

Seeing without Participating

Andy Warhol's unshakeable determination not to be moved

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It is a stare of distance, of indifference, of mechanically complete attention and absolute contactlessness.

(Koch, 1973, p. 1)

...no to involvement of performer and spectator...no to seduction of spectator by the wiles of the performer...no to moving or being moved

(Rainer, 1996, p. 295)

Writing about the grand opening of The Warhol Museum in Pittsburg for the *New York Times* in 1994, Roberta Smith complained that 'one canvas, *Dance Diagram*, [was] displayed horizontally on the floor as if to teach viewers the tango.' Ms. Smith, it seems safe to assume, did not 'play footsie' with Warhol's *Tango Diagram*, but she did inadvertently put her foot in her mouth.

Indeed, her critical misstep was not to realise that when Warhol's *Dance Diagrams* (one illustrating the tango, another the fox trot) were first exhibited in New York, (as part of Sidney Janis's epochal 'New Realists' show in 1962, and subsequently in Warhol's first one person show a week later at the Stable Gallery), not only were they displayed in precisely that manner – horizontal to the floor, on a step-up platform under glass – but they were accompanied by a printed placard inviting the viewer to remove his or her shoes and put his or her best foot forward: that is, to literally follow the numbered footprints in Warhol's teach-yourself-how-to-tango (or foxtrot) diagrammatic dance lesson.

Warhol's strategy was to create an either/or dichotomy that pit the eye against the rest of the body, forcing the gallery goer to choose between looking at the image (acrylic on canvas) or physically interacting with it. To see the painting in its entirety required the spectator to distance him or her-self from it and to radically de-emphasise his or her degree of physical participation. In other words, the spectator was required to remain ... a spectator.

Even as early as 1962, Warhol's meticulously cultivated aura of dandified cool, what Baudelaire (1963, p. 29) once referred to as the dandy's 'unshakeable determination not to be moved,' makes it easy to imagine him suppressing a sly, condescending smile, when, from behind his dark sunglasses, he watched naïve, unsuspecting, but all-too-eager 'participants' try and get into the spirit of the painting by dancing with it.

Flash forward to April of 1966. Andy Warhol is unveiling his *Exploding Plastic Inevitable* in the heart of the East Village on St. Marks Place in Lower Manhattan. Nico and The Velvet Underground are performing on stage with an indifference toward their audience that borders on contempt. They often turn their backs toward their listeners; and if anyone in the audience is presumptuous enough to actually try and 'dance' to their music, Lou Reed, John Cale, and company will deviously change the tempo. But their icy aloofness is countered by the hot mix of media – films beamed on the walls, slide projections that appear to melt into one another when cross fading, rotating mirror balls, periodic eruptions of brilliantly bright strobe flashes – all serving to saturate the space in dense layers of swirling imagery and pulsating light.¹ In fact, the *Son et Lumiere* that constituted an essential component of Warhol's *Exploding Plastic Inevitable* was consciously envisioned as a simulation of psychedelic drug experience; the externalisation of an interior voyage.

Whenever The Velvets were on break, a much more aggressively exhibitionistic performer, Warhol's studio assistant Gerard Malanga would hurl himself into a number of different dance routines. His sado-masochistic, 'whip' dance had the effect of startling the otherwise zoned-out audience into periodic moments of shared attention. (The ear-splitting crack of his bullwhip was piercingly audible even amidst the white noise ambience.) At other times, Malanga would spin in circles like some sort of psychedelic dervish, entangling himself in labyrinthine spider webs of phosphorescent, glow-in-the-dark-wrapping tape. And on still other occasions, he would dance with a hand held strobe light pointed directly at his face, the fast-flicker intensity of which had the effect of momentarily transforming him into a spectral hallucination, a sort of Loie Fuller for the 1960s.

Three inter-related elements lent both an optical and a symbolic order to this potentially chaotic mix of media: the periodic pulse of a powerful overhead strobe light, illuminating both the audience and the performers, and thereby freezing, however briefly, this otherwise amorphous blur of motion into a series of still (i.e. 'captured') images. And among the vast range of visual patterns and effects, one image often dominated the others by virtue of the frequency with which it appeared and the length of time it remained visible: the projected image of a gigantic, unblinking eye. An emblem, no doubt, of Warhol himself, the eminence grise who presided over this sensory overload spectacle from the detached, omniscient vantage point of the balcony. There he stood, night after night, the unmoved mover, the eye of this multi-media storm.

But, as even Warhol seemed to suggest with his *Dance Diagrams* four years earlier, dance is routinely regarded as the most 'participatory' of the arts. Almost all of us have danced at one time or another, if only socially; and

perhaps that's why we continue to think of dancing as something to 'do' rather than something to look at. In fact, Havelock Ellis (1983, p. 494) in *The Dance of Life*, his rhapsodic ode to the underlying rhythms of nature, argues that:

Even if we are not ourselves dancers, but merely the spectators of dance, we are still, according to that Lippsian doctrine of *Einfühlung* or 'empathy' feeling ourselves in the dancer who is manifesting and expressing latent impulses of our own being.

What then could be more antithetical to the spirit of dance than Andy Warhol's legendary mode of *disengagement*, his desire to remain uninvolved, unmoved, *untouched*, both emotionally and kinetically?

But the fact of the matter is that Andy Warhol managed to exert a considerable influence on experimental dance during the 1960s – an influence especially visible in the work of the so-called post-modern choreographers who created their most innovative dances under the auspices of The Judson Dance Theatre. Conversely, Warhol himself was undoubtedly influenced, (in ways that have yet to be widely acknowledged) by some of the work he is known to have seen at Judson, particularly the early dances of Yvonne Rainer.

Michael Kirby (1969, p. 110) writes, in his unjustly neglected essay 'Objective Dance' – one of the earliest attempts to theorise about the connections between the Judson Dance Theatre and concurrent developments in the visual arts:

In the new dance, the subjective empathetic relationship which exists in all traditional performance dance, [by which he means ballet and modern] is replaced by an objective relationship in which the observer sees but does not 'participate' in the work.

'Sees, but does not "participate"'. Was there ever a more aptly phrased description of Andy Warhol's mode of being-(and seeing)-in-the-world? Kirby is referring to that moment in the early 1960s when Yvonne Rainer and other members of The Judson Dance Theatre were beginning to test their radical premise that *any* movement – no matter how pedestrian, no matter how kinesthetically unaffecting, no matter how 'undancerly' (in conventional terms) – could be defined as 'dance' by virtue of the way it was re-contextualised in the presence of observers.

Unlike the pioneers of modern dance, who were determined to invent unique ways of moving which would reflect their own inner musculatures, (Martha Graham spoke of her desire to 'make visible the interior landscape') many Judson choreographers simply transplanted impersonal, pedestrian movements into an 'art context', where, like Duchamp's readymades, they were involuntarily stripped of their worldly function and 'aestheticised'. Yvonne Rainer in fact, coined the term 'found movement' as the direct choreographic equivalent for Duchamp's readymades and found objects. The very titles of many of Rainer's early dances (*We Shall Run*, *Ordinary Dance*, and *Person Dance*) give the game away.

Kirby (1969, p. 110) elaborates on what it means to see this sort of movement without 'participating' in it:

One very significant result of the use of simplified movements and the elimination of dance technique is the *objectification* of dance. Dance in the larger sense with its foundations in ritual and social dancing is basically meant to be *done* rather than be seen: it is subjective.... In traditional performance, the relationship of dancer and observer is then basically one of empathy. The spectator 'reads himself into' the dancer. This process does not have to be as obvious as the track fan tensing as the pole-vaulter attempts to clear the bar or the golfer using sympathetic magic as he gives 'body English' to his rolling putt. Empathy theory hypothesises an outwardly passive but inwardly active correspondence between the state of the spectator and the physical movements of the dancer.

Here he touches on what is arguably the principle distinction between modern and post-modern dance. The choreographers Kirby alludes to are consciously rejecting the emphasis that most modern dance, in the long tradition stretching from Isadora Duncan through Martha Graham, placed on kinesthetic empathy. John Martin (1983, p. 22), one of Graham's earliest partisans among dance critics, praised what he called 'the inherent contagion of bodily movement, which makes the onlooker feel sympathetically in his own musculature the exertions he sees in somebody else's musculature...'

By contrast, when Kirby says that post-modern dance is more 'objective' than modern dance, he means not only that the movement vocabulary itself is more impersonal, but also that it's experienced by the viewer from the *outside*. It's divested of the kinesthetic 'contagion' that induces virtual participation. Warhol (in Shanes, 1991, p. 17) too, was quick to distinguish the cool 'objectivity' of his own art from the hot, tortured, internally driven subjectivity of the abstract expressionists. 'Pop comes from the outside,' he liked to say.

But the relationship between Warhol and Judson was more than a matter of shared sensibility. In fact, a well-travelled, two-way street connected Judson to Warhol's famous 'Factory.' One of the founding members of the Judson Dance Theatre, Fred Herko, also performed in some of Warhol's earliest and most distinctive films (including *Haircut* and *Kiss*, both produced in 1963). That same year, Herko was also the featured performer in Warhol's *Dance Movie* (also known as *Rollerskate*) a short film which must surely have been inspired by one of Herko's Judson dances, *Binghamton Birdie*, staged three months earlier. (This included a sequence in which Herko, adorned in a yellow and blue jersey with the words 'Judson' emblazoned across the front, glided breezily about the space on one roller skate.)

Herko also lived for a while with Billy Linich, who would subsequently re-name himself 'Billy Name' (in the self-inventing manner of Warhol's 'Superstars'). Linich designed the lighting for a number of early Judson concerts; and it was Linich who had the 'bright' idea of coating the surfaces of Warhol's studio with silver paint and reflective tin foil, thereby transforming it into 'The Silver Factory.' And Herko was typical of the amphetamine junkies who infused the Silver Factory with its distinctive, drug-driven pulse. Warhol claimed to love the way Freddie '...would just dance and dance until he dropped. The

amphetamine people believed in throwing themselves into every extreme – sing until you choke, dance until you drop, brush your hair till you sprain your arm. It was the perfect time to think silver... silver was narcissism – mirrors were backed with silver' (Warhol & Hackett, 1980, p. 61). And Warhol's studied passivity allowed him to serve as the human mirror, for whom hopped-up exhibitionists like Herko could pull out all of the stops.

In July of 1961, as part of a dance concert organised by James Waring at The Living Theatre, Fred Herko performed one of his own high-energy (and no doubt, high camp) dances *Possibilities for a Pleasant Outing*, alongside an early minimalist solo by Yvonne Rainer titled *The Bells*. It's difficult to imagine two conceptions of dance more antithetical to one another than Herko's and Rainer's. If Herko was the sort of person who was always 'on,' always performing, always in search of, perhaps in need of, an audience, then Rainer was the exact opposite. Indeed, she would soon write:

If my rage at the narcissism and disguised sexual exhibitionism of most dancing can be considered puritanical moralizing, it also true that I love the body, its actual weight, mass, and unenhanced physicality.

(Rainer, 1974, p. 71)

In other words, Rainer wants to treat the body like an 'object' in a gallery, something incapable of playing 'roles' or of pandering to the gaze of an appreciative perceiver: the very opposite, in other words of the sort of Warhol 'Superstar' that Herko aspired to become. In fact, if Herko can be said to have approached dance principally from the vantage point of the (exhibitionistic) performer, then it's fair to say that Rainer sought to re-conceive of dance from the vantage point of the *perceiver* – the sort of perceiver one is more likely to encounter in a museum or gallery than at a traditional dance concert. As she said (in Rose, 1968, p. 290):

I remember thinking that dance was at a disadvantage in relation to sculpture in that the spectator could spend as much time as he required to examine a sculpture, walk around it, and so forth – but a dance movement – because it happened in time – vanished as soon as it was executed. So in a solo called 'The Bells' I repeated the same seven movements for eight minutes...in a sense allowing the spectator to 'walk around it.'

'Repetition,' Rainer (1974, p. 68) went on to write in her essay *A Quasi Survey of Some 'Minimalist' Tendencies*, 'can serve to enforce the discreteness of a movement, objectify it, make it more object-like.' Relentless repetition as a strategy for making human activity more 'object-like.'

It's easy to see why Warhol, the master of serial repetition, would take an interest in Rainer's work. And Rainer was quick to return the compliment. In the very same essay quoted above, she proposed a number of analogies between her own dances and the work of visual artists such as Warhol, Judd, and Morris. Her *Quasi-Survey*... begins with an illustrative chart juxtaposing 'Objects' (left hand column) with 'Dances' (right hand column), establishing a set of 'family resemblances' between them. For a painter like Warhol, the 'role of the artist's hand' is replaced by 'factory fabrication' (e.g. photo silk

screen techniques). For Rainer (1966, p. 63), the corresponding strategy is to substitute 'found movement' for idiosyncratic choreographic 'phrasing.'

Rainer's performing style was almost the exact antithesis of Herko's; but considered in tandem, they tell us something important about Warhol's 'taste' in dance during the 1960s. In fact, between them, Herko and Rainer managed to embody what might be called the two poles of Warhol's sensibility more generally: his attraction, on the one hand, to the most extreme forms of human exhibitionism (the wannabee superstars who 'enacted' themselves in the presence of his passive gaze), and on the other hand, his ongoing fascination with the most minimal experiences imaginable (i.e. Robert Indiana eating a mushroom in the film *Eat...* Billy Linich getting his hair trimmed in the three versions of *Haircut*). These are experiences that possess little or no 'intrinsic' interest for the viewer. Like Yvonne Rainer's found movements, they acquire aesthetic and philosophical significance by virtue of the way they're looked at, which is to say: by virtue of the self-reflexive manner in which the *act of looking itself* becomes a metaphor for the relationship between 'subject' and 'object.' And Warhol's editing strategy periodically reminds us that what we're looking at is being perceived through the *medium of film*: each of the one hundred-foot reels was spliced together end-to-end, producing a brilliantly bright white 'flare up' effect every time the clear white leader with its perforated sprocket holes ran through the projector.

These exercises in minimalism, culminating in Warhol's eight-hour, fixed-camera 'stare' at the Empire State Building (in *Empire*), also suggest another important connection between Warhol and post-modern dance: the implication that absolute 'stillness' is an illusion. John Cage (1961, p. 3) had already argued that '[t]here is no such thing as silence.' But it was Warhol, with his *seemingly* 'static' films, who demonstrated that 'there is no such thing as absolute stillness', even if the 'movement' that eventually proves his point can only be perceived over excruciatingly long periods of time (e.g. the setting of the sun in *Empire*).

In April of 1963, Andy Warhol attended two events that must surely have influenced his steadily growing interest in the relationship between stillness and motion, a dynamic that would soon become a central dialectic in almost all of his work. That month marked the 50th anniversary of the 1913 Armory Show at which Marcel Duchamp first unveiled his fusion of cubist stillness and futurist motion, *Nude Descending A Staircase No. 2*. Duchamp's notorious painting utilised a number of photographic techniques that had already begun to figure in Warhol's art as well (e.g. the nude appears to be descending the stairs in a painterly version of the stop-motion photography pioneered by Etienne-Jules Marey.) Indeed, Duchamp's fascination with the photographic 'freezing' of motion firmly situates his painting in the long tradition that begins with Marey and Eadweard Muybridge and extends through the work of Harold Eugene 'Doc' Edgerton, who experimented with multi-flash strobe-light photography in the 1930s. It was Edgerton, in collaboration with Gjon Milli, who created those now legendary 'stop-action' photographs of balloons bursting and bullets 'captured' in the millisecond they pierce the skin of an apple.

Warhol will subsequently contribute to this tradition in a variety of ways. (We've already discussed the role that strobe lighting played in 'freezing' the swirl of psychedelic motion at his *Exploding Plastic Inevitable*.) But there's a more fundamental connection between stroboscopic 'flash' photography and the countless images that Warhol produced of celebrities. His famous photo-silkscreen images of Marilyn, Liz, Jackie (et al) suggest the simultaneous 'freezing' (and flattening) that occurs when an object is momentarily illuminated by a bright flash of light. Tellingly, Warhol's portfolio of fourteen color screen prints documenting the four days between the assassination of JFK and his funeral are titled *Flash...November 22, 1963*. But, as with almost all of Warhol's work, the impulse to 'freeze' motion in a 'flash' is offset by the relentless, time-bound rhythm of mechanical reproduction, the way in which these media-generated images are infinitely replicated.

Later that month, Warhol attended another event that addressed these concerns in a rather different way: Yvonne Rainer's *Terrain*, an evening length dance performed at The Judson Memorial Church. *Terrain* was a further exploration of the way in which human movement could be made more object-like, thereby transforming the spectator's experience of watching a dance into something more closely resembling the museum-goer's mode of apprehending static, inanimate objects. In particular, *Terrain* contained two solos that must surely have intrigued Warhol; and, when examined in light of his subsequent development, may even have deeply influenced him.

The solos were titled *Sleep* and *Death*, two states that have been connected with one another historically in a variety of metaphorical ways (e.g. nightly sleep as a memento mori; 'dreamless sleep' as a metaphor for eternity). In Rainer's book *Work: 1961-'73*, we find a photograph of the two solos being performed simultaneously by Trisha Brown and Albert Reid. Brown, upstage, lies prone on the floor, clutching what appears to be a pillow. Reid, in quasi-arabesque, displays an oddly contorted expression on his face, apparently an allusion to the 'faces' that Jean Paul Belmondo makes in his famous 'Death Run' at the end of Godard's *Breathless*.

Both sleep and death were soon to become recurring motifs in Warhol's work as well. For example, the *Death and Disaster* series of photo silk-screened images was already underway. Paintings of skulls and shadows would loom large later in his career; and *Sleep* would soon provide both the title and the subject for one of Warhol's most ambitious films. Furthermore, his famous floating sculptures, the *Silver Clouds*, which would eventually become the décor for Merce Cunningham's legendary 1968 dance *Rainforest*, are of course, really silver *pillows*, suggesting that sleep, in one form or another, had become a continuing fascination of Warhol's.

But let's return to Rainer's treatment of these themes in *Terrain*. Sleep and death are both states in which the body becomes literally object-like, unaware of its surroundings, unable to acknowledge the perceiver's gaze – no matter how glaring, intrusive or voyeuristic. Of course, in Rainer's dance, the state of sleep is merely simulated (Trisha Brown clutching her pillow) and death is merely alluded to in the form of an ironic visual quotation from *Breathless*. But there are other activities incorporated into *Terrain* – actions that Rainer refers to as 'tasks,' which more closely approximate the object-like nature of both the

sleeper and the corpse. Rainer's rehearsal notes contain the following jottings about the 'tasks' she assigned the soloist in *Sleep*: 'Stretching arms between two objects that were too far apart to touch' (Rainer, 1974, p. 21). In other words, the performer is asked to do something that is technically impossible, an activity, which will 'absorb' all of the performer's effort and attention. Other notes refer to the way the performer's own gaze creates a sense of self-absorption: 'focusing all of (one's) attention on the objects... never taking notice of anything else going on around one...' (ibid.).

This quality of self-absorption was designed to limit, if not eliminate, the performer's awareness of the audience; in other words, to make him or her more like an inanimate object. Significantly, in her *Quasi-Survey...* Rainer (1966, p. 66) speaks of 'movement-as-task or movement-as-object.' In *task* work, the performer is given an assignment that will prove totally *engaging*. Sometimes, in a work such as Tom Johnson's *Running Out of Breath*, the task is designed to literally *exhaust* the performer. Something similar occurs in a work like the 'Stairs' section of Rainer's *The Mind Is a Muscle*, where the performers lug a bulky mattress up and down stairs.

The performer of the task thus achieves a degree of 'authenticity' forever denied to more protean modes of theatrical persona (e.g. the actor portraying a 'role', or for that matter Fred Herko 'exhibiting' himself to Warhol). In Rainer's *This is the Story of a Woman Who* (1973), a projected title reads 'His very gaze seems to transform her into a performer.' By contrast, Rainer (1974, p. 109) subjected task movement to the following test: 'How much of what is seen would actually take place were the spectators not present?'

In Rainer's recently published autobiography *Feelings Are Facts*, there's an especially revealing photograph of Albert Reid performing the 'Sleep' solo. He's posed in a low-crouch, close to the floor, staring obsessively into a bag filled with objects. Upstage of him, Yvonne Rainer, Judith Dunn, Trisha Brown, and Steve Paxton are standing behind a police sawhorse barrier. Rainer (2006, p. 21) contrasts 'the cool detachment' of the dancers watching from behind the barricade with the self-obsession of the soloist. The 'watchers' are also distinguished from the 'sleeper' by virtue of their relationship to the floor and to gravity. The 'sleeper' is never permitted to stand upright – in part because upright posture constitutes the clearest physical evidence of being *awake*. Rainer (1974, p. 21) is particularly insistent on this point: 'The performer never stood erect in this solo,' she writes.

The physical barricade between sleeper and watcher thus becomes a metaphor for the ideal relationship between 'subject' and 'object' in much of the work of *both* Rainer and Warhol. Indeed, in Warhol's first film *Sleep*, made just few months after he saw *Terrain*, Rainer's (still illusionary) premise is carried to its literal and logical conclusion. Here, the body that the camera gazes upon really *is* asleep, truly oblivious to the camera (and by extension) to the spectator's gaze. Almost as oblivious as the inanimate 'star' of Warhol's last and most minimal silent film, *Empire*.

Our 'access' to Warhol's sleeper (John Giorno) stops at the visual edge of his semi-naked body. Whatever dream-life he may be experiencing will never be made known to us. Indeed, we don't even hear his breathing, if only because

this six hour long film is silent. As a subject viewing an object, our experience becomes purely optical. We view him 'objectively' entirely from the 'outside.' The final stanza of Paul Valéry's beautiful 1922 poem *La Dormeuse* serves as a remarkable anticipation of the experience Warhol's offers us in *Sleep*.

That, though the soul is absent, busy in the depths
Your forms' pure belly draped by the fluid arm
Is awake; your form is awake and my eyes are open.

(Valéry, in Hartman, 1966, p. 98)

And if we're willing to keep our eyes open and active for the duration of this film (six hours!) we are bound to become increasingly attuned to the slightest movement, the subtlest change, in the lazy, bodily deportment of the sleeper. Indeed, in order to survive such an ordeal of attention, it's necessary to entirely recalibrate our perceptual metabolism, to refocus our eyes on the micro-rhythms rather than macro-rhythms of experience.

Given Yvonne Rainer's radical re-definition of dance as movement whose sole function is to be *seen*, (a purely optical experience 'untouched' by kinetic empathy), then Warhol's *Sleep* must surely qualify as one of the most original 'dance films' ever made. And *Sleep* exists in a fascinating dialectical relationship to a dancer like Fred Herko who seemed *never* to sleep, who often exhibited the frenetic hyperactivity of the speed freak. In fact, Warhol, who spent much the 1960s surrounded by people whose central nervous systems were perpetually sped up by a steady diet of 'uppers', once expressed his fear that sleep itself would soon become obsolete.

The relationship between the spectator and the spectacle in *Sleep* is further complicated by the fact that Warhol shot the film at twenty-four frames per second, but insisted that it be projected at 'silent' speed (sixteen frames per second). The result is an almost imperceptible tinge of dream-like slow motion, a subliminal sense of floating, countered by the unyielding fixity of the camera and the gravity of its gaze.

This accumulating tension in *Sleep* finds its metaphorical antidote, its 'release', if you will, in the *Silver Clouds*, Warhol's most successful foray into the realm of kinetic sculpture. These helium filled silver-mylar balloons, which floated languorously about the Factory can be thought of as a cross between the soft sculpture of Claes Oldenburg and the mobiles of Alexander Calder. And what connects them most intimately to Warhol's recurring concerns is the simple fact that the so-called *Silver Clouds* are really silver *pillows*: shiny, reflective emblems of sleep and of dreaming, an image of consciousness finally floating free of the body entirely. And it was the *Silver Clouds* that led to Warhol's first full fledged entry into the world of concert dance: his 'collaboration' with Merce Cunningham on *Rainforest* in 1968. Cunningham first saw the *Clouds* at Leo Castelli's gallery in 1966; and he had Jasper Johns, then the chief designer of settings and costumes for his company, ask Warhol for permission to utilise them as the décor for *Rainforest* two years later.

Perhaps it was inevitable that Warhol and Cunningham would eventually work together, if only because they shared such peculiar ideas about what it *means*

for two artists to 'work together.' Cunningham (along with his partner John Cage) had already pioneered a model of artistic collaboration that proved temperamentally perfect for Warhol: what might be termed 'collaboration at a distance.' In the Cunningham/Cage aesthetic, movement, sound, and décor are all conceived and executed independently of one another; and all remain 'autonomous' in performance, never melding into an organic whole. And 1966, the year that Cunningham encountered *The Silver Clouds*, was also the year that Warhol made *The Chelsea Girls*, a film that utilises a Cunningham-like principle of disjunction in which two reels of film are projected simultaneously side by side. The twin streams of projected imagery remain as independent of one another as the disparate components in a Cunningham dance. And Cunningham may well have been acknowledging this similarity when, in 2007, he choreographed one of his unnamed 'Events' for Dia: Beacon, (Beacon, NY), set against a panoramic assemblage of Warhol's 'Shadow' paintings. At one point in the dance, Holly Farmer and Andrea Weber danced simultaneous solos on separate raised platforms, reminiscent of the projected juxtaposition of say, *Nico Crying* and *The Pope Ondine Story* toward the end of *The Chelsea Girls*. In both works, the viewer was left free to decide how, when and where to focus his or her visual and auditory attention.

But there's an even more fundamental similarity between Warhol and Cunningham. Both cultivated an aesthetic of 'impersonality.' Under the influence of Cage, Cunningham began in the early 1950s to utilise 'chance methods' as a strategy for liberating himself from his own ingrained, hardwired habits of movement. Thus Cunningham was the first modern dance choreographer to break with the Gospel of Graham, which had emphasised moving in a manner unique to the choreographer's own body. And in so doing, he set the stage for the Judson generation of post-modern choreographers like Rainer who would go on to explore what Michael Kirby has called 'objective dance.'

Cunningham's choreography also promoted the ideal of objectivity by focusing the audiences' attention on the sensuous *surface* of the dancer's outer body rather than on the subjective, 'inner,' psychological landscape that presumably motivated the movement. That's one of the reasons *Rainforest* was so successful: the surface of the silver pillows mirrored, literally and figuratively, the surface of the dancer's bodies. In 1974, Warhol acknowledged this symbiotic relationship between inanimate objects and the 'object-like' bodies of Cunningham's dancers by creating *Merce Cunningham I*, a delicate screen-print on Japanese gift-wrapping paper utilizing one of Richard Rutledge's photographs of Cunningham in *Antic Meet* from 1958. It's surely no coincidence that the photo Warhol chose was of Cunningham dancing with an inanimate object, a chair, strapped to his back.

When *Antic Meet* was first performed at the American Dance Festival in '58, (then very much a bastion of traditional modern dance with its psychological and 'humanist' orientation), audiences were left shaking their heads in confusion and dismay. Writing about the challenge that Cunningham posed to the modern dance of Graham, Limon, and Humphrey, Jill Johnston (1968, p. 21) once noted, 'One of the key words was HUMAN...they did feel, I guess, that Merce threatened the concept they had of what it meant to be human.'

Of course, the same accusation was leveled at Andy Warhol on countless occasions. And Warhol (in Swenson, 1963, p.24) actively encouraged such talk by declaring: 'I think everybody should be a machine.' Clearly, the machine he most wanted to emulate was the lens – the unblinking eye of the 16 mm Bolex movie camera with which he had filmed John Giorno in *Sleep*. And the movie camera, which remains kinetically indifferent to anything and everything it records, is the utmost manifestation of what it means to 'see, without participating.' It's also the ultimate embodiment of Baudelaire's 'unshakeable determination not to be moved.'

So it's understandable why many people are inclined to dismiss Warhol as 'inhuman.' Certainly he never presented himself to the world as a 'sympathetic', let alone empathetic, figure. Still, the word 'unshakeable' assumes a certain poignancy when considered in light of his childhood. At the age of eight, the young Andy suffered through a debilitating and no doubt, humiliating bout of St. Vitus Dance, a neurological disorder that leads to an involuntary shaking of the feet and hands. It also left him painfully hypersensitive to touch for the rest of his life.

Traumatic to be sure. Yet also ironic. Because Warhol (in Smith, 1986, pp. 132-3), whose earliest Hollywood idol was the tap-dancing child-star Shirley Temple, once confessed to Gretchen Berg, 'I never wanted to be a painter, I wanted to be a tap dancer.' But the spastic, involuntary, tics of St. Vitus dance had little in common with the effortless self-confidence that Shirley Temple exuded in say, her tap duet on the staircase with Bill Bojangles Robinson in *The Little Colonel*. In fact, to the homely, pathologically shy, 'little, queer, mommy's boy' (as Simon Watney has described the young Andy), St. Vitus dance must have felt more like an invitation to public bullying of the sort we associate with another Hollywood product, the B grade Westerns in which sadistic gunslingers fire bullets at the feet of hapless townspeople, barking orders at them to... 'Dance!' Maybe this helps to explain Warhol's life-long aversion to what John Martin (1983, p. 22) called 'the inherent *contagion* of bodily movement....'

Perhaps it was then and there, at the tender age of eight, that Warhol decided to transform himself into a still point, an all-seeing, God-like audience for whom the *rest* of the world dances. As T. S. Eliot (1943, p. 66) has written in *The Four Quartets*, 'Except for the point, the still point, there would be no dance, and there is only the dance.'

But could Andy Warhol (of all people) possibly have been the sort of still point that T. S. Eliot had in mind? Warhol? Master of the fixed, unblinking gaze that could stare blankly at mechanically-replicated images of Coca Cola bottles, the widowed Jackie Kennedy, Campbell's soup cans, the electric chair, Marilyn Monroe, automobile crashes, et al ... subjecting them all indiscriminately to the same, affectless, semi-autistic mode of looking? Moralists will surely argue that the only real 'dance' Andy Warhol ever participated in was the dance macabre, the Dance of Death, the – shall we say – 'deca-dance' of The Silver Factory where, as still-point-in-residence he simply watched, with detached neutrality, the self-destruction of many members of his own entourage. In fact, one of the earliest casualties was the dancer Fred Herko who staged his own suicide as a twin tribute to Nijinsky in

Le Spectre de la Rose and to Warhol's suicide paintings (in which we see images of people jumping to their deaths from upper floor windows.) On October 27th, 1964 Herko executed his last Nijinsky-esque leap, out of the window of an apartment on Cornelia Street, falling to his death five flights below. Warhol's reaction to the news that Herko had committed suicide in such a flamboyant manner? Regret that he hadn't been there with his camera to film it.

Notes

¹ The amoeba-like patterns on the slides were designed by Jackie Casson, who had already begun to collaborate with Timothy Leary on his 'psychedelic celebrations.'

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Biographical statement

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