the images show Midgette in profile, turning away from the camera. His lack of direct confrontation maintains his secrecy and heightens his mystery. While concealing his true identity, Midgette perhaps unconsciously replicates Warhol's actual behavior.

Photography was the key tool in authenticating or debunking Warhol's performance. Because Warhol challenged the audience's ability to glorify his presence, documentation certifies the artist's bodily existence. Warhol's refusal to glorify the self displaces the site of attention. As a fetishized object, the photograph stands in for the artist's missing body. This reinforces another artistic myth, which posits photography as

“truthful” medium.<sup>39</sup> This misconception allows photography to work as *evidence* in Warhol’s fraud. In the *Chronicle*’s front-page story from Friday, February 2, 1968, Editor-in-Chief Angelyn Nelson emphasized the importance of photography in her story, “Warhol Comes in Pairs?” The article described how student investigators compared photographs of Midgette (in Warhol’s guise) and Warhol, to uncover the fraud:

Andy Warhol, the Campbell’s Soup man whose appearance at the University on Oct. 2 created controversy, first the description of the person who appeared the same month at the University of Oregon, but a picture taken in New York in December doesn’t match a picture taken during his stay in Salt Lake. The facial features in the Oct. 3 issues of the *Chronicle* are different from the features shown in a December 21-27 issue of the *Village Voice*, a New York Greenwich Village newspaper. Prominent cheekbones, a bulbous nose, attached ear lobes, and much longer hair indicate the pictures are of two different individuals.<sup>40</sup>

This statement attests to the didactic and taxonomical usage of photography. Photographs of Warhol *prove* his presence or absence.

Photographs taken of Midgette as Warhol reinforce the uncertainty of the medium. A small photograph of Midgette’s profile [Figure 2] accompanied the front cover of the January 31, 1968 *Chronicle* beside an article entitled, “Phony Warhol Suspected: Film Reveals Hoax on U.”<sup>41</sup> His head is turned down and he wears dark sunglasses and a black turtleneck. His salt and pepper hair blurs into the haziness of the background. The stark blackness of his sunglasses and shirt are the only areas of contrast in the otherwise fuzzy image. In this case, the medium of photography heightens the disguise rather than revealing truth.

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<sup>39</sup> Roland Barthes examines the role of photographic technology in *Camera Lucida* (New York: Hill and Wang Publishing, 1981). His examination has since become a landmark analysis of how photography renders “truth” subjective.

<sup>40</sup> “Warhol Comes in Pairs?,” *The Daily Utah Chronicle*, 2 February 1968, no. 74, 1.

<sup>41</sup> “Phony Warhol Suspected: Film Reveals Hoax on U,” *The Daily Utah Chronicle*, 31 January 1968, no. 72, 1.

The photograph used in the later “Hoax Confirmed”[Figure 3] presents Midgette straightforwardly. In harsh black and white silhouettes, Midgette’s face appears blocky and abstracted. This photograph was compared with an image of the real Warhol in order to prove “guilt.” In this case, the medium is used as a method of distinction rather than concealment.

### **Performance: The Dualism of Presence and Absence**

The Utah lecture highlights a dialogue across Warhol’s art between presence and absence. As a conceptual occurrence, this event is best described through the realm of performance. The physical signifiers specific to Warhol are now assigned to Midgette, as a way to both convince and deceive. As a copy of the original, Midgette’s exterior physically replicates Warhol. His mimicking of Warhol’s dress, hair, and verbal cadence enact the deception. Performance therefore, renders the artist’s identity physical through re-creation.

While few scholars recognize this event as part of Warhol’s body of work, even fewer see it as a performance. I will extend the interpretation of Warhol’s Utah lecture by explaining how performance is Warhol’s *medium* for self-portraiture. His use of a duplicate body evidences his continual interest in disguise and surface. Such concepts integral to Warhol’s performance are also aligned within the artist’s other mediums of painting, film, and sculpture.

In *Body Art: Performing the Subject*, Amelia Jones reads performance art as a reaction against the artist’s traditional role.. To Jones, body art coincides with a psychosocial dialogue positing the *self* as performative. The artist’s desire to know

himself is demonstrated by his projection *onto* the other. This notion underscores Warhol's use of an alternate body as a site for self-reflection. Jones refers to this outsourcing as aesthetic narcissism. Narcissism, in conjunction with performance displays the intrinsic body by displaying what Jones calls the "internal structures of identification and desire."<sup>42</sup> Body art scholar Lea Vergine similarly interprets performance as a psychological attempt to manage the self. In *Body Art and Performance: The Body as Language* she states:

Projection expels an internal menace that has been created by the pressure of an intolerable impulse and thus it is transformed into an external menace that can be more easily handled. The artist shifts their problem from the subject to the object, or from the inside to the outside.<sup>43</sup>

This excerpt explains the nature of Warhol's projection. His bodily displacement is a way of replicating himself in a more manageable way. . This manipulation enables him to *control* his image.<sup>44</sup>

For Warhol, bodily presence displays his artistic persona. At first glance, Warhol's artistic identity appears non-existent. It exudes nothing but a lack of discernibility or originality. His external body/self is generic and reproducible: silver hair, sunglasses and colorless attire. This identity is an active construction of indifference. The idea of "constructed ambivalence," the willing manipulation of something indecisive, presents an obvious paradox. This opposition is inherent within Warhol's entire body of work. While explicitly superficial, his paintings read as social satire of the consumer fetish. His films such as *Empire* (1964) and *Sleep* (1963) are

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<sup>42</sup> Amelia Jones, *Body Art Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 46.

<sup>43</sup> Lea Vergine, *Body Art and Performance: the Body as Language* (Milan: Skira Editore, 2007)

<sup>44</sup> Jones extends this discussion to Warhol specifically. She states that Warhol's performative body, "projected an ambiguous subjectivity whose most salient aspect seemed to be its emptiness; its dependence on the other to confirm its meaning." 69.

monotonous and exhaustive in length but expose a delicate human psychology. His identity is similar, replacing personality with banality.

Instead of being easily understandable, the body is intrinsically dynamic and complicated. The body is not always synonymous with the self. For Warhol, surface *is* meaning. Yet, regarding idealization, Warhol chose Midgette as a more appealing version of himself. When asked why he sent Midgette, Warhol's manager Paul Morrissey reiterated this sentiment to staff reporter Angelyn Nelson for *The Daily Utah Chronicle*, in an article entitled "Hoax Confirmed!" "Andy Warhol," explained Morrissey, "thought that his substitute would be better for public consumption. Like a person that was younger and better looking and better spoken. We thought that the creative person was a better thing for the stage and appearances."<sup>45</sup>

Midgette's ability to deceive is based on replicating Warhol's appearance rather than his insight. As a more attractive version of the artist, Midgette is the new Warhol, the version best equipped for public interaction. Certainly, Warhol's idealized portrait coincides with his glamorous silkscreen subjects. Warhol acknowledges that beauty sells, and his self-image is no different.

With Midgette as his idealized doppelganger, Warhol sells his veneer, a performance of himself, as his art. Idealization is a complicated term for Warhol. If Midgette is his ideal, he is only in the physical sense. There is nothing idealized about Midgette's lecture. For audience members of the Utah lecture, the ideal would be an engaged and revelatory artist. Warhol then recognizes the ideal as an artifice. Despite Midgette's appearance, his gestures are synonymous to Warhol's. This validates Warhol's instructions to Midgette before the lecture tour. Maintaining the role of the

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<sup>45</sup> "Warhol Hoax Confirmed!," *Daily Utah Chronicle*, 8 February, 1968.

impartial, disconnected Warhol was perhaps the most authentic aspect of Midgette's deception.

Warhol's duplicate body works as an interpretive vessel that replaces the static art object. As such, his body becomes a receptacle for the desires of viewers. His vacancy offers an ideal vessel for projection. This blank exterior allows for an easily reproducible bodily facsimile. By outsourcing himself, Warhol disrupts the ability to locate the subject.<sup>46</sup> As one looks to the artist's body for signals of authority and insight, one is met with resistance. The body does not reassure, but blocks. Looking to Warhol's body to understand him is as artificial as looking to his silkscreened canvases. In fact, one of Warhol's most emphatic statements relates to his lack of depth: "If you want to know all about Andy Warhol, just look at the surface of my paintings and films and me, and there I am. There's nothing behind it."<sup>47</sup> This statement highlights Warhol's unwillingness to interact with viewers. The relationship between viewer and art-object is not contaminated by the artist's opinion.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> In "The Ontology of Performance: Representation without Reproduction," Peggy Phelan continues this discourse by outlining the qualities of performance as medium. She asserts that the ephemerality of performance resists documentation and commodification. This specificity forces viewers to acknowledge a complicated dynamic between absence and presence. body tries to unify fragmentation and the inevitable disintegration of the object. The body serves as a metaphor for the complexities of the self, as Phelan states: "In performance, the body is metonymic of self, of character, of voice, of presence." This statement emphasizes how the artist's body stands in for and becomes the subject. Midgette's performance defies Phelan's notion of resistance, instead showing the artist's self as artifice and consumer product.

<sup>47</sup> Gretchen Berg, "Andy Warhol: My True Story," *The East Village Other* (1 November 1966).

<sup>48</sup> Phelan further explains this dynamic by stating: "performance uses the performer's body to pose a question about the inability to secure the relation between subjectivity and the body per se; performance uses the body to frame the lack of being promised by and through the body--that which cannot appear without a supplement; performance marks the body itself as a loss; for the spectator the performance spectacle is itself a projection of the scenario in which her own desire takes place." In other words, performance highlights a disparity between what is expected and what is received. The body as ultimate site for contemplation inevitably fails to live up to its promise, The body frames the lack of cohesion longed for by viewers. This applies to the promised body of Warhol at the University of Utah. The artist's presence is a tool used to convince. Attendees came away from the lecture with the same knowledge of Warhol as they had going in. In this case, the artist's body does not direct perception. The body continually negates its necessity. Midgette's abrupt and misleading behavior

Warhol's bodily presence emphasizes the generic, anti-personal celebrity he performed on a continual basis. Midgette's mannequin body functions as an extension of Warhol's persona. As a way of marketing himself, Warhol uses his replica to test his public consumption. Midgette's body enacts the fame Warhol ardently desired. His presence allows Warhol to live vicariously through an idealized alter ego.

To Warhol, private and public appear synonymous. Here, a stylistic similarity exists between his performance and his silkscreens. In her article, "Andy Warhol: the Public Star and the Private Self," Cecile Whiting explains the significance of surface in Warhol's silkscreened portraits.<sup>49</sup>

By analyzing Warhol's portraits of Marilyn Monroe and Liz Taylor, Whiting points to the silkscreen technique as a process of disassociation. The sloppy overlay of neon colors atop a pristine black and white image evokes masking. The garishly bright masks overlay the distinctiveness of the human face. Large planes of color eclipse personality. However, masking implies something hidden beneath. Warhol's body negates this; the mask *is* the self.<sup>50</sup> Whiting's thesis posits silkscreens as the antithesis of the private and emotional. Contrary to traditional portraiture, Warhol's portraits do not *reveal* the subject, but rather the process of image reproduction itself. We can apply Whiting's assessments to Warhol's performance. His exterior deconstructs the authorial gesture rampant in Warhol's artistic predecessors. This non-self is certainly a reaction against the hyper-masculine, grand individualism of the Abstract Expressionists. Within

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makes one question the intent of his presence. His body doubly reflects Warhol's presence and absence, a contradiction, which is in fact an accurate representation of Warhol's embodied self.

<sup>49</sup> Cecile. Whiting, "Andy Warhol, the Public Star and the Private Self," *Oxford Art Journal* 10, no. 2, (1987): 56-75.

<sup>50</sup> Whiting finds the term 'portrait' problematic because it implies that the work of art reveals the aura of the sitter. Warhol's portraits fit into this category stylistically rather than contextually.

this tradition, the artist's canvas is a projection of his soul, an object that captures the psyche. Warhol reverses this trope. To him, over-emphasizing authorship depletes his market potential.<sup>51</sup>

By hiring an actor to impersonate himself, Warhol undermines his role as authentic artist. In order to emphasize his blankness, his presence is not necessary. Neither Warhol nor Midgette provide any aesthetic 'truth' to lecture attendees. Warhol mocks both the eager public and the authoritative artist archetype simultaneously.

### **Self-Portraiture: the Aesthetic of Repetition**

Within the genre of self-portraiture, Warhol creates Midgette in his guise in a manner similar to the iconic self-depictions associated with many master artists. Artists often idealize their own image. A notable example is Albrecht Durer's *Self Portrait in a Fur-Collared Robe* (1500), which shows the intensity of a young master. Durer's rapturous attention to detail is captured in the face of the artist. In the painting, Durer frames himself from the chest up, as he divides the composition in half with his powerful presence. Durer's body aligns with the Renaissance triangle of geometric clarity. To accentuate himself as subject, Durer's form is painted against a black background. This lack of composition is dramatic when paired with Durer's bright face. He confronts the viewer directly, exhibiting a calm, yet forceful gaze. Durer's long, curly hair accompanies his serious expression. Great attention is given to the way light shines upon the right side of Durer's form. Additionally, Durer wears a brown, fur-collared robe, held together delicately by his right hand. Durer's delicate treatment of the hand mimics the gesture of Christ. In this work, Durer uses Christian iconography to elicit a personal

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<sup>51</sup> Cecile Whiting, "Andy Warhol: the Public Star and the Private Self," 60.



comparison. The carefully constructed exterior gives cues suggesting the genius inside. Durer's painstaking attention to each detail of his face shows his devotion to artistic craft and his commitment to the creation of a "master artist" persona. Warhol's self-portrait contests this notion of the artist body as vessel of hidden insight. By deploying Midgette's body, Warhol relishes in misidentification.

Repetition is the device that structures Warhol's self-portraiture. In Freudian psychology, the repetition compulsion is a response to trauma.<sup>52</sup> Repetition can be interpreted both, as an action that unites or divides the subject. In his self-portraits, Warhol enacts each polarity. Predominantly, Warhol uses repetition to downgrade the power of the single image. While for Warhol, any and all subjects are suitable for repetition, nothing is specific. His replication of the self implies that the artist's body is no longer sacred or revelatory but repeatable.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Sigmund Freud describes repetition as a pragmatic human action that attempts to manage unconscious disturbances. To Freud, repetition is a way to 'loosen' repressed material, he states that "the compulsion to repeat recalls from the past experiences which include no possibility of pleasure, and which can never, even long ago, have brought satisfaction even to instinctual impulses which have since been repressed," in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Vol. XVII. (London: Vintage, 2001), 20.

<sup>53</sup> Walter Benjamin's 1936 foundational essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproducibility," relates to Warhol's use of replication. Benjamin's essay warns of the harmful alteration of art that he feels is implicit in technological reproduction. His trepidation concerns repetition's depletion of an artwork's "aura." To Benjamin, aurality is contingent to the sentiments of its creation: ritual, creativity and specificity. With this definition in place, the remainder of his essay explains how replication eliminates authenticity. This alignment with what Benjamin deems "the apparatus" creates alienation among citizens. Interestingly, Benjamin defines the technological apparatus as a mirror, which reflects the fears and desires of society. The technological apparatus makes human exertion minimal, replacing individuality with the generic. With repetition, the context and ritual of the art object are eliminated. Art objects, like the citizens of modernity, are plucked from comfort and thrown into unfamiliarity. Replication thus kills creativity and negates the concept of artistic ingenuity. Benjamin's belief that technological intrusion interferes with the sacred, presents interesting connections to Warhol's performance. Warhol's self-portrait rejects Walter Benjamin's notion of the aura. His work takes the mechanical and transforms it into the elite. With silkscreens, he blends the technological product, (the photograph) with the artistic gesture (paint and canvas). Negating the social construction of 'authenticity' Warhol combines high and low art forms. Replicating his body is another method of rejecting authenticity. For Warhol, replicating the self is no different than replicating the image. Benjamin's emphasis on context, genius and creativity then seem nostalgic in the modern age. Rather than explaining the self, Warhol emphasizes Midgette as his method of reproduction. In other words, he willfully encourages the replica. Replication conjures opposite reactions for Warhol and Benjamin, with the former inviting this process of disassociation, and the latter

The act of replication is inherent to self-portraiture. Warhol's replication extends outside the realm of art and into the public and commercial spheres. By performing, Warhol's self becomes a brand name, which he *sells*. His artworks blur the distinction between representation and reality, often standing in for real commercial products, such as Brillo Soap Pads and Campbell Soup. Warhol replicates the packaging of products and re-appropriates them in an artistic context. This act emphasizes his interest in replication and distribution over content.

The aesthetic of repetition so integral to Warhol's artwork sheds light on self-portraiture. Within the genre, the replicative body enables him to avoid direct confrontation. Midge becomes the receptacle for scrutiny, adoration and confusion. The construction of indifference is showcased by Warhol's image. Bradford R. Collins, editor of *The Critical Response to Andy Warhol*, psychologically aligns repetition with Warhol's machine fetish, stating that:

[He] preferred to deal with people through the medium of some mechanical device, such as a telephone or a camera. Eventually he transferred his affection to such instruments, because they could not hurt him. Warhol chose the serial device because he knew that 'the more you look at the same exact thing, the more meaning goes away, and the better and emptier you feel.'<sup>54</sup>

Collins' statement gives insight into the cathartic capabilities of repetition. By continuously reproducing his images, Warhol is able to avoid their content. This concept occurs most prominently in his *Death and Disaster* series (1962-64), in which violent imagery becomes neutral with replication. Warhol's disassociation with the lecture controversy is consistent with his obsession with repetition. Replication outsources and

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dreading the distance such concept evokes. Warhol's celebration of replication negates the emotion of Benjamin's assessment. Technology presents itself to Warhol as a tool of willing alienation. He ardently adopts the mechanical appropriation that Benjamin opposes.

<sup>54</sup> Alan R. Pratt, *The Critical Response to Andy Warhol* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1997), 179.

avoids the source of the conflict. This all ties back to his interest in surface. Society's construction of beauty was a source of fascination for Warhol, emphasized by sending Midgette in his place. As a more beautiful version of himself, Midgette becomes Warhol's ideal self-portrait. Collins strengthens this notion by asserting:

Warhol cherished the beauty of Hollywood stars not in spite of its being fabricated but because it was so. The issue of beauty, so problematic for Warhol, was thereby removed to a safe realm outside reality... Warhol transformed ideal beauty into a fiction. He could continue to embrace the pleasant illusion of the screen without being hurt by it.<sup>55</sup>

For Warhol, reproducibility is more than just an aesthetic; it works as psychological shield. Warhol's performance emphasized his voyeurism. By sending a body double, Warhol engages in the disassociation that marks his artistic practice.

### **The Utah Performance in the Context of Warhol's Other Self-Portraits**

Throughout his career, Warhol used self-portraits to express his many guises. His inclination to declare, repeat, and conceal is apparent in his Utah performance and throughout his catalog of self-portraits. Warhol's self-portraits display his preoccupation for concealment and repetition. These works often show him as only partially present. His identity is hidden beneath a cloak of paint, shadow and illusion. The photographs taken of Midgette appear similar. In the *Chronicle's* photographs, the image seem to overshadow Midgette as subject.<sup>56</sup> For Warhol, concealment extends beyond the framed image to become a state of being. Mimicking the coy actions of Warhol's public persona was an essential element of Midgette's deception. Turning to self-portraits from various

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<sup>55</sup> Collins, Bradford. "The Metaphysical Nose Job: the Remaking of Warhola 1960-1968," *Arts Magazine* (February 1988), 182.

<sup>56</sup> Note that the *Chronicle* photographers don't share the same intentionality as Warhol as artist. Comparing the two elucidates the lived experience of masking rather than just the visual aesthetic.

stages in Warhol's career, I explain how these themes mark a history of performed identity. This clarifies Warhol's evasive self as subject, providing insight into his performative self-portrait. Of the many self-portraits embodying replication, the following three deserve closer analysis: *The Photo Booth Series* (1963), *Set of Six Portraits* (1967) and *Strangulation Series* (1978). These self-portraits reveal how Warhol's seriality simultaneously evokes dislocation and declaration.

Commissioned in 1963 by the collector Florence Baron, Warhol's *Photo Booth Series* (gelatin silver prints, 7 ¾ x 1 7/16 in each, Metropolitan Museum of Art) are among his earliest self-portraits. Totaling eight images, the series exists as two vertical registers of four snapshots. Highly stylized and carefully posed—despite the spontaneity implied by its title—the shots mimic a reel of film. Warhol's sunglasses and trench coat resemble the protagonist in a detective film. This film-noir archetype displays Warhol's desire for stardom, fame and notoriety. In the *Photo Booth Series*, we see Warhol the star eagerly posing for the camera. The photo booth stands in for both the mirror and the eye of the camera operator. At his creative peek, Warhol poses as if hounded by the paparazzi. For the lecture tour, Midgette's costuming closely resembles Warhol's style within this series. In conjunction with this series, Midgette's impersonation reads as if performing Warhol's character in a film. Warhol's fame in 1963 leads to Midgette starring as him in the lecture circuit (metaphorically, a Hollywood picture).

The *Photo Booth Series* foregrounds Warhol's obsession with fame. He appears confident and readily absorbable in celebrity culture. His carefully articulated persona of surface and neutrality has yet to be perfected. Rather than dislocation, repetition in these images implies confidence. The viewer is visually assaulted by Warhol's various poses.

The enactment of socially recognizable gestures marks Warhol's powerful presence. By *posing* within the conventions of pop culture, Warhol merges identity and image.

Similarly, Warhol's painting *Set of Six Portraits* (oil and silkscreen ink on canvas, 45 in. x 67 ½ in. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1967) displays two horizontal registers composed of duplicates of the same image.<sup>57</sup> In the individual square panel, Warhol's head fills the entire frame. With one hand pressed to his mouth, Warhol looks as if he has just asked his viewers a question. The entire right side of his face is covered in shadow, creating a composition of opposing light and dark. The hand pressed against his mouth creates an additional barrier between Warhol's face and the viewer's gaze. The mysterious façade constructed from red, blue and green are strengthened with repetition. These devices both distance viewers and engage their inquiry. By replicating this image in various colors, Warhol intensifies the invitation.

The *Strangulation Series* (acrylic and silkscreen ink on canvas, 40.6 x 33 cm each, Collection of Anthony d'Offay, 1978) also suggests Warhol's psychological reaction to mortality and violence. Like the *Death and Disaster Series* (1962-64), The *Strangulation Series* replicates the macabre, now with Warhol as the victim of violence. The image shows him screaming as a hand clasps around his neck. His reaction is both theatrical and jarring. His mouth gapes wide, in a futile effort for lifesaving breath. The hand appears from the right side of the frame as a ghostly fragment. This disembodied hand implies the abstract, yet constant threat of death of which consumed the artist. Warhol certainly felt that death could come at any moment, cementing this sentiment in numerous subjects. For Warhol, the fear of death allegorizes the loss of fame. This

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<sup>57</sup> Worth noting is how Warhol names his self-portraits. Many of these works are described as "series." The aforementioned portraits, including *Drag* and *Photobooth* are compilations of individual images. *Set of Six Portraits* and *Strangulation Series* however, are paintings of multiple images.

sentiment implies an alternative motive for Warhol's Utah performance. By outsourcing his body, Warhol is able to ensure against his own demise. Historically, the artist's self-image enables him to live on through his creation. For Warhol, the mortality of his own body is combated by the distribution of his image.

The work contains two registers of six repeated images. One image is flipped upside down as a metaphor of Warhol's corpse subsumed beneath ground. The colors intensify the stark subject matter. Black, red and grey create a foreboding atmosphere of impending death. The work's mimicry of the silkscreen technique implies a gradual elimination of contours, a deration of the original to the point of dissolve. The image, like the body, will gradually cease to exist.

In the *Strangulation Series*, like the earlier *Photo Booth Series*, Warhol performs for the gaze of the viewer. Both series use replication stylistically in a way that resembles the film reel. In fact, the repeated image in the strangulation images looks like a promotional still for a B-grade horror film, which teases the audiences to the disturbances awaiting them. Warhol's seriality is inspired by the image production of popular culture. By mimicking the intriguing facets of the horror genre, Warhol performs the role of contemporary cinema protagonist.

In only a few examples do Warhol's self-portraits display his unconcealed self. Ranging from confident to vulnerable, these portraits are infrequent among his self-depictions. Two vastly different self-portraits evoke this concept: one created in his most formative decade (1964) and one at the very end of it (1986). Each exposes Warhol's performed identity at various life stages, first as a confident youth and then as a matured celebrity. Warhol's *Self-Portrait* (1964) shows a strong young artist indulging in his

newfound fame. The second work, a set of Polaroid photographs entitled *The Fright Wig Series*, shows an artist ambivalent to recognition. In this work, attention confines rather than strengthens his presence.

*Self-Portrait* (acrylic, silver paint and silkscreen ink on canvas, 50.8 x 41 cm. The Andy Warhol Museum, 1964) sharply contrasts to his other self-depictions. The acrylic painting is an emphatic declaration of presence. Warhol borrows from the tradition of Roman bust sculpture by presenting himself from the shoulders up. Warhol's body is placed in front of a bright red background with his tight black shirt, peach skin and silver hair all serving as contrasting color planes. His posture demands recognition. With broad shoulders, Warhol's forward gaze directly confronts the viewer. His stare reads as a mixture between celebrity and criminal. This image reminds of the single photograph of Midgette facing the camera directly.<sup>58</sup> In each, the framing assaults the figure as a guilty subject. Warhol expresses an aura of brevity by painting himself with his head turned upward and his face emotionally vacant. As a serious confrontation, his confidence reads like a mug shot.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> 'Hoax Confirmed!,' *Daily Utah Chronicle*, 8 February 1968.

<sup>59</sup> As of late, this work has been pulled into public controversy. *Self-Portrait* (1964) is one in a series of 12 canvases that the Andy Warhol Foundation has deemed "inauthentic". This categorization ignited a series of lawsuits filed by independent collectors. The foundation's Authentication board has since garnered both judicial and public outrage for their selections. Despite the Warhol Foundation's ruling, different copies of the work are defended and remain in museums such as the Andy Warhol Museum and the Tate Modern. The painting's subject is a photo booth image Warhol took of himself in 1964. The board's decision is based on the fact that an associate of Warhol's silkscreened the image rather than Warhol himself. Numerous friends and associates of Warhol have criticized the board's decision. In an article for Artinfo, writer Jason Edward Kaufman confirms this sentiment, stating, "Warhol himself deemed the self-portrait an autograph work. Members of Warhol's circle and experts in the artist note that he adopted industrial production techniques that challenged traditional concepts of authorship. They maintain that he considered such works authentic, and that the authentication board was wrong to reject them." (Kaufman, Jason Edward. "Warhol Foundation Kills Antitrust Lawsuit Over Authentication - ARTINFO.com." *ARTINFO* 24 Oct. 2010. <<http://www.artinfo.com/news/story/36126/warhol-foundation-kills-antitrust-lawsuit-over-authentication/>>.)

His self-presentation works similarly. Warhol depicts himself in his signature style, ready to make his presence consumable as a dynamic force within the art world. His alluring presence is akin to an advertising campaign for a new product, himself. While declarative, this painting emphasizes shape and color over exact details. The image is carefully manipulated to make the product more alluring. It reveals a stylized figure, rather than an *authentic* one. While *Self-Portrait* displays a confident Warhol, the artist's "true" self remains hidden behind technique and style. In this regard, *Self-Portrait* is not far removed from Midgette's act of replacement. In each, youthful virility is of the utmost aesthetic importance.

Warhol's appearance evolved throughout his career, going from demure young man with well-kept hair and sunglasses to eccentric, middle-aged artist with frightful wigs. In the later *Fright Wig* series of 1986, a very different image of Andy Warhol emerges. His polaroids get their name from the white Albert Einstein-looking wig Warhol wears in each image. Warhol's fondness for wigs shows a desire to exhibit multiple personalities. Detached from its source, the wig becomes a symbol of Warhol. Midgette's use of the Warhol wig affirms its ritualistic significance. In these photographs (as with Midgette's appearance), the chaotic frenzy of white hair often overwhelms his face beneath. This series captures Warhol's style in the year of his death. These works share a stark presentation with *Self-Portrait* (1964). Warhol's presence startles with his bright white wig and pale face as the central focus. In one image, *Fright Wig #4*, his mouth is slightly ajar, as he gazes vacantly into a spatial abyss. In others, he looks directly at the viewer, exuding blankness. The emotional numbness of Warhol's self-presentation makes this series particularly haunting.



Contrasts in lighting accentuate Warhol's facial features, which are often covered and concealed in his self-portraits. Warhol's bright face emerges from a pitch-black background. He wears a black turtleneck that visually severs his head from the rest of his body. The resulting image is that of the artist's decapitated head, ghostly hovering in each photograph. Warhol's expression hardly differs within the multiple images. His face appears sullen, drugged and unresponsive. This reminds of the silkscreen process, which continually duplicates the same image with slight variation in each result.

In the *Fright Wig* series, Warhol forfeits majestic self-presentation in favor of unrelenting honesty. He is unglamorous and unreceptive. His exterior is hollow, revealing nothing but the generic self. The ambiguity of this series is equally apparent in Warhol's performance. The presentation of the artist's body reveals only vacancy. Making the wig series different, however, is the honesty with which Warhol exposes his face. Finally, Warhol discloses the features he works so hard to conceal. It seems then that he reverses the idealized body of Midgette. This series shows the wrinkles, scarring and sagging of Warhol's age. The only distraction from these features is the wig, which shifts slightly in each image. Warhol's features change only slightly throughout the series.

### **Self-Portraiture and Concealment**

Warhol evokes bodily repetition throughout much of his self-portraiture. While his presence is implied, it is constantly negated and hidden beneath various masks. Midgette then serves as a living mask, one that can distance Warhol even further from his audience. Worth analyzing, is the degree to which Warhol evokes absence through concealment. While various self-portraits emerge from this category, I will focus on two

in particular: Warhol's *Drag Series* (1980-82) and *Fright Wig with Camouflage* (1986). In each portrait, Warhol appears uncomfortable with bodily presence.

The *Drag Series* from (1980-1982) stands out among Warhol's self-portraits. The boldness of altering genders reads as both shocking and elusive. The series is the result of a two-year experimentation, as Warhol staged and documented various female guises. His enactment of femininity ranges from the matronly to the seductive. In each drag portrait, Warhol applies thick white makeup in attempts to conceal his masculine features. He draws in black eyebrows and eye makeup paired with dramatically red lips. Warhol's transformation into the "other" parallels Midgette's change into Warhol. In order to deceive, both men undergo a physical alteration, yet traces of the true self cannot be completely hidden.

From the series, *Self-Portrait in Drag* (Polaroid, 4 ¼ x 3 3/8 in., 1980 ) shows Warhol in full length. In this image, he stands against a bare wall with his hands crossed above his right knee. His wig is styled in a fashion similar to his celebrity icon, Marilyn Monroe. He wears jeans, a white business shirt and a checkered tie. The masculine clothes contradict his feminine face. Similar to the use of Midgette's body, Warhol appears to relish in the confusion of viewers, who receive contradictory signals of gender identity. These contradictory signs make it impossible to fix the real Warhol in terms of both gender and of an authentic self.

While boldness is implicit to Warhol's gendered performance, his true self remains hidden beneath the façade of wigs and make-up. In many of the images, Warhol wears a suit and tie, performing the opposition between male and female. The images

affirm his gender confusion rather than concealing it.<sup>60</sup> For author Adrian Wagner, “Warhol’s performance of gender is a reaction to homophobic American society.” Wagner sees Warhol’s obsession with celebrity and the “desire for glamour [as] decidedly feminine.”<sup>61</sup> The *Drag Series* is therefore “tied to Warhol’s pursuit of feminine glamour, [representing] a repeated desire to assume an alternate identity, to transcend himself.”<sup>62</sup> This desire to transcend bodily limitations is what mobilizes the self. Warhol’s bodily extension allows him to inhabit more than one gender simultaneously. This multiplicity de-emphasizes the original body, thus making the replica the chosen site of scrutiny and judgment. Midgette and *Drag* both serve as case studies for Warhol’s interest in the transformational qualities of beauty.

As both masculine and feminine, the *Drag Series* shows Warhol’s constant negotiation of identity. Curator Nicholas Baum has a different reading of the *Drag Series* based on Warhol’s inability to convince. He states:

Based on negation and disappearance, the primary tropes of Warhol's myth, Warhol's drag is a failure, his masculine characteristics are ill-disguised, his wigs absurd, his looks more stunned than stunning. Indeed for Warhol, the failed performance was always the most fascinating.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Warhol’s friend and collaborator Christopher Makos notes that, “The drag pictures were done in late 1981. It was a Dadaist experiment. The ugly ones were done in the first session, the beautiful one in a second. At first, we had only one fashion make-up specialist. A make-up artist from the theatre joined us later on. We got the wigs from a specialist who supplies en who want to disguise themselves for private occasions. We could have gotten the most expensive dresses from people close to Andy, but we didn’t need them. The point was not *drag* itself but the *altered* image. It had nothing to do with transsexuality. As you can see no stuffed bras, no artificial fingernails. Only the face is altered. Andy’s eyebrows are pulled back with gum Arabic. Perhaps the hand gestures, but nothing more. Martin Shaub, Mein Name ist Andy, Das Magazin, Tages-Anzeiger und Berner Zeitung BZ, no. 6 (Feb. 8-14, 1997), 33.

<sup>61</sup> Adrian Wagner, *About Face: Drag and Self in Andy Warhol’s Polaroid Prints*, (Princeton University, 1995)

<sup>62</sup> Wagner, 3.

<sup>63</sup> Nicholas Baume, *About Face: Andy Warhol Portraits*. (Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum, 1999)

Baum's assessment of "the failed performance" is particularly interesting in relation to Warhol's Utah performance. It appears that the act of convincing is secondary to presentation. Warhol adopts an alternate identity, performing the role of other rather than himself.

Similarly, Warhol's *Fright Wig with Camouflage* (acrylic and silkscreen ink on linen, 40 x 40 x 1 3/8 in., The Andy Warhol Museum, 1986) uses silkscreening as a way to resist being seen. Warhol's self retreats into the image, offering an additional masked absence. In this image, pink, white and blue camouflage is superimposed on Warhol's face. The color slices through Warhol's facade, severing off sections of his face and hair. Camouflage facilitates disappearance, constructing a disguise enabling one to *blend* with into the surroundings. For Warhol, camouflage is used stylistically rather than pragmatically. In other words, camouflage doesn't render his image indistinguishable, it accentuates it. *Fright Wig with Camouflage* represents the psychic shift from life to death. The spectral quality of Warhol's isolated decapitated head leads Rosenblum to note that, "Nowhere before has he pushed his image so close to the brink of extinction and despair, a shocking close-up of a disembodied head that confronts us like a hallucination."<sup>64</sup> Rosenblum's statement reinforces the haunting aspect of Warhol's masking, which fades in and out of focus. This image questions the nature of representation and perception respectively. This ambiguity leads us to ponder if the image is in fact real, or merely a projection of our imagination.

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<sup>64</sup> Richard Rosenblum, "Andy Warhol's Disguises," *Andy Warhol Selbstportraits, Self-portraits* (Edinburgh: Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art and Hannover: Sprengel-Museum, 2004), 25.

Warhol's use of performance confirms his complicated interaction with himself as subject. His Utah lecture reaffirms the historical circumstances of the 1960s and 70s, which used the artist's body to expose this ambiguity. Comparing his self-portraits to the Utah lecture reveals Warhol's shifting, yet consistent, treatment of the self. His early self-portraits anticipate the simultaneous declaration and disavowal of the self crucial to his Utah lecture. Furthermore, his self-portraits after 1968 extend such themes of idealization and substitution. An examination of Warhol's broader work in self-portraiture shows how Midgette's body in the Utah lecture might usefully be understood as an additional mode of self-depiction. As a conceptual occurrence deeply connected to Warhol's larger aesthetic practices, his Utah lecture deserves to be read as a valuable component of this dialogue.

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