‘What is Pop Art?’
A Revised Transcript of Gene Swenson’s 1963 Interview with Andy Warhol

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In March 2016 I came across a set of cassette tapes in the archive of critic and curator Gene Swenson, best remembered today for his defining interviews with the Pop artists, published in ARTnews in November 1963 and February 1964 as a two-part series titled ‘What is Pop Art? Answers from 8 Painters’. The cassette tapes contain recordings of Swenson’s original conversations with the Pop artists: raw material that, as it turns out, was heavily edited and reconfigured for publication, at points altering the meaning of the artists’ words by excising controversial and explicitly queer content. In what follows, I offer a partial transcription of the recording of Swenson’s original conversation with Andy Warhol. Warhol’s then-new studio assistant Gerard Malanga joined in for the conversation, along with two other friends named ‘John’ and ‘Rory’.1 The entire conversation runs 90 minutes, I transcribe here approximately 45 minutes. Bracketed ellipses indicate stretches of recorded conversation that are not included in this transcription, mostly inaudible banter. Swenson begins the interview by asking Warhol, ‘What do you say about homosexuals?’ – signaling from the outset the extent to which the published version was heavily redacted. Warhol’s response to Swenson’s question shapes his subsequent reflection on the interview’s chief question ‘What is Pop Art?’ For an analysis of this conversation, and of its implications for reconsidering the importance of Swenson’s queer practice, see Jennifer Sichel, “Do you think Pop Art’s queer?” Gene Swenson and Andy Warhol’, published in this issue of Oxford Art Journal, pp. 1–25.

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[tape machine clicks on]
Swenson Now we have to start talking again. What do you say about homosexuals?
Warhol Oh, you have to ask me a leading question.
Swenson Do you know a lot of closet queens who are homosexuals who are [laughing] Abstract Expressionists?
Warhol Yes. [laughing] Uh...
Malanga [laughing] Who are they? Who are these girls?
Warhol No, I’m, I’m...
Malanga Michele Goldberg. [laughing]
Warhol Really! How fantastic. Who else?
John Al Leslie.
Malanga Norma Bluhm.
Warhol Norma Bluhm? [laughing]
Swenson [shouting] Ivan Karp!
Malanga [laughing] Eva Karp, that is. How bout, uh... no... uh... think...
Swenson You’d have hours of content.

1. The ‘John’ in question is likely either John Giorno, who starred in Warhol’s 1963 film Sleep, or the poet John Giorno, who appears in a 1963 photo-booth strip alongside Warhol and Malanga.
Swenson: Is that what Abstract Expressionism is all about? [laughing] They're moralists, they really are. It's inconceivable to me that somebody would say about a painter that he's a homosexual, you know, as if it were a kind of criticism. You know, just inconceivable, as... as...

Warhol: I think that the whole interview on me should be just on homosexuality.
John: Okay, well then let's start. What do you know about homosexuals? Andy, have you ever met a homosexual?
Malanga: Does your can represent a penis? [laughing]
Warhol: No, it can't be like that.
John: I understand that... I understand that... New York is homosexual, is slightly homosexual...
Malanga: The crust of the middle class.
Warhol: No, it has to be on a different, a kind of different... No, it should be a different... it should be a different, differently than you know just sort of like, you know, sorta...
Swenson: Different than direct?
Warhol: Yeah.
Swenson: Like, uh, when you were drawing shoes, did you want to draw women's shoes?
Warhol: Yes.
Swenson: [laughing] Why did you like to draw women's shoes? Did you see yourself being put under the heel of one of them?
Warhol: Yes.
Malanga: It made a star? Do you feel like a star wearing women's shoes?
Warhol: [laughing] Oh, yes! No it can't be like that, can it? Well it has to be something like the idea that, uh, uh... that all Pop artists aren't homosexual. And it really doesn't... you know... And everybody should be a machine, and everybody should be, uh, like...
Swenson: I don't understand the business about -- if all Pop artists are not homosexual, then what does this have to do with being a machine?
Warhol: Well, I think everybody should like everybody.
Swenson: You mean you should like both men and women?
Warhol: Yeah.
Swenson: Yeah? Sexually and in every other way?
Warhol: Yeah.
Swenson: And that's what Pop art's about?
Warhol: Yeah, it's liking things.
Swenson: And liking things is being like a machine?
Warhol: Yeah. Well, because you do the same thing every time. You do the same thing over and over again. And you do the same...
Swenson: You mean sex?
Warhol: Yeah, and everything you do.
John: Without any discrimination?
Warhol: Yeah. And you use things up, like, you use people up.
Swenson: And you approve of it?
Warhol: Yes. [laughing] Because it's all a fantasy...
Swenson: Toscanini, and the critic Hagin. He visited Toscanini, and he visited him several times when they were playing some tape recordings, and, uh, Toscanini took off a record and said 'Now, Hagin what do you want?' He said, 'I don't care, whatever you want to play...' [pause] And Toscanini, he sort of incredible, said, 'You mean, you just come here to be with me? You don't want anything now?' He couldn't believe that somebody didn't want something.
Warhol: Oh. [pause] Well, I think you should ask people like, uh, Jim Dine and the other people what they think of... you know, just one other person or something. On the same subject, I think it would be great. Say, on homosexuality. I think you should ask Jim Dine.
John: Oldenburg too.
Swenson: It’s sort of funny. Because I talked to Lichtenstein and Indiana too, and in Warhol: Oh, yeah, well I think that’s going to be great now. If Roy said that, that’s going to be fantastic because... like, I just heard... Hartman, Grace, um... Malanga: Hartigan.

Warhol: Well, Hess said something about the other end of things. Is it a fad? Do they think it’s a fad?

Swenson: What?

Warhol: Pop Art.

Swenson: He asked me to ask... Warhol: Oh, yeah. It’s a fad. [laughing] Put that in my interview, it’s a fad.

Swenson: It’s sort of funny. Because I talked to Lichtenstein and Indiana too, and in both cases... you see, Gottlieb had said something like, ‘Abstract art will last 1000 years.’ And, you know, neither of them think their art is going to last – Indiana said ‘I don’t care whether my art influences future generations or not.’ And, and uh, Lichtenstein said, ‘I’m going to get tired of comic strips in a year or two.’ [laughing] It’s this whole business of... I mean, the Abstract Expressionists were obsessed with eternity.

Warhol: Oh, yeah, well I think that’s going to be great now. If Roy said that, that’s going to be fantastic because... like, I just heard... Hartman, Grace, um... Malanga: Hartigan.

Warhol: Grace Hartigan quit working. She’s giving up art altogether. And like, how bad it is now when Al Leslie is changing his style and doing it in a different way. But I think, I think it should work to a point where an artist can change his style without feeling bad. Like what Roy said, ‘Well, I might not be painting comic strips in a year,’ and he might be painting something else. And I think that would be so great, you know, like, that you can change your style without feeling that you’ve... uh...

Swenson: Abandoned a way of life.

Warhol: Yeah, and I think that’s what’s going to happen. That’s going to be the whole new scene, I think.

Malanga: That’s the whole thing with Abstract Expressionists, they couldn’t change their style.

Warhol: No, but I mean...

Malanga: They’re afraid to.

Warhol: Or, if they can’t do any more then they should just quit. Or something. It doesn’t matter what you do, just so you do it right.

Swenson: Well, style for the Abstract Expressionists was a kind of philosophy, if you will. Barbara Rose made an interesting point in that thing about Pop Art is not a style. One person paints in the manner of comic strips, one person paints in the manner of signs, billboard painters, and another in a different manner.

Warhol: She’s right, I think.

Swenson: [pause] But you know, the whole Pop thing. Where did the name come from? Who started it?

Warhol: It came from Alloway, I guess. 4

Swenson: From Alloway?

Warhol: Yeah.
Swenson: But, he likes it.

Warhol: I know. Well, Pop. Is Pop a bad name? Or...

Swenson: Do you think it is?

Malanga: Well, there's the New Realism too.

Warhol: Well, the name sounds so awful, it really does.

Swenson: It's such an ugly name.

Malanga: There's Pop, and there's Dada.

Warhol: But I never thought Dada had something to do with Pop, it's sorta funny, the name is so similar. They're really the same name. It's so funny. I never realized that until one day I saw the two names together.

Malanga: But think of Pop in a different connotation.

Warhol: It's such an awful, it really is such a funny name. But I don't know what could be...

Swenson: Indiana felt more a relationship to Dada than Lichtenstein.

Warhol: Really? You're kidding. Why?

Swenson: Well he felt the relationship to Duchamp, to Duchamp's formal works. *Nude Descending a Staircase*, that sort of stuff.

Malanga: But, Dada is just nonsense, where, uh, Pop art is sense.

Swenson: Except with Rauschenberg, for instance. When he looked at Dada he didn't see it as anti-art, or didn't see it in terms of the way the artists wanted it to be seen. But, just saw something marvelous.

Malanga: There's just a whole point.

Warhol: He did, he said this?

Swenson: Yeah.

Warhol: Oh, maybe he was just trying to, oh, you think he just said it to be different?

Swenson: No, no.

Warhol: You know who I think is so interesting... you know well, John Cage and Merce Cunningham, John Cage is really so responsible for so much that's going on, I guess. He really seems to be.

Malanga: La Monte Young?

Warhol: Well, La Monte Young is really just following John Cage. La Monte is very young.

Swenson: There's an article in one of quarterlies about how much influence John Cage has had on Rauschenberg and all others.

Warhol: Where was that?

Swenson: In *Hudson Review*. 5

Warhol: Oh really? Who wrote it?

Swenson: I don't know. Some professor. It's a pedantic kind of thing, but it makes very interesting kind of points. Big, highfalutin words.

Warhol: Oh really, maybe we should just copy some of the things and I should just read lines from it.

John: Can I read poetry that way?

Malanga: Yeah, make up a poem. [muttering]

Warhol: Is this still going on?

Swenson: Yeah.

Warhol: Well, we didn't say anything, Gene, did we?

Malanga: Be quiet, listen.

Swenson: Well, I'm not going to copy it all down.

Warhol: Oh, Oh, but uh...

Swenson: But I'll keep the tape, and use it against all of ya! [laughing]

Warhol: But, I think it's uh... I think you could really... I, I would want that on my interview, you know that. You know what we were talking about...

Swenson: What?

Warhol: You know, the homosexuality, and... and... and...

Swenson: You want it in your interview?

Warhol: Yeah. But it should be on somebody else's too, just to, uh...

Swenson: Oldenburg?

Warhol: Yeah.

Swenson: Who would be the best one?
Warhol: Uh, Rosenquist.
Swenson: Rosenquist?
Warhol: Yeah.
Malanga: He's too gentle!
Warhol: Yeah, he's so gentle. No, no, he's just... no, I mean, he's sweet.
Swenson: [pause] Do you think Pop Art's queer? [laughing] I'll ask Rosenquist that.
Warhol: Yesss! That would be fantastic!
Malanga: And so this time next Sunday for the Rosenquist interview on the same tape...
Warhol: Oh, that's really marvelous. And Jim Dine too, just to get his reaction.
Malanga: No, Bob Indiana! Awww, are you kidding me!
Warhol: No, well you can't do it on everyone's.
Malanga: No, but Bob Indiana should have that question asked to him... because he'd go, 'Oooh, no that doesn't make sense...' [laughing]
Warhol: Is he like that?
Malanga: Yeah, he came to my poetry reading wearing a knit t-shirt, a net t-shirt, a t-shirt, but it's a net.
Warhol: Oh I like Bob.
Malanga: He went into this big thing about how cool it was to wear it.
Warhol: But then there's another subject... this idea we were talking about, uhhh... [pause] What were we talking about before?
Swenson: On anti-style.
Warhol: Yeah, but something else too.
Swenson: What about the business of subject matter? As a way of, um...
Warhol: I was thinking on style, how, like uh, it doesn't matter what you do. You can change it, become an Abstract Expressionist, the next week you can turn into a Pop artist or something else. Without feeling that you've given up something.
Swenson: A way of life?
Warhol: Yeah, yeah you should write that.
Swenson: Campbell's soup cans are not a way of life...? [laughing]
Warhol: No, no.
Swenson: They're almost in a way of saying, they're not a way of life.
Warhol: Oh, yeah.
Swenson: I mean, the business of subject matter is one way of making style less important, and making it possible to change. How did you ever get the idea of a silkscreen? What was your first silkscreen?
Warhol: Uh, it was money.
Swenson: Money?
Warhol: And I didn't want to draw it that many times.
Swenson: You mean for one of those big paintings?
Warhol: Yeah.
Swenson: So you got a little silkscreen made. But you drew the drawing for the silkscreen?
Warhol: Yeah.
Swenson: But then you decided to use the photograph, because it was easier.
Warhol: It was easier, yeah. [laughing] And now I want somebody to do all my paintings for me, because I think it would be much easier.
Malanga: Andy, I'll do one of your paintings for you.
Warhol: But you get too creative, Gerry.
Malanga: I'll get un-creative for ya.
Warhol: Okay. [laughing] I think every painting, every image should be clear and simple and the same as the first one, but I haven't been able to do that.
Malanga: Because every day we turn on and get hard.
Warhol: [laughing] Gerry's very good at turning on. Uh, what other... uh... Swenson: Well, you ought to say something nasty about, uh, imitation problems.
Warhol: Oh, no. I think it would be so great if more people would take up silkscreens so that, in turn, no one would know whether my picture was mine or whether it was somebody else.
Swenson: You mean, people do imitation.
Warhol: Yeah, I just think it would be fantastic.
Malanga: Well, I could do that with your silkscreens.
Warhol: Oh yeah.
Malanga: Let me be the first imitator. [laughing]
Warhol: Oh how fantastic. That would be so great. Well, actually we should trade screens. I should trade screens with Bob Rauschenberg. Oh, wouldn’t that be fantastic!
John: You know how you should get yourself in the news. You steal Andy’s silkscreen for your painting and then sell it as an Andy Warhol. And the Andy Warhol could come into court and say it’s not an Andy Warhol, and it would just be so great, it would be in all the papers. [laughing]
Warhol: You want to do it?
Malanga: The thing, you’d back out afterwards. You coward. We were supposed to hang a painting in the Museum of Modern Art’s men’s room.
Warhol: Oh yeah, we were going to do that.
Swenson: You mean, take one of yours in?
Warhol: Yeah, isn’t that great.
Malanga: Would they arrest you, for taking one in?
Warhol: I don’t know. No, absolutely no.
Swenson: Besides, you smuggle one in.
Warhol: Yeah, then you sort of put it on the wall. Tape, kind of paper, it can’t be very big.
John: Then you’d carry it in a magazine, because they make you check parcels.
Swenson: No, you’d wear a long coat, and stick it in, in the back.
Warhol: Yeah. We’re doing that. Ted [name inaudible] is going to do it. Isn’t that a great idea?
Swenson: Did they ever get your paintings? They were supposed to.
Warhol: Yeah.
Swenson: They accepted it?
Warhol: Yeah.
Malanga: Did they hang it up?
Warhol: I think it was December when they had the acquisition. Isn’t it? They have a Larry Poons too. [muttering]
Malanga: I never remember what Larry Poons’s paintings look like... Warhol: They’re dots. [muttering] Oh, he’s nice.
Malanga: He is not. He tried to steal your tie one night.
Warhol: Oh, well he was drunk.
Malanga: I don’t care. I am to protect you.
Warhol: You didn’t protect me... you let him take the tie.
Malanga: No I didn’t.
Warhol: Who was it that wanted to ask, I can’t remember.
Malanga: Henri, and uh... Charles Henri and I... Warhol: Oh, Charles Henri who asked! It was Charles Henri who asked. Oh, Gene, you have to meet Charles Henri when he comes back.
Malanga: We tried to turn Jasper Johns on one night, but he was so puritanical. He was afraid.
Swenson: Well, who was that guy, the movie-maker who had some stuff up here one time?
Warhol: Who?
Swenson: Yale movie maker... Malanga: Stan Brakhage?
Warhol: de Antonio? Who?
Swenson: A play director.
Warhol: Was it at my place?
Swenson: Yeah, and Paul was there. And Marisol.
Warhol: Oh, Dennis Deegan.
Swenson: Dennis Deegan. He had some pot but it was so bad. You know, it didn’t make you feel anything.
Malanga Oh, we got stoned last night. Forget about it... I was zocked.

Warhol Do you get high on one smoke?

Swenson Well, I mean if it's good stuff.

Warhol Well, Gerry does, he just takes one puff... I can't, I never even feel it, I don't know why. I've had a pipe and it just, uh...

Swenson Well, the stuff that Dennis had, it was a guarantee.

Warhol Oh, yeah.

Swenson That's the way I used to live.

Warhol Really?

Swenson Well, you were stoned out of your head?

Swenson No, no. I'd go to work, I'd just feel awful and lousy all day long. I'd go home at night, and be sort of tired, and eat a little bit. Because if I took the tea first, I would not get hungry.

Malanga You wouldn't? Gee, I could eat...

Swenson I would not eat anything. And so I'd eat a little bit simply because I knew I'd ought to. And then I'd... I'd always have a horrible, horrible headache. Then I'd smoke about halfway through the second cigarette... and I would be just beautiful... the world would be beautiful...

Warhol What do you do now, Gene?

Swenson I don't have much, I don't have any source for it anymore. Then it was that I would go out every night after I got high.

Warhol Would you take an amphetamine too?

Malanga Ooooh, whoo, woo, woo... Amphetamine is horrible for me...

Swenson I mean, with, with pot.

Warhol Gene, you must have been wild.

Swenson It was.

Warhol Where did you get the amphetamine?

John I got sick on amphetamine. [muttering]

Swenson Yeah, with, with pot.

Malanga You're taking trips...

Swenson Yeah, yeah... [laughter] Shit. But the next day, my god... cotton in my mouth.

Malanga I used to get sick on amphetamine.

Warhol But it's supposed to last for two days, isn't it?

Malanga Nah, sixteen hours, eight hours... But I used to get sick for like two, three days straight after taking 'em. My stomach shrunk...

Warhol What do you take, John?

John The only thing I've ever tried to take is poppers, and, uh... [laughter] But it didn't work, because I didn't inhale properly... and everyone else is having a wonderful time.

Malanga Well that doesn't mean it's bad...

John Yeah, maybe I just took it wrong.

Malanga [in a mock flirtatious, sexy voice] Oh, Andy, you're fat... baby fat...

Warhol I'm getting rid of my baby fat.

Swenson For your Ileana catalogue, I'll just write a description of you.

Warhol How fantastic, that's great, all right. How wonderful! Isn't that wonderful?

Malanga What can I do for my poem? My death poem on you?

Warhol Oh, no!

Malanga My death poem on your paintings.
Swenson [inaudible] like a corpse... 
Warhol Yes. Oh Gene, that would be fantastic! It’s a wonderful idea. [laughing, kissing noises] Oh, Gerry!
Malanga [shouting, laughing] Rape Andy!
Warhol Is it happening?
Malanga [laughing] What, are you kidding, you don’t rape. [laughing]
Warhol Maybe Gene rapes over there. . .
Malanga Andy, what are you setting me up for? I can set myself up. . . [laughing] 
You’re the one who needs to be set up all the time.
Warhol We’re going to do movies, won’t that be great. Next week, this week, or this weekend.
Swenson Saturday.
Warhol We’ll have to get some marijuana. Do you want to do it on marijuana?
Swenson Let’s get some poppers? Poppers. [muttering]
Warhol I though poppers were amphetamine.
Malanga No, amyl nitrate is poppers.
Warhol Oh.
Swenson You’ve had it while sex? [sic]
Malanga Near climax, I’d break one open. [loud, howling laughing] You cum twice as much, I think.
Swenson Really?
Malanga I don’t know... [muttering, laughing]
Swenson Well, if you’re a masochist, it’s wild.
Malanga I turned a friend on in a bathroom which was like two inches by two inches. 
And we were so paranoid, we didn’t want to leave the bathroom. We were scared. I was all crouched down, on the floor, I didn’t know what the fuck 
was happening.
Swenson Oh my god! You know, I’ve been all tied up.
Warhol Really?
Swenson Yeah, and they give you that stuff. I mean, you know, you say, ’Don’t do it! 
Don’t do it!’ Because I can’t really stand pain very much.
Malanga Why do you get beat up for?
Swenson I can’t really stand pain very much. I didn’t like it. And then, you do one of 
those things where you go ‘Uhhhh, do it some more, do it some more, do it some more...’
Warhol Oh really?
Swenson Yeah.
Warhol And it doesn’t hurt?
Swenson I mean, it’s like beautiful!
Warhol Oh. But doesn’t it hurt afterwards?
Swenson Oh, I don’t know.
Warhol Huh? No? Oh, well they do it so well... But I mean, uh, being a sadist and 
being beaten and stuff, if you can really do it well, it really doesn’t hurt, does 
it? I mean, it’s just the idea that, you know.
Swenson It hurts.
Warhol It does, really? Oh. I though it really wouldn’t hurt. It really hurts?
Swenson It really hurts.
Warhol But how long can you take it for? Five minutes? Two seconds?
Swenson Well, if you’re tied up there’s nothing you can do.
Warhol And it goes on for hours?
Swenson It can.
Warhol Are you serious, Gene?
Swenson Yeah.
Warhol Oh. Have you done it recently?
Swenson No, not too recently.
Warhol Oh. Did you do anything exciting in Paris? Was it different in Paris?
Malanga Andy, what are you asking such questions for? You know you’ll never become 
a sadist.
Swenson  Paris isn't very S&M. London is.
Warhol  [responding to Malanga: I’m asking for my new paintings.] Oh, you did it in London?
Swenson  London is very S&M.
Warhol  Did you do it in London? Did you?
Swenson  London’s real sadist. Everybody in London is S&M.
Warhol  Oh, yes, I just met a boy from London. And, uh...
Swenson  That’s where I met Jacques...
Warhol  Oh, Jacques. But Jacques has settled down with this nice boy. [laughing] Is that all finished?
Swenson  You don’t know what happened when he was in London?
Warhol  He was with an English boy. Was this this summer?
Swenson  Yeah. This past summer. You know what happened in London? He got beat up so much that he had to have two people carry him to the plane. He went out to get into the cab and he fainted. And he... where he’d been beaten up his legs started bleeding and everything, and they took him back into the hotel. And he said ‘I’ve gotta make that plane.’ And two people in the hotel, which was an S&M hotel, took him to the plane. [laughing]
John  Basically, sadists and masochists took him to the plane?
Warhol  How fantastic...
Swenson  They made it so that he would suffer on the plane.
Warhol  Oh, then you must have changed your roles and beat him up?
Swenson  No, I wasn’t in on that last...
Warhol  No, not on that thing, but I mean, was this before? Last year?
Swenson  No, there was no S&M and that sort of thing.
Malanga  I like straight sex, I don’t need this S&M thing...
Swenson  I don’t really either. I’ve given it up.
Warhol  You have? But what is it?
Swenson  Yeah, I really have, I really have because it was, I mean, you know, dabbling in it a little bit, that’s sort of exciting.
Malanga  [interrupting] You gotta do it all the way or not at all.
Swenson  But I got involved in London in a way that was almost, that was heading toward it going all the way. And I didn’t like it, I didn’t like it.
Warhol  What was going all the way?
Swenson  I mean, I mean like, it might not have ended in, you know, in sort of, I don’t know whether you’d call it murder or suicide. But, but there was someone who wanted to do it, I mean, who wanted to push it as far as it would go.
Warhol  Oh, really?
Swenson  And I sort of, except that I saw something happening, and, you know, something happened inside of me. One time I went to this one session where things were going really violent. And I suddenly realized that my face was all twisted up, and my insides were all twisted up, and everything about me was twisted up. And it was so ugly. I mean, you know, just so ugly.
Warhol  Was it just, uh, a scene? Or was it, you know, somebody doing it to somebody else?
Swenson  Somebody doing it to somebody else.
Warhol  Oh.
Swenson  But it was like those horrible pictures in the newspapers.
Warhol  Oh, really?
Swenson  Because they don’t really, they don’t... they’re not as effective, it seems to me, as... I mean, you know, the pictures you use are not ugly in the same...
Warhol  Oh yeah.
Swenson  The subject matter may be ugly but the pictures are not ugly. Why don’t you use ugly pictures?
Warhol  Well, uh, will you find me some?
Swenson  They’re in the newspapers all the time.
Warhol  Well I use some of those.
Malanga  Those actual ones? You never use those actual ones.
Warhol  No...
Swenson: But you wouldn’t use ones like the ones that are in *This Week*, would you? Of that burned baby...

Warhol: Oh yeah, yeah, I plan to use all those. But they don’t, you know, they don’t come out that way. They just don’t...

Swenson: They wouldn’t have any effect, because they’re so horrible, it seems to me.

Warhol: Yeah, that’s why I feel these paintings that I do. You do them over so many times, there really is no effect.

Swenson: These pictures that you use, they’re not necessarily...

Warhol: Yeah.

Swenson: I mean, you just need one of those pictures that are really ugly in order for it not to have any effect. Don’t you think?

Warhol: Oh, yeah. Well, I was planning to get them all, I wanted to. I mean... but I’ve used *Enquirer* pictures, I have. Most of my pictures are from *The Enquirer*. They’re not the real gruesome, gruesome ones.

Swenson: Because the gruesome ones are so gruesome that they don’t have any effect?

Warhol: Yeah, yeah.

John: What time is the movie?

Warhol: Uh, I don’t know. We can leave soon. Yeah, we should leave now. But the whole point is, uh, the whole point is... um...uh... uhhhh... uhhhh...

Malanga: Uhhh, uhhh what?

Warhol: Um, I think I lost it.

[Laughter, followed by approximately five minutes of laughter and indecipherable chatting and roughhousing. Malanga jokingly attempts to ‘hypnotize’ Warhol until they leave together to see a movie and the tape machine clicks off.]

[Tape machine clicks back on after five seconds of silence. Swenson is talking mid-sentence. Warhol and Malanga, and a man named Rory are with him. As the conversation progresses, it becomes clear that they are at Swenson’s apartment for dinner. The following forty-five minutes of conversation are muffled, rambling, and, at times, barely audible.]

Warhol: Oh, well tell me about that thing that happened to you...

Rory: Well, I was going out to Versailles and I was waiting for some friends, so I was killing some time and I needed a new pair of sunglasses. So I went in the photo booth to take my photograph. And I was sitting there, and after I finished taking my photograph I pulled the curtain aside, and there was a man with a machine gun and a mask on his face, pointing his machine gun at me.

Warhol: Why? Did you pull the curtain again?

Rory: No, I just sat there. Oh, and in the meantime I heard a lot of banging going on in the background, and I thought ‘Oh, these French kids are just like the kids on 81st Street are playing with firecrackers. So anyways, *inaudible* pointed at me, and he just stood there for a while and I just sat there, because what can you do? And I was pretty sure he wasn’t going to kill me. Then he walked off, he was running away honestly, because... and then I sat there, because I could hear somebody else shooting, there was a lot of shooting. And I looked down, and I was sitting right here, and over there, just about less than ten feet away, there was a lot of packages. Like when I had *inaudible* someone was standing right outside there, you know...

Warhol: Well, what happened?

Rory: Well anyway, it turned out five armed robbers had held up a... uh... it was the train station in the airline terminal, they held up the airline terminal. They stole $100,000.५

Warhol: Really, and the guy had a mask on?

Rory: Yup.

Warhol: What kind?

Rory: It was sort of grey, I think. Over his face, you know.

Warhol: Over his eyes?

Rory: It was, you know, just like in the movies. You know, like...

Warhol: Was it form fitting? Or, you know, just a handkerchief?

Rory: It was a piece of cloth.

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5. A number of high-profile armed robberies in France were reported in US newspapers around 1963. A headline in the *Washington Post* from 3 January 1963 proclaims ‘Armed Robberies Worrying France.’ On 24 April, the *New York Times* reported a ‘$200,000 Robbery in Cannes’; and on 29 June the *Chicago Tribune* reported ‘Escape with $14,000 in French Robbery’.
Warhol: Oh, how strange... You should say ‘oops’ and then pull back... [inaudible]
well did they question you?
Rory: No, I just walked off.
Warhol: Oh you did? Oh.
Rory: I didn’t want to get involved with the French police. [inaudible]
Warhol: Well, were you shaking?
Rory: I wasn’t shaking. You saw me that day...
Malanga: No, no...
Rory: I wasn’t shaking! I was shaking because of other things.
Warhol: Well, it was so funny. Gerry and I and Sharon [name inaudible] went to see Dr No at 42nd Street and Broadway. And Dr No is fantastic, fantastic and so corny. So we walked outside, and somebody threw a cherry bomb right in front of us, you know. We’re in this big crowd on 42nd Street. And blood, I see blood all over, and, you know, people, they’re rushing with blood here, and stuff. And it just destroyed me. Because the movie was so good, and I was so scared. And I just fell apart, I really did, because I thought I was bleeding all over or something. And it happened right in front of me, the bomb was just thrown right there. Lucky it missed the three of us, it hit everybody else, you know. Or I don’t even know, how does that work?
Rory: What kind of bomb?
Warhol: Cherry bomb. And so it really cuts you. But I don’t know whether it gets into you. Does it get into you? Or does it just sorta...
Malanga: It tears flesh.
Warhol: But what tears the flesh? Is the gun powder that just sort of comes up and hits against your flesh? Is that what it is?
Rory: There must be some little pieces of something in it.
Warhol: The blood was sort of, it was like, uh, like, somebody just took a, a dog and sort of scratched you, and so you were bleeding in spots, and it was sort of all over people’s face and hands and legs... But it was just so funny and the movie was so good and it gives you the feeling that nothing can really... but Gerry was good, he just wanted to get out of the scene. But the funny thing... I just read in the paper like a week ago that more people are throwing them, and it’s just part of the scene down there, they’re just throwing them. And hurting people. It really is frightening. [inaudible] The whole thing was just so cool and marvelous. And so...
Warhol: I thought you were going to record tonight?
Swenson: I might.
Warhol: Oh, you are? [laughing] I want to be very serious. Will you write a script for me? So I can be really tremendously serious.
Swenson: You could be serious anyway.
Warhol: But why don’t you write a script so that...
Malanga: But you can be natural, just speak in...
Warhol: But I think you should write the script.
Swenson: You have to give me some clues.
Warhol: All right. Before we record it, it has to be like... uh... really...
Swenson: What kind of questions do you want me to ask you about?
Warhol: What were you going to ask? We can practice.
[...]
Swenson: What are you working on?
Warhol: Oh, just the things for Ileana.7
Swenson: What?
Warhol: Oh, just the death things.
Swenson: Which death things?
Warhol: A guy was hit out of a car and landed on, hanging on the telegraph pole by his car. And the car is burning.
[someone says] Have you seen the newspaper article from The Enquirer? The Crash that Made Cops Cry?
Warhol: Oh, it was just sick, Ohh.
Warhol: Well, everything I’ve just been doing has been death pictures.
Swenson: When did you start? Was there a picture that made you start?
Warhol: Yeah, I guess it was the one from, um, The Enquirer, 129 Die in Plane Crash, that’s the thing. Oh and Marilyn. And I realized that I must have been doing everything that was dead, and so... It was Christmas. It must have been... or a holiday. Because, you know, every time you’re on a roll, it’s a holiday and they say... you’re going to die... so and then I started saving them.
Swenson: Saving them?
Warhol: Saving the ones from the newspaper, you know, like the car and things, and jumping out... Swenson: Now you’re obsessed with them?
Warhol: Yeah.
Malanga: Do you have to see a psychoanalyst?
Warhol: Yeah. [laughing] So I thought the show in Paris should be called maybe ‘Death in America.’ Or something.
Swenson: Well, when did you do the Electric Chair? Was that after the, uh...?
Warhol: Oh yeah, well that was part of it. Well, you never saw the Electric Chair either.
Swenson: I saw, uh, yeah, I did see it.
Warhol: That was at the Guggenheim. Oh, well you did see it, because I left you a booklet... And then I gave it to Paul, and Paul got you on or something... You missed the Guggenheim show.
Swenson: But I have seen one of your Electric Chair pictures. [inaudible] But you’re still doing the Elizabeth Taylor?
Warhol: Oh, no that was... I started those a long time ago, and then I redid them over again.
Swenson: Why?
Warhol: Because, uh... they looked so deathly... and I, uh, wasn’t certain she was going to die.
Swenson: You mean, they looked deathly before?
Warhol: Yeah, and now I sorta put paint on it, and so it goes up... because the Elvises’ have guns... And the show in California was going to be people being killed in movies.
Swenson: Like who?
Warhol: Well, like James Kenyon killing somebody or Marlon Brando killing somebody... But then I got this marvelous picture of Elvis standing there with two guns. So I just looked at the whole show and it looked so perfect.
Swenson: Where do you get them?
Warhol: It was just on 42nd Street. So I just decided to do... So it’s still part of the same imagery. [inaudible] So, do you think it’s a good idea? All those death pictures?
Swenson: Yeah. Yeah.
Warhol: Oh well I’ll have to show you more... Did you review this week? Or are we going out?
Swenson: I was reviewing last week.
Warhol: Oh. Are you doing any articles?
Swenson: Well, Hess asked me to do this series of interviews.
Warhol: Oh really! You mean, any interviews you want?
Swenson: No, no... nine or ten.
Warhol: Have you picked out? [Tape cuts out.]
[...]
Swenson: Tell me, what sexual symbolism is there in a Campbell’s soup can? [laughing]
Warhol: [laughing] Oh, yeah you should say things like that.
Malanga: There isn’t, though. Well we can make them up to make them sound true, like T.S. Elliott does.
Warhol: Oh, please write the whole script Gene, and I can... [someone says] No, come on, you have to answer that one... Swenson: Why did you start painting Campbell’s soup cans?
Warhol: Because I used to drink it.
Malanga: It tastes good.
Warhol: I used to have the same lunch every day for twenty years.
Swenson: Like, what?
Warhol: Soup and a sandwich.
Swenson: You mean, your mother would make it for you?
Malanga: That’s what your paintings are all the same, Andy... Andy, you realise your whole life has dominated you into a repetitive...
Warhol: Oh, I like that.
Malanga: I mean, everything is repetitive. Your shirts, you have like thousands of these shirts.
Warhol: Soup and a sandwich, soup for lunch... Malanga: Your paintings... Andy, that’s a communistic viewpoint.
Warhol: Is it?
Malanga: Sure.
Warhol: Well, I wanted to live at the Waldorf Towers...
Swenson: Do you read Brecht? You know, he’s a communist.
Warhol: Yeah.
Swenson: You know, sort of that’s his attitude. You know, he wants everybody to think alike.
Warhol: Well, I want everybody to think alike.
Malanga: Well that’s a communistic attitude.
Warhol: Is it?
Malanga: Sure it is. Everything’s got to be the same, no individuality.
Warhol: No, well I want everybody to be the same. But they don’t have to, uh...
Malanga: Well, you can’t have it that way.
Warhol: Well, it will happen all by itself. Because it is, it’s happening now. It’s happening now without even, uh...
Swenson: You mean everybody’s...
Warhol: Yeah, they’re wearing the same clothes, I mean, uh, some people think alike. It’s happening this way without even trying. So, I mean, if it’s working, why can’t it work without being communist?
Swenson: You mean, for us to be totally mechanised, for Russia to be totally mechanized?
Warhol: I mean, Russia is sort of doing it under government, and we’re doing it... it’s happening without even being under government here. Everybody looks alike and acts alike and we’ll be getting more and more that way, you know. And it will just sort of happen.
Swenson: And you like it?
Warhol: Yeah. [laughing] Everybody should wear the same uniform. [laughing] [someone says] Very tight pants? [laughing]
Warhol: Yeah. [laughing]
Malanga: Not everyone’s going to be equal, that’s for sure. Some of them are going to have little ones, some of them are going to have big gigantic ones.
Warhol: What?
Malanga: Joints.
Warhol: Oh. [laughing] [someone says] Everyone wears tighter pants than they do in America.
Malanga: Because they’re so conscious of themselves.
Warhol: Oh, well I think they look better too. Although I do like the heavy loose pants on people too. Well, I saw a lady who had clothes from 1930 yesterday on the street, you know, the Joan Crawford look, and she looked fantastic. Really looked fantastic. I couldn’t believe that I could ever like that look again. And it was someone who looked like she might have worn the same clothes, and she had sandals on, and something, and it was just so unbelievable. It looked so good. You want everybody to look alike, don’t you Gene?
Swenson: I wouldn’t care.
Warhol: Really?
Malanga: Just as long as it doesn’t interfere with our creativity. [laughing]
Swenson: Who is creative? Are you creative?
Warhol: No.
Swenson: Are you creative?
Malanga: Oh, yes! [laughing] But I think, the more and more I hang out with Andy, I’m against creativity.
Swenson: [at the same time] I’m against creativity.
Warhol: I am too!
Malanga: Oh, screw youse all.
Warhol: I am! It’s too hard to be creative, Gerry.
Malanga: Well, I’m getting more and more non-creative being around with you.
Swenson: No, well, it’s harder to not create.
Warhol: Yeah. Why?
Swenson: Well, because everybody’s, you know... everybody’s sort of... all these years we’ve talked about creativity and individuality...
Warhol: Oh, well, yes, I believe in that too. I think all these people who aren’t really very good should be really good. Like, uh, everybody is too good now. It’s so hard, everybody is so good. Like, you know, like... well, it’s just so fantastic.
Swenson: Nell Blaine is good?
Warhol: Well, good in her own way. But, uh, everybody’s too good. I mean, you know, like, they really are.
Swenson: Like, who?
Warhol: Well, everybody, you know, like, uh... how many actors are there? Millions of actors. They’re all pretty good.
Swenson: All professional?
Warhol: Yeah. And how many painters are there? Millions of painters, and they’re all pretty good. How can you say that an Abstract Expressionist is better than, you know, a Pop artist... and they’re all pretty good, you know. So I think the people who aren’t very good should be the ones, you know, who are...
Malanga: It would switch everything around, turn into a metamorphosis.
Swenson: Who become stars?
Warhol: No, I think people should like all the things that aren’t really that good...