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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.

1. The ‘John’ in question is likely either John Giorno, who starred in Warhol’s 1963 film *Sleep*, or the poet John Wieners, who appears in a 1963 photo-booth strip alongside Warhol and Malanga.

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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.

- Warhol Yeah.
- 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.

Warhol Or, Oldenburg. Yeah, Oldenburg. Yeah, that would be sort of, kind of marvelous.

John What would Jim Dine say?

Warhol Well, I think he has problems, somewhere.

Swenson Yeah, I think so too.

Warhol But I think everyone has problems . . .

Swenson He really is. . . I didn't realize today, I mean, how, really, shy. . . He mentioned Barbara Rose's review of that 'Six Objects' show. She was sort of, I guess, down on him. And, you know, you could tell that when he read that it must have just crushed him. It's funny.²

Warhol Well, but reading things like that shouldn't crush people if they're really sincere about working.

Swenson I mean, it didn't make it impossible for him to work or anything.

Warhol No, but, it shouldn't even have bothered him somehow. *[pause]* No, I really don't think, you know, like. . . because he's been getting that from everybody, it's just not her. I mean, why her?

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

Warhol What?

Swenson Pop Art.

Warhol Oh, he asked you all these?

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.'³ 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.

2. Reviewing the 1963 Guggenheim exhibition 'Six Painters and the Object' for *Art International*, Barbara Rose writes, 'Jim Dine appears to strive for a heavy-handed freshness, as if to make a virtue of his own clumsiness. If he could do this, it would be fine, but instead he seems capable only of cartooning his own ideas. I found him in all ways the least of the artists represented.' See: Barbara Rose, 'Pop Art at the Guggenheim,' *Art International* vol. 7, no. 5, May, 1963, pp. 20-2.

3. Swenson is likely referencing painter Adolph Gottlieb's quote, 'We're going to have perhaps a thousand years of nonrepresentational painting now.' See: Selden Rodman, *Conversations with Artists* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1961), p. 87.

4. British critic Lawrence Alloway is indeed widely credited with coining the term 'Pop Art'. In the 1966 *Pop Art* anthology edited by Lucy Lippard, Alloway writes, 'The term "Pop Art" is credited to me, but I don't know precisely when it was first used.[. . .] Furthermore, what I meant by it then is not what it means now. I used the term, and also "Pop Culture", to refer to the products of the mass media, not to works of art that draw upon popular culture. In any case, sometime between the winter of 1954-5 and 1957 the phrase acquired currency in conversation, in connection with the shared work and discussion among members of the Independent Group.' See: Lawrence Alloway, 'The Development of British Pop' in *Pop Art*, ed. Lucy R. Lippard (New York: Praeger, 1966), p. 27.

5. Swenson is referencing the following article: Leonard B. Meyer, 'The End of the Renaissance? Notes on the Radical Empiricism of the Avant-Garde,' *Hudson Review*, vol. 16. Summer 1963, pp. 169-85.

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.
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 is. 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. . .
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 Yessss! 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, 'Ooooh, 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, uh. . .
[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 Yeah, I had this job. I was supposed to be there at 12, but I'd get there at 1. It's a furniture shop over in the Village. . .
- Malanga So 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 I was with this other guy, and we were in this apartment. And there was no furniture in the apartment. It was my apartment, I had just moved in, there was no furniture there. And we both took both, and we just sort of sat there cross-legged, looking at one another. And we just kept getting higher, and higher, and higher. Then all of a sudden. . . I mean, not all of a sudden because nothing happens suddenly, really, we just sort of breathe. But then, during one of the intakes, I realised where he was, and I told him where he was, and then he started telling me where I was. And like, I was in Africa in this clearing. I couldn't remember.
- 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 thought 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 'Uhhh, 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 thought 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. . . Oh.
- 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. . .

6. 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'; on March 9, a *Washington Post* headline read '2 Robberies Reported in France; One Attributed to Terrorists of OAS'; and on 29 June the *Chicago Tribune* reported 'Escape with \$14,000 in French Robbery'.

- 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. [pause]
- 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. . . uhhhhh. . .
- 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 \$100,000.⁶
- 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.

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.
[...]

7. Warhol is referencing his upcoming exhibition at the Galerie Ileana Sonnabend in Paris. Although Warhol here proposes the title 'Death in America', the exhibition opened in January 1964 called simply 'Andy Warhol.'

- 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. . .
[The recording cuts off mid-sentence. The end of this recording is overwritten by the start of the next recording, a conversation between Swenson and artist Joe Raffaele.]