ANDY WARHOL

Self Portrait (detail), 1966

ANDY WARHOL

“Everybody has their own America, and then they have the pieces of a fantasy America that they think is out there but they can’t see.”

—Andy Warhol

Andy Warhol (1928–1987) was born Andrew Warhola in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. His parents had immigrated to the United States and settled in an Eastern European enclave in the city. Warhol's mother was an artist as well, and after he moved to New York in 1949, she would follow him. They lived together until her death.

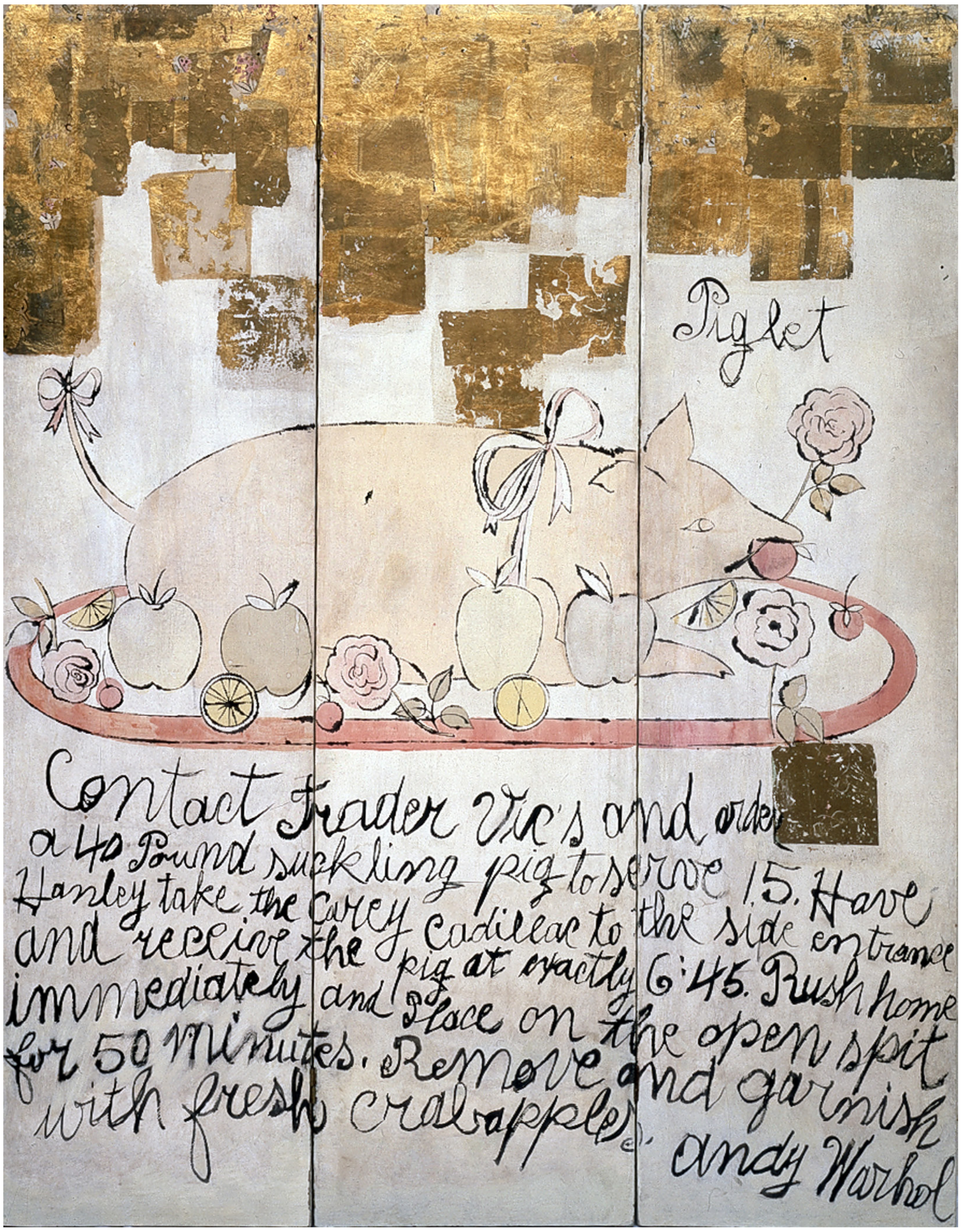
Throughout the 1950s, Warhol worked as a commercial illustrator. By the early 1960s, he began to develop his iconic Pop style. As a leading figure of Pop art, Warhol brought the imagery and techniques of mass commercialism into the visual arts, moving away from abstract expressionism, the dominant movement that touted universal appeal and a unique brand of American freedom. Warhol's work showed another side of America. His paintings of Coca-Cola bottles and Campbell's soup cans highlighted the wide-spread recognition of these products through slick advertising. Early works were painted by hand, the images often traced from projection in order to appear as if mechanically produced. In 1962 Warhol began to create silkscreen prints, the medium he is best known for.

While the artist's hand is not visible as brushstrokes in his photo-silkscreened works, Warhol's choices—of content, cropping, color, and, in some instances, manipulation of the photographic source image—are integral to his process. Through these choices Warhol drew on themes of celebrity, death, disaster, and commodity, often read as metaphor for American culture. In his celebrity portraits and self-portraits, some see religious icons as inspiration; Warhol was Catholic, and he remained religious throughout his life.

Warhol was skillfully ambiguous, and his work is interpreted as both celebratory and critical. From his artwork, ranging from painting and sculpture to film, to his studio (The Factory), which became a flashpoint for 1960s counterculture, to his infamous celebrity persona, Warhol was deeply influential during his lifetime, and his influence on younger generations of artists is difficult to overstate.

The Nation's Nightmare, 1951

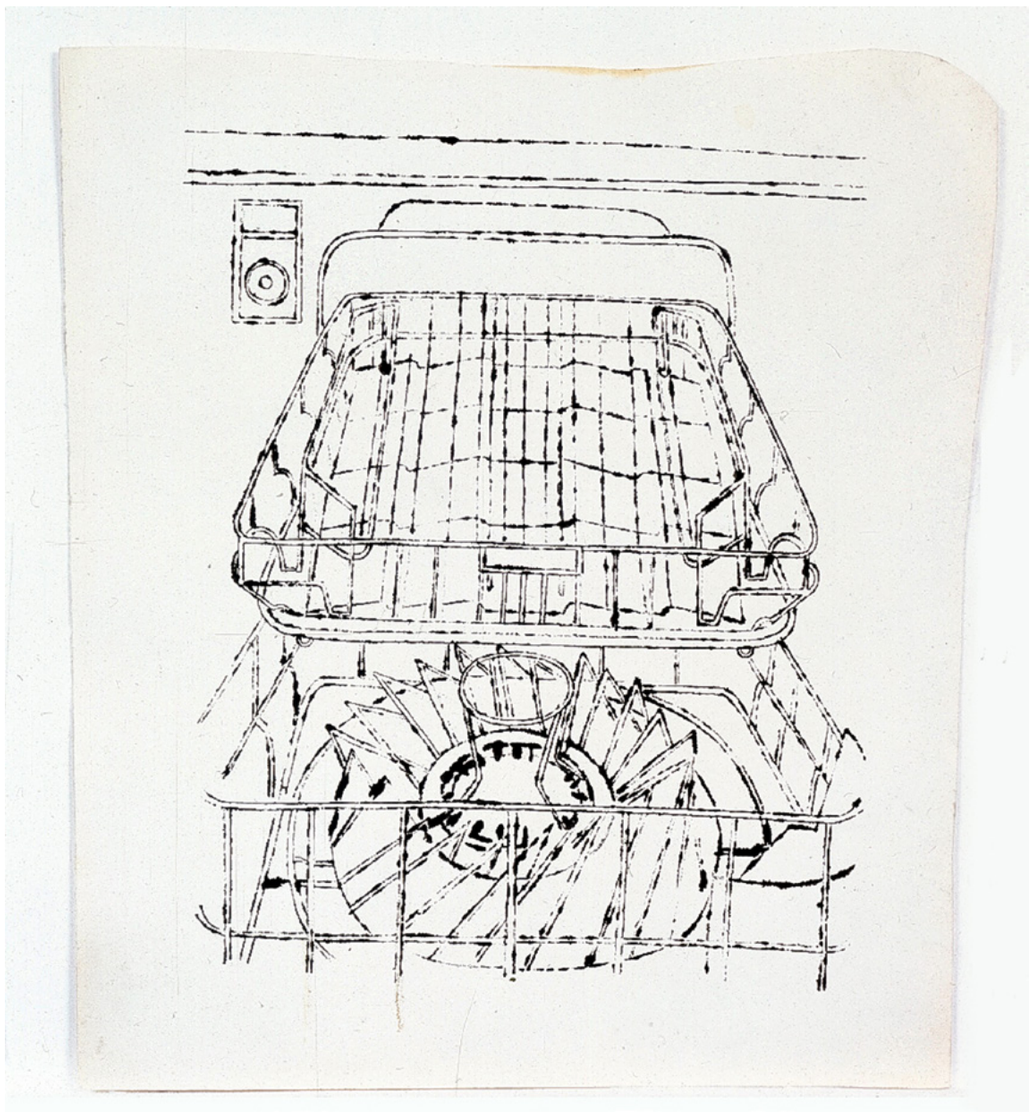
After graduating from Carnegie Tech (now Carnegie Mellon University), Warhol moved to New York, where he found work as a commercial illustrator. This drawing was for a record cover for the CBS Radio Network production titled *The Nation's Nightmare*. On the record cover, the radio series was described as "a report of crime in America in 1951—documented with tape recordings from back rooms and front offices of the underworld." Although these early illustrations do not bear much resemblance to Warhol's later work, the similarities lie in the artist's methods. Warhol used a technique in which he would transfer the drawn image from one surface to another; this eventually led to his complete elimination of the artist's hand through the silkscreen process.



Folding Screen (Piglet), 1955–57

Warhol began subverting the idea of authorship early in his career. He hired assistants to help him keep up with commercial commissions, and he would often ask his mother, who was also an artist, to lend her hand. The cursive script in *Folding Screen (Piglet)* and other works of this time was penned by Julia Warhola. The text is a series of instructions for buying, cooking, and consuming a suckling pig. The combination of gold leaf and still-life depiction with his drawing and instructions blurs the boundaries between commercial illustration and visual art, while the folding screen positions the work within the field of interior design.

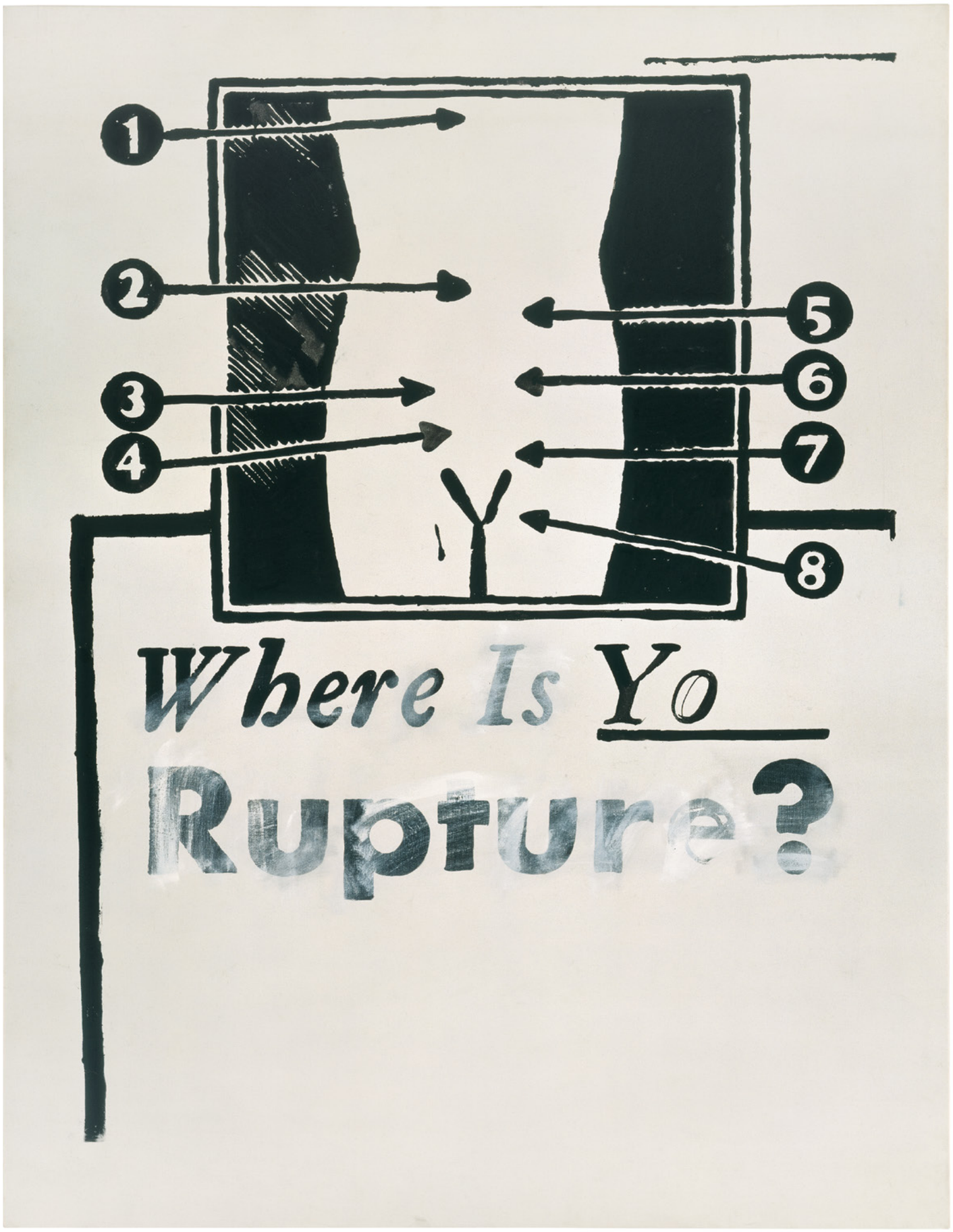
Man Seated at Automat Counter, 1958



Dishwasher, 1960

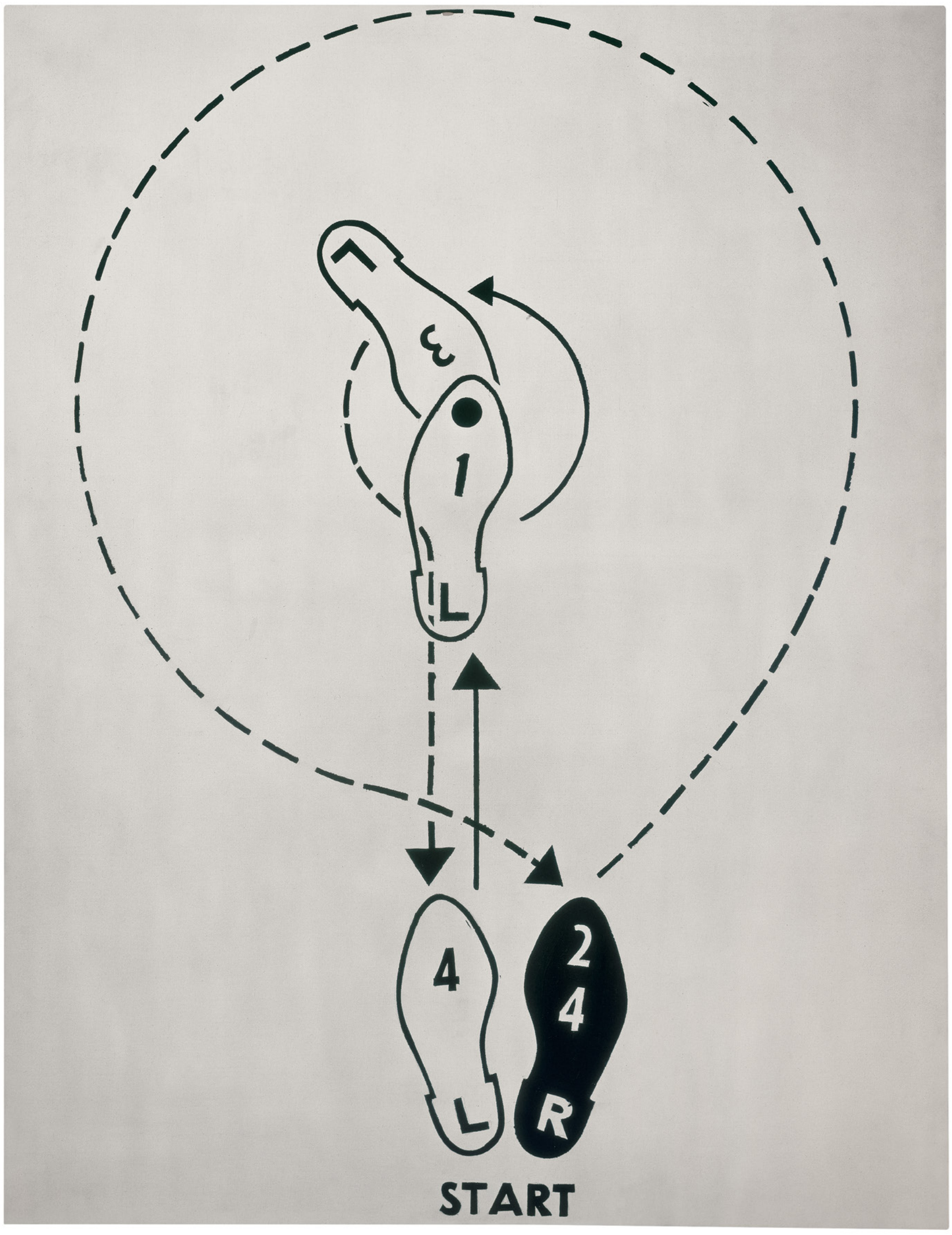
Man Seated at Automat Counter is a depiction of an early fast-food experience where customers bought prepared plates of food from vending machines to eat quickly and anonymously. Automats began to decline in the 1970s, and in 1975 Warhol understood their nostalgic value. According to curator Bob Nickas, Warhol wanted to create an Andy-Mat, as a tribute to automats, which he called “The Restaurant for the Lonely Person.” The Andy-Mat patron would take their tray of food and watch television in a booth. This illustration—made almost twenty years before Warhol talked about his restaurant idea (it never materialized)—already hints at Warhol’s interest in anonymity, while the prominent red ketchup bottle is perhaps a precursor to the Campbell’s soup can.

In 1960 Warhol drew several everyday household objects, including dishwashers and an icebox. In *Dishwasher*, Warhol experiments with what would later solidify into his Pop style. The work is drawn by hand, but it looks like a page from a user manual—reminiscent of his work in commercial illustration.



Non-Objective I, 1964

In *Where is your Rupture? [1]*, Warhol adapts a diagram of an injured torso. The work is eerily prophetic—barely seven years later, Warhol would survive a shooting that ravaged his torso and left him with life-long scarring. Mimicking mechanically reproduced print media, Warhol used an opaque projector to enlarge the image, which he then traced. His reproduction, however, contains blatant evidence of the artist's hand (unlike later works that demonstrate a near complete removal of it). Here, brushstrokes of white paint are applied over lettering of the artwork's title, with the word "Your" cut off, reading "Yo." Warhol is experimenting with what looks to be automated but is not: the assumed printing error and the hand-painted covering of text. Above the text is a torso from abdomen to mid-thigh, with numbered arrows pointing to hernia locations. Like the erased title, the figure appears as a removed, sterile, and sexless outline. In the work, both the painted body and "your" body are broken, incomplete.



I...I'm Sorry!, 1965–66

Dance Diagram [3] ["The Lindy Tuck-In Turn Man"] **is topical to the early 1960s, which experienced a revival in 1920s and 1930s dances such as the Charleston and the Lindy Hop. The work allows for many readings: the evolving nature of painting as a performative endeavor, and, since it's an invitation to participate, the blurring boundary between participation and spectatorship, artist and subject. When the work was first exhibited at the Stable Gallery in New York, Warhol showed it on the floor, facing another painting of the instructional dance steps for the female counterpart. Curator Donna De Salvo describes this as "a placement that points directly to the mechanics of social interaction and prevailing cultural expectations at that time." Made when the artist was quickly ascending to celebrity, it might also symbolize Warhol "dancing the dance" of the art world.**

Campbell's Soup Can (Clam Chowder-Manhattan Style) [Ferus Type], 1962

Small Torn Campbell's Soup Can (Pepper Pot), 1962

Warhol created his iconic Campbell's Soup Cans in 1962. First shown at Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles, thirty-two paintings—one for each flavor—were exhibited on a narrow shelf, standing upright, to mimic the shelves of a grocery store. (*Campbell's Soup Can (Clam Chowder-Manhattan Style*) [Ferus Type] is one of sixteen additional Ferus Type soup cans not shown in the 1962 exhibition.) While Warhol would turn to silkscreen as his main art-making method in 1962, the soup cans were painted, not printed. To achieve a pristine reproduction, he projected the image onto the canvas, then traced its outline before painting it. The fleurs-de-lis on the can are stamped on. With the Campbell's Soup Cans, Warhol uses the repetition found in advertising and mass production as a stand in for midcentury American life, while also drawing parallels between the production and consumption of art and everyday goods.

Warhol also made six paintings of torn soup cans in early 1962, some of the last works revealing the artist's painterly hand. *Small Torn Campbell's Soup Can (Pepper Pot)* is based on a photograph by Warhol's assistant Edward Wallowitch, a professional photographer who shot several items Warhol would then paint. The effect of the weathered can was achieved with several washes of diluted black casein.

Dead Stop, 1958

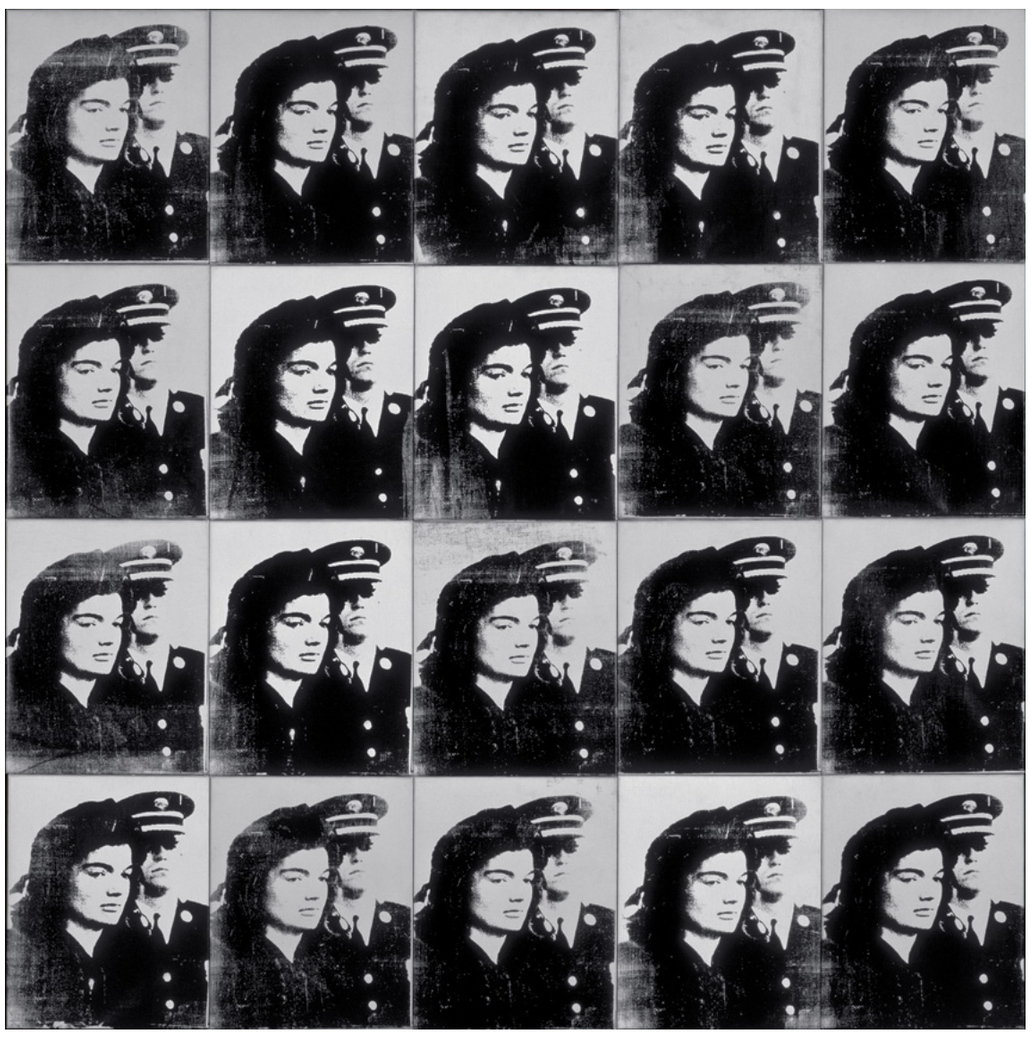
Warhol began his Death and Disaster series in June 1962, finding inspiration in a newspaper headline that read “129 DIE IN JET!” In the series Warhol included images of celebrities such as Marilyn Monroe, Jackie Kennedy, and Elizabeth Taylor, as well as news images of car accidents, electric chairs, race riots, and wanted posters. The universal specter of death cast a long shadow over Warhol’s work, and had appeared several years earlier in *Dead Stop*, a small drawing of a head-on collision.

Two Marilyns, 1962

Forty Gold Marilyns, 1980

After Marylin Monroe's suicide in August 1962, Warhol began making paintings of the actress, silkscreening the same tightly cropped portrait in a series of works produced throughout that fall. Silkscreen made the artist's hand even less visible, and the mechanical process employed in mass production made it easier to work serially. Warhol used the same source image for all his depictions of Monroe, including nearly two decades later in *40 Gold Marilyns*.

Before he chose to feature the Hollywood star, popular icons—from Campbell's soup cans and Coca-Cola bottles to teen idols and baseball players—were already an emerging theme in Warhol's work. In addition to Monroe, the artist made portraits of Jackie Kennedy and Elizabeth Taylor, which were also created in the presence or near presence of death in each woman's life. The Jackie paintings were begun shortly after the assassination of John F. Kennedy, Jr. Taylor had suffered from a severe case of pneumonia during the filming of *Cleopatra* a few years before Warhol started the Liz series. In these subjects, Warhol confronts the relationship between celebrity and grief lived in the public eye.



Twenty Jackies, 1964

Liz [Early Colored Liz], 1963

Twenty Jackies features a grid of portraits depicting the widow at JFK's funeral alongside a military escort. Art historians Georg Frei and Neil Printz describe Warhol's decision to tightly crop the images of Jackie as "making her the dramatic focus and emotional barometer of the Kennedy Assassination, shifting the historical narrative into a series of affective moments or portraits that register the subject over time."

The cerulean blue *Liz (Early Colored Liz)* is from a small series of Liz paintings with colored backgrounds. Like the Marilyn paintings, Warhol applied color block sections of paint, then silkscreened over with black ink. Taylor's portrait is based on a publicity photograph, and this work is made from the same screen as a series of works with silver backgrounds shown with the Elvis paintings at Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles in 1963.

The Kiss (Bela Lugosi), 1963

The *Kiss (Bela Lugosi)* is an ode to the iconic early film *Dracula*, 1931. Of course, Warhol's title is a bit tongue-in-cheek. While Mina, played by Helen Chandler, extends her neck in seeming pleasure, Dracula's bite is predatory. Warhol's work captures the paradoxical moment of death and immortality central to the vampiric tale.

Ambulance Disaster, 1963

In the Death and Disaster series, Warhol created many works picturing car accidents, highlighting the ubiquity of everyday tragedy. “It was Christmas or Labor Day—a holiday—and every time you turned on the radio, they said something like ‘4 million are going to die.’ That started it,” Warhol said. “But when you see a gruesome picture over and over again, it doesn’t really have any effect.” *Ambulance Disaster* intensifies the tragedy, adding a car accident to the already emergency. “Warhol’s car crash victims epitomize the ordinary American. Without a caption, identities remain anonymous,” wrote art historian Neil Printz. “The automobile as a vehicle of social mobility and leisure was a proud attainment of the working middle class during the prosperity of the post-war years; the car crash turns the American Dream into a nightmare.”

Race Riot, 1963

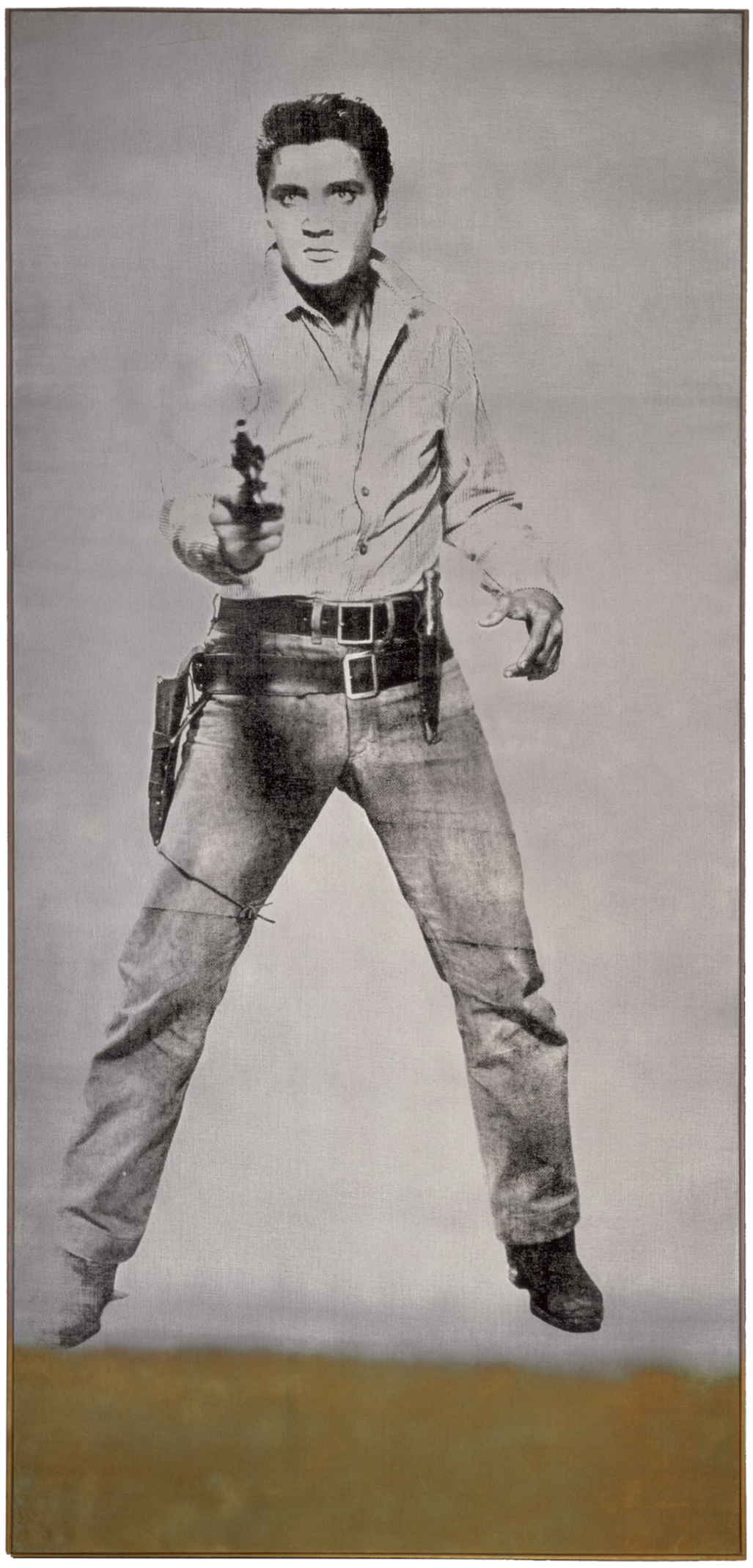
Warhol based the Race Riot series on news images from *Life* magazine, photographs taken by Charles Moore during civil rights marches, boycotts, and sit-ins in Birmingham, Alabama, in May 1963. Over three days, police used dogs and fire hoses to squash the demonstrations that were calling for an end to segregation. A large painting from the series was shown at Galerie Ileana Sonnabend in Paris in 1964, in the artist's first European exhibition themed "Death in America," which also featured several Death and Disaster works. Curator Okwui Enwezor noted that the subject of these works is neither death nor riot: "It would be better designated as belonging to the category of the painting of catastrophe—that is to say, the catastrophe of American racism and its historical effects on black lives."

Most Wanted Men No. 6, Thomas Francis C., 1964

Commissioned by architect Philip Johnson for the 1964 World's Fair in Queens, New York, Warhol created a public mural of the Thirteen Most Wanted Men. Featuring imagery taken from a New York Police Department booklet of criminal mugshots, the artwork was ultimately censored and painted over within days of its installation at the request of the Fair's organizers and politicians. Warhol used the screens from this work to create his Most Wanted painting series the same year. He lined the walls of his studio, which he called The Factory, with these images. Art historian Richard Meyer has notably interpreted these and other early Warhol works as coded queer images, reading the dual meanings of "most wanted" as related to both legality and sexuality. (The same year Warhol created the paintings, he also made *The Thirteen Most Beautiful Boys* and *Thirteen Most Beautiful Women*, films composed of three-minute takes in which each person sits as still as possible under bright lights.)

Big Electric Chair, 1967

In early 1963, as part of his Death and Disaster works, Warhol began a series of paintings of the electric chair. One of the first Electric Chairs was included in Warhol's "Death in America"-themed exhibition at Galerie Ileana Sonnabend in Paris in 1964. The same source image was used for all of the Electric Chairs, which the artist made between 1963 and 1971. The widely circulated photograph, from January 1953, depicts an electric chair at Sing Sing Prison in New York. According to the image's caption, this is the site where Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, American citizens convicted of spying for the Soviet Union, were "slated to be executed." This version from 1967 is part of a series of larger canvases made for an exhibition at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm.



Single Elvis [Ferus Type], 1963

First shown at Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles, most of the Elvis paintings in the series are black ink on a silver background, a stand-in for the silver screen. For the exhibition, Warhol sent the paintings rolled together in one long, untrimmed canvas. The artist instructed gallerist Irving Blum to cut and stretch the works. This version has gold paint sprayed at the bottom. The image was sourced from a publicity still for the 1960 Western *Flaming Star*. Elvis is pictured with a wide stance, reminiscent of his infamous hip-shaking, and pistol (or phallus) drawn. With this work, Warhol—who was openly gay—took on the construction of identity through the cowboy, the ultimate archetype of heroic masculinity. In doing so, he spoke directly to the barriers still present in art, a field that continues to uphold stereotypes of white male genius.

Flowers, 1964

For the Flowers series, Warhol sourced an image from the June 1964 issue of *Modern Photography*. In addition to tightly cropping the image, a practice Warhol often employed, here he moved one of the flowers and rotated the image entirely. He also copied the center of the flower on the upper right, rotated and inverted it, and imposed it onto the flower on the upper left. At first the Flowers appear surprisingly traditional like still-life painting, but they are as ambiguous as any subject Warhol selected. They may be symbolic of death or funerary flowers, in relation to his then-recent Death and Disaster series. Or the Flowers may indicate a connection to interior design, through their zeitgeist chic quality and production at a variety of scales and colorways.

Self Portrait, 1966

In addition to portraits of celebrities, Warhol produced commissioned portraits and self-portraits. By the mid-1960s, Warhol himself had reached celebrity status, and his self-portraits became as famous as his images of Marilyn Monroe and Elizabeth Taylor. This work is from a series of self-portraits created from 1966 to 1967, all with this image of the artist's tightly cropped head, chin resting on his hand, with fingers partially covering his mouth. The pensive pose is coupled with a gaze slightly outside of the frame. The artist's face, half in shadow, is color-blocked into sections to accentuate the features, and with each version Warhol employed different color combinations.

Mao, 1973

From 1972 to 1973, Warhol made five series of Mao portraits, following Richard Nixon's visit to China. The source image was the frontispiece of *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*. The Mao paintings were Warhol's first series of non-commissioned paintings since 1968, when he was shot and nearly killed by writer Valerie Solanas. With the Mao series, Warhol also returned to painting with visible brushwork on the surface.

Superman (Myth Series), 1981

In the Myth series, Warhol created ten works based on characters of mythic proportion, a fitting subject decades into his career that interrogated celebrity and its effects. The series included actress Greta Garbo, the Wicked Witch of the West from *The Wizard of Oz*, Mickey Mouse, Santa Claus, Uncle Sam, the southern "mammy" caricature, Howdy Doody, Dracula, Superman, and himself casting a shadow. The image Warhol used to create *Superman (Myth Series)* came from the Warner Brothers archive. The triple outline of the figure is reminiscent of both Warhol's early hand-drawn commercial work as well as his early silkscreens, which played with optical effects by layering the same image in different colorways slightly off grid to mimic dimensionality or motion.

Rorschach, 1984

This massive painting is over thirteen feet tall and was created as part of a series inspired by the amorphous inkblots. Developed by the Swiss psychiatrist Hermann Rorschach in the early twentieth century, the Rorschach test consists of ten standardized blots that a patient deciphers. In this collection, Warhol invented his own Rorschachesque work by painting one side of a canvas and then folding it vertically to imprint the other half. Warhol noted, “I thought that when you went to places like hospitals, they tell you to draw and make the Rorschach Tests. I wish I’d known there was a set.” Due to this misinterpretation, Warhol’s Rorschach series is one of the few in which the artist does not rely on preexisting images. Still, as writer Lynne Tillman aptly points out, “no artist could make the problem plainer: whatever art one makes, viewers project onto it.”

Camouflage, 1986

Warhol began a series of camouflage paintings in 1986, taking up a subject that is at once abstract and familiar, much like the Rorschach works. “*Camouflage*, as painting, is a representation—a representation of a schematic diagram that is itself a strategic representation of nature,” describes curator Donna De Salvo. Since the early nineteenth century, camouflage has been used in war to conceal. Warhol’s camouflage paintings range from traditional greens and browns to bright, vibrant colors, and from patterned repeats to self-portraits.

Statue of Liberty (Fabis), 1986

Nearly twenty-five years before Warhol made this work, he created his first two paintings of the Statue of Liberty, which explored optical effects using red and green overlays. Taking on the subject at the height of the civil rights movement, these initial paintings might signal two distinct Americas: an American ideal and the reality of its short fallings. Warhol returned to the iconic image many times and in 1986, one hundred years after the statue was erected, he made *Statue of Liberty (Fabis)* as a part of a series using red, white, and blue camouflage. A logo from the French cookie company Fabis appears at the bottom left with the French and American flags, a nod to the monument's origin.

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