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THE BEAUTY IN THE BANAL: A CONSILIANCE OF MODERN CULTURAL REALMS THROUGH

A WARHOLIAN LENS

A Master Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty

of

American Public University

by

Vivian O’Grady

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

of

Master of Arts

May 2018

American Public University

Charles Town, WV
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to the memory of Andy Warhol, who continues inspiring the “misfits” of society to cultivate their own reality.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my whole-hearted gratitude to my professor, Dr. Kathryn Broyles, for the patience, guidance, and inspiration she provided during my time as her student. Dr. Broyles inspired me to become the best version of myself, in both my writing and in life.

I also would like to thank my parents for their unwavering love and dedication to my well-being, and Michael for his positive encouragement throughout this process.
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

THE BEAUTY IN THE BANAL: A CONSILIENCE OF MODERN CULTURAL REALMS THROUGH A WARHOLIAN LENS

by

Vivian O’Grady

American Public University System, May 2018

Charles Town, West Virginia

Professor Kathryn Broyles, Thesis Professor

Pop artist Andy Warhol predicted, “In the future everybody will be world famous for fifteen minutes.” Warhol’s work and his mechanical method of creating art established different relations between art and popular culture in this secular and technologically advanced Western society. Andy Warhol and the Pop Art movement created a cultural shift in how one perceives art: Art became a thing for the masses, and not a privilege for the elite. By breaking down the barriers between art and popular culture, Warhol made it acceptable to perceive reality in different ways. This thesis compares theorists in the realms of art, religion, and technology to Warhol’s artistic process, in order to connect ideologies across disciplines. In this “post-internet” and “post-art” society, and in light of
Warhol’s prophetic gaze, the current cultural landscape must be reevaluated. The collective obsessions of modernity lie in celebrities, banality, and social media. There is a new sense of “community” on the rise: Social media platforms allow for an altered state of being “connected” to others. The widespread popularity of technologies alters the way individuals interpret society. As society continues to evolve into a global network, a consilience of art, religion, and technology, predicted within Warhol’s ideal of a commodified Western society, uncovers patterns in culture promoting empathy and communal values.
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CHAPTER I

Introduction:

“How Andy Warhol is a Modern-Day Prophet”

“In the future, everyone will be famous for fifteen minutes.” - Andy Warhol

Andy Warhol believed in the beauty of the banal—yet was simultaneously obsessed with the glamour and fame of the celebrity life, so much so that he deliberately integrated himself into the celebrity culture he utilized as his muse. There is much said about this son of immigrants—born in poverty and a sickly child—who grew up to become a major cultural icon of the twentieth century. Art historian John Richardson spoke at Warhol’s memorial service, reminiscing of the late artist, “The holy fool: the simpleton whose quasi-divine naivete protects him from an inimical world” (qtd. in Colacello, 497). Warhol possessed a soft-spoken nature and a childlike adoration for both the banal and glamorous sides of life. In creating simple, yet evocative, works of art that provided a commentary on the modern culture, Warhol cultivated a place in modern history as a defining leader of Pop Art in the mid-twentieth century. Warhol utilized distinctly American aspects of culture—Campbell’s soup cans, Hollywood celebrities, and Coca-Cola bottles, for example—to showcase the rapidly increasing consumer culture dominating the Western world. The Pop artist’s simple observances of the American culture he adored so much aided in creating new cultural perspectives of art, the celebrity, and the banal aspects of life. Warhol enjoyed how the consumerist nature of society allowed for an equality in the goods bought by individuals of any background. Warhol once said,

What's great about this country is America started the tradition where the richest consumers buy essentially the same things as the poorest. You can be watching TV and see Coca-Cola, and you can know that the President drinks Coke, Liz Taylor drinks Coke,
and just think, you can drink Coke, too. A Coke is a Coke and no amount of money can get you a better Coke than the one the bum on the corner is drinking. All the Cokes are the same and all the Cokes are good. (The Philosophy of Andy Warhol 100-101)

No matter one’s social status in Western society, one consumes the same products as those on other rungs of the social ladder. Warhol recognized and embraced this consumerist notion; in doing so, he created a new paradigm to view the realms of daily life and glamorous fame.

Throughout much of his work, Warhol sought to create a new archetype of the “divine” celebrity- illustrating how celebrities and popular culture may replace the social need for religion. Some of Warhol’s masterpieces, Gold Marilyn Monroe (1962) and Jackie (Four Jackies) (Portraits of Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy) (1964), depict celebrity icons in a different light- highlighting the tragic fallen beauty of these female stars. His experimental films featuring Warhol “Superstar” Edie Sedgwick also dabbled in this theme of tragic beauty, highlighting the changing paradigm of popular culture and celebrities.

What makes a person famous, and how their fame creates illusions of reality around their aura, are issues relevant both in Warhol’s day and in the present context— especially in this social media obsessed culture where being a YouTube star or “Insta-famous” has become the new ideal in youth culture. These overnight sensations are worshipped by fans just as easily as established celebrities are, creating a dichotomy in modern society where one may become famous in the blink of an eye, and just as quickly fade from view. The American Dream has always been centered around individual success and wealth; fame provides a path to this dream. When an online star, or any modern celebrity, falls from the public eye, the dream disintegrates as quickly as it began. With easy access of communication and information,
individual consumers are subject to more and more content to choose and focus their attention on. Therefore, an icon’s fame may fade more quickly in this age of the internet.

Warhol, despite being a respectable artistic icon, was a major contributor who commercialized art for the masses- and aided in the eventual disintegration of “high” art. Warhol once wrote, “Money is the MOMENT to me. Money is my MOOD” (The Philosophy of Andy Warhol, 136). In contemporary society, money and materialism are major points of reference for most individuals. An analysis of mid-century pop artist Andy Warhol’s life reveals the ways in which his obsession with the supposedly opposing realms of fame and banality changes the basis of legitimation for high-art (as opposed to low-art) in a mass-cultural, technologically-driven, and secular Western society.

The role of art in our modern society is examined to establish a consensus within our growing secular nation as to how we interact with art, ourselves, and the world. Arguably, Warhol is still relevant today- as his museum in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania is one of the biggest dedicated to a single artist. Warhol revolutionized the way the individual viewed the world by presenting profane objects as sacred in his various works of art, including his celebrity portraits, silk-screening, and sculpturing of mundane objects, which allows our contemporary, mass-cultural, and secular Western society to interpret and accept the notion of high-art (the most aesthetically pleasing and intellectually challenging art) in numerous ways in. Arguably, one may consider Andy Warhol a modern-day prophet, as his prediction that, “In the future, everybody will be world famous for fifteen minutes,” has come true, with this continuously changing understanding of art in our technologically-driven global society. Similar to the manner Warhol distinguished his “art” as different from a mere Brillo box or advertisement for
Campbell’s soup— one may ask, “what is art,” and the artist may simply answer, “This is art,” and let it be so.

In analyzing both Warhol’s visual arts and his writing, one obtains a thorough understanding of Warhol’s interpretation of art in the 1960’s and the essential meaning of art as it progresses past the “Post-Historical Period of Art,” as art critic Arthur C. Danto proposed. Warhol, arguably, created the notion of worshipping a pop icon, as one does a sacred religious idol, through his distribution of his celebrity portraits. Essentially, Warhol makes it possible to argue that art can replace religion in America’s growing secular society.

This study, through an analysis of Pop artist Andy Warhol’s life, art, and relevance to contemporary culture, will utilize the intersection between art, religion, and technology to discuss valid theories from each realm, as their intersection provides society an outlet to grow as a community in our otherwise individualistic nation. The art theories of Benjamin Heinz-Dieter Buchloh, Arthur C. Danto, and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel will aid in an exploring the relationship between Warhol and the concept of high versus low art. In reference to religion, this study utilizes the ideas of William James, Emile Durkheim, and the authors of *Habits of the Heart*. This study also expands upon the critical art theory of Danto’s “End of Art,” within a setting of the drastically expanding Western society obsessed with technology and social media. In an analysis of Warhol’s various biographies and his own writing, one may attempt to understand his theory of art and its relationship with society. Warhol’s celebrity portraits and his work with repetition demonstrate the intersection of art, religion, and technology. His experimentation in creating pop culture idols may be akin to the idolization found in religion—from Native American symbology to the worship of Catholic saints. This study argues Andy
Warhol, through his accreditation of the phrase, “In the future, everybody will be famous for fifteen minutes” is a modern-day prophet – a seer anticipating social media impact. In contemporary culture, the notion of sharing on social media websites has changed the way one views art and the way celebrities achieve “Superstar” status. In Andy Warhol’s “future,” anybody may become “Insta-famous,” through the easy accessibility of their work on social media platforms.
CHAPTER II

Literature Review:

“A Consilience of Culture”

Introduction

The intersection between art, religion, and social media usage may converge to create a more empathetic and spiritual society in the secular United States. Such a statement falls in line with Andy Warhol’s prophetic phrase, “In the future, everybody will be famous for fifteen minutes,” as well as relies on a working theory of Andy Warhol’s work to determine its usefulness on society. In analyzing Warhol’s work with this discussion of the relationship between art, religion, and social media in mind, one may create a dichotomous, yet equally harmonious, relationship between modernity and Warhol. This literature review will provide an overview on the various texts relating to this intersection between religion, art, and contemporary mass culture, with the focus being on Andy Warhol’s contribution to this discussion.

Religion: Sacred in the Secular

Exploring the relationship between art and the mystical realm of life allows for an analysis of what religion is in modern, secular, America. In a review of Bellah et al.’s Habits of the Heat, one recognizes a major theme of religious individualism becoming the most popular form of religious expression in America. Religious individualism allows for religious or spiritual experiences to warrant interpretation in a plethora of ways. However, in our contemporary culture, fixating on a materialistic focus of our society has led religion, no matter the form, to take a backseat role in the lives of many Americans. Warhol understood such in his artistic
idolization of money, fame, and materialism. One may argue that because of the increasing focus of relying on oneself in a capitalistic society, religious individualism gained popularity, as religion had to “compete in a consumers’ market,” in an attempt to stay relevant to society (Bellah et al., 233). Ironically, Andy Warhol is known for creating his career as an artist into a business, even calling his office the “Factory.” In his work, *Popism: The Warhol Sixties*, Warhol describes the Factory:

The early Factory style had come out of Pop Art, where you didn’t talk, you just did outrageous things, and when you spoke to the press, it was with “gestures,” which was more artistic. But now that style was all played out- everyone was ready for some articulation. (*Popism* 279)

Such articulation may be interpreted as a search for something more- for religion, perhaps. Recognition of what one calls “God,” is the same force in every religion. This intertwined tangle of religion, materialism, and the individual is present in Warhol’s works as well. Arguably, the essential message of every religion is to spread love, creating a sense of community and compassion within society. Because of contemporary America’s emphasis on the individual as the driving force of society, such an emphasis on love has taken a backseat to capitalistic gain (Bellah et al., 248).

Individuals participating in society now transmit a kind of love unto intangible objects experienced in popular culture- celebrities, for instance. This paper argues the notion of celebrity has, essentially, replaced the idea of an icon in religion. In this new secular Western society, individuals now possess the freedom to choose one’s own beliefs and spiritual practices, or simply where one wishes to transmit their love. Sara Beak’s work, *The Red Book,*
discusses such individual choice, and how the concept of religion in popular culture has rapidly evolved in the twenty-first century. As young people appropriate different aspects of various religions, they recognize the best parts of themselves and the world. Similarly, S.I. Shapiro provides an array of lists pertaining to the concept of “Zen” in America and its relationship with contemporary Western culture. The most interesting, and relevant, is the list for “Varying Motives for Practicing Zen;” the list includes rebellion, search for authority figure, attraction to aestheticism, and seeking truth. Arguably, these reasons are similar to those creating or admiring art. As people develop greater self-awareness in the easily accessible world of knowledge we now live in (thanks to the internet), the practice of appropriating various aspects of different religions further seeps its way into the cultural landscape. Beak discusses the religious icon of the Virgin Mary, and how one may appropriate her image for their own ideologies. This concept may, arguably, lead insight to how an icon is formed and worshipped. Beak gives readers awareness of contemporary spiritual culture and allows for a simple introduction to religious icons and symbols, including the Buddha, the Hindu goddess Kali, and the Virgin Mary.

Sidney Callahan, in her 1993 article, “Mary and the Challenges of the Feminist Movement,” as she explores the Virgin Mary, through both a feminist and practicing Christian lens provides a unique paradigm. She argues for a reevaluation of the Virgin Mary as an icon to aid the feminist movement. Pushing back against the argument that devotion to the Virgin Mary hinders feminism, Callahan discusses the various symbols of the Virgin Mary, and how a reevaluation of Christian symbols of Mary will aid in promoting feminist values. She states that within a “modern feminist perspective,” the practice of praying to “the great mother goddess”
and feminine pagan idols does not create subordination in women, but emblematically increases, “female power and a validation of women’s experience” (Callahan, 1993). Entrusting one’s spiritual wellness to a female religious idol creates a growing collective trust of the feminine form. Callahan goes on to argue, “When God was, or is, or shall be, symbolized with female images, ordinary women in a society will be better off for it” (1993). The portrayal of women as the inferior sex becomes less relevant as society alters their traditional gender role prejudices.

By altering what an icon symbolizes, as Callahan suggests, one changes the entire landscape of a culture. In his third lecture, “The Reality of the Unseen,” William James brings forth the notion that one’s attitude is the result of the “objects of our consciousness,” which he describes as fragments of one’s reality they believe to exist (W. James, 61). One’s relationship with such objects, perhaps in the form of religious icons, elicits reactions, of which James states, “the reactions due to things of thought is notoriously in many cases as strong as that due to sensible presences. It may be even stronger” (W. James, 61). James’ connotation here is straightforward in introducing the idea that an individual’s thoughts about a subject are as real as the subject itself, as it is only through the experience and understanding of an event or object that it becomes reality. It is exactly these thoughts of the individual which determine the validity of art, in the eyes of Warhol.

Emile Durkheim focused on the spiritual notions of religion- how to scientifically measure such. He believed that by establishing a scientifically sound institute of religious study, it would be possible for humanity to gain a deeper understanding of the universe, through analysis of the origins of religion. Durkheim states, “If religion generated everything that is
essential in society, this is because the idea of society is the soul of religion” (Durkheim, 314). Hence, Durkheim argues there is an undisputable relationship between society, religion, and the individual. However, William James defines the subject of religious experience as belonging specifically to that of the *individual*. Contrary to the belief that religions thrive through their dogmatic doctrines and historical reverence, James puts forth the notion that religion is fundamental to society because of its value to individualistic welfare. He believes the individual’s reaction, when introduced to religious faith, constitutes the basis of the religious experience (W. James, 2002).

Durkheim proclaims religion to be an integral aspect of the processes of man. It is through the mind of man that society blossoms into being, just as through grasping the tenants of society, “a new way of explaining man becomes possible” (Durkheim, 343). Therefore, one may argue that Durkheim’s notion of religion is transcribed to Warhol’s notion of art. Art infuses into life if the notion of “high” and “low” art dissipates, as Danto believes it has. Durkheim’s system of understanding religion— and Danto’s view that Warhol created art anew—is transcribed to understanding the *human consciousness*, as it is through collective consciousness that rites of society establish themselves. Durkheim states, “Collective feelings can become conscious of themselves only by fixing onto external objects” (Durkheim, 314). Such objects have “acquired a kind of physical nature,” thus they are able to “mingle with the life of the material world” (Durkheim, 314). This tangibility represents the collective values of a given society.

In creating such tangible experiences and *objects*, like Warhol’s Brillo boxes, collective feelings adorn in museum exhibits to also create such shared experiences. Contrary to James,
Durkheim argues it is through this fixation of the sacred unto palpable forces that man creates society for collective use, rather than for the individual. By essentially creating religion to establish a “unified set of beliefs and practices,” man is unconsciously creating society (Durkheim, 46). Thus, it is argued that in creating art, man is creating his own, secular, space for society to flourish as well.

**Defining Art in the Modern Realm**

Andy Warhol admired empty spaces. The Pop artist felt himself to be contradictory in creating such vast amounts of art to fill up a blank wall. He believed blankness and banality to be beautiful. Warhol’s belief, and his contradictory method of creating vast amounts of repetitive artwork, leads one to question, “What is beauty? What is art?” Changeux offers a unique perspective, believing that the field of art criticism benefits from an analysis of neuroscientific research and how such relates to theories of beauty and aesthetics. He comments on possible neural origins of aesthetic pleasure. Such information is important and relevant because including a scientific paradigm aids in facilitating a tangible premise for the critical analysis of Warhol’s theory of art to identify what makes art and artists popular. Including scientific thought adds validity to a purely theoretical argument, as a consilience of disciplines creates more solidified theories.

By the same token, such a relationship may point to the fluidity of art and its natural ability to mask itself as other forms of human expression. Arthur C. Danto, expanding upon Hegel’s philosophy of art, believes art for mere art’s sake has been dead since Warhol’s *Brillo Box* exhibit in 1964, yet he believes art as philosophy now reigns. We are in what he refers to as the Post-Historical Period of Art, and, Danto believes, “there is no reason for it to ever come to
an end” (Danto, 9). In art becoming a quest for a philosophical question and answer, society comes to a standstill to determine what art is- or, more specifically, what differentiates high from low art. It is with Warhol’s contributions that society has accepted a wide variety of art into its mental sphere.

David James utilizes transcripts of Hegel’s lectures to discuss Hegel’s own innate interest in the development of art as a historical phenomenon, and art’s relation to the ethical values of individuals. Hegel treats art as experiencing a mystical moment of spirit. James explains Hegel’s stance on aesthetics: artistic beauty is more beautiful than natural beauty because it was created in the context of the spiritual, rather than simply being of a natural occurrence. Art becomes a way of experiencing what human beings essentially are, in a metaphysical sense (D. James, 2009).

Commodified Culture

This paper argues that the sacred, as understood by the religious individualistic American public, can be commodified and mass produced in a distinctly Warholian fashion. Religious facets of life may simultaneously be a sacred practice, an evolving idea, and a mass-produced commodity. Warhol was most concerned with the subject of commodities within his artwork- how a facet of life transforms into a commodity. The media affects popular culture, while what is popular in culture affects which commodities an individual engages with. Warhol developed a great interest for the powers of the media from an early age.

Edward D. Powers provides an excellent analysis of two texts that were assigned to Andy Warhol while he attended Carnegie Institute of Technology: All the King’s Men, by Robert Penn Warren, and Patterns of Culture, by Ruth Benedict. All the King’s Men gives Warhol the
chance to analyze and play with the idea of the manipulative powers of the mass media. However, this was not Warhol’s first foray with interest in the media. Blake Stimson, throughout his work, “Andy Warhol’s Red Beard,” provides a clear history of Warhol’s childhood- with the focus being on his obsession with child actress Shirley Temple. Arguably, the beginning of Warhol’s fascination with fame and the media began during this unhealthy obsession with Shirley Temple (Stimson, 2001).

Benedict’s *Patterns of Culture* describes the “policing of normalcy in middle America,” which affords great interest to Warhol, as the fear of being marginalized and “picked on,” is prevalent in America (Powers, 2012). In an analysis of Benedict’s work, one notices Benedict discusses, at great lengths, the concept of normalcy and the fear many people get if they stray too far away from such. However, if one were to practice cultural relativism, as Benedict calls it, one realizes different cultures’ versions of normalcy are *vastly* different. Therefore, a shy individual born in the action-driven and dominant American society may feel out of place in their birth country yet fit in with a nation upholding different values. Those who are considered “abnormal” by their respective cultures are looked down upon, cast aside, or even shunned. Why do such differences in what is popular vary across societies? Benedict believes such changes are random.

Marvin Harris’ work, *Cows, Pigs, Wars, and Witches: The Riddles of Culture*, argues against Ruth Benedict’s *Patterns of Culture*. He believes everything has an answer, if one only takes the time to look deep enough. Harris states, “If you don’t believe that a puzzle has an answer, you’ll never find it” (4). To discover the truth about an issue, it’s important to keep an open mind when finding connections across disciplines. Sheldon Richmond believes he
pinpointed such connections, noting a “functional interdependence” has developed between science and art- that of “rationality (cognitivity) and irrationality (imagination)” (Richmond, 1984). In believing that science is not all rational, and art is not all irrational, a consilience forms between the two disciplines. When one analyzes where art and science converges, one becomes closer to developing valid similarities between the artist and scientist (Richmond, 1984).

Society is experiencing perhaps the biggest scientific advance in the new millennium within the realm of technology. The normality of social media and the internet in contemporary society lends itself to these rapid scientific advancements. Lauren Cornell and Ed Halter, editors of the book, *Mass Effect: Art and the Internet in the Twenty-First Century*, present a collection of articles concerning the relationship between art, the internet, and society. Most of these articles revolve around the history of “internet folk art,” the concept of “post internet,” and the artist’s evolving relationship with museums and galleries as society progresses into this “post internet” period. Because of the rapid progression of the internet and modern technologies, the internet as a social space has greatly evolved since its introduction in the 1990s. Now a form of mass media, the internet can, and has, become a great tool- as well as a hindrance, for the artistic community.

In an article from Cornell and Halter’s anthology, “Excerpts from *Post Internet*,” Gene McHugh quotes Brussel curator Karen Verschooren, “Almost all contemporary art is influenced by the fact that we live in a networked society” (Cornell, 2015). In such a “networked society,” it is easier than ever to be seen by thousands, or even millions, of people through websites like YouTube, Tumblr, or Instagram. Art is created, shared, and experienced by all walks of life
through the internet, so art galleries must evolve to keep their spaces relevant in this “post
internet” society.

Art is defined in the eye of the beholder, and this sentiment is seen now more than ever
in our mass-sharing networked society. If one relates as strongly to money as he does to a
Picasso piece, as Warhol ironically determines in his text, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, then
so be it, it is considered art in our secular and materialistic world:

I like money on the wall. Say you were going to buy a $200,000 painting. I think you
should take that money, tie it up, and hang it on the wall. Then when someone visited
you the first thing they would see is the money on the wall. (*The Philosophy of Andy
Warhol* 133-4)

It seems Warhol attempts to distinguish this illusion of art being high or low- of famous
artists being special. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, in his article, “Drawing Blanks: Notes on Andy
Warhol's Late Works,” touches upon Warhol’s “lifelong preoccupation” with the question of
what it took for an object to achieve “mass magnetism,” and relates how this question comes
up in most of Warhol’s works. Warhol explores the idea of magnetism with his iconography of
celebrities (Elvis, Marilyn, Liz Taylor) and objects of Western consumer culture, such as food
products and fast food chains. Warhol recognized American popular culture’s ability to achieve
vast amounts of mass magnetism and establish itself as the leader of capitalistic consumer
products. Buchloh quotes Warhol, “Moscow and Peking did not yet have something beautiful,
like McDonald's” (Buchloh, 12). While it is possible Warhol was being sarcastic when stating the
above, based on the varied statements found in Warhol’s *Philosophy*, such a socialistic stance is
quite possible. In everyone buying and experiencing the same things, society in America, and
increasingly throughout the globe, achieves a sense of socialism with the products everyone consumes.

To Warhol, art was a business- a way to make money. Warhol states of the *icon* of the artist, “What do you mean, an ‘artist?’ An artist can slice a salami too! Why do people think artists are special? It’s just another job” (*The Philosophy of Andy Warhol* 178). In such a disillusionment, art is merely an entity. This change in paradigm may allow individuals to cast aside the “risks” associated with creating “different” and “new” art, to expand their own creative horizons and benefit society (*The Philosophy of Andy Warhol* 179). Adam Frank discusses the artist’s work in television and film- and the artist’s own theory that television is a form of *therapeutics*. Frank’s chapter on Warhol provides insight into Warhol’s background in film, including both historical details of the making of Warhol’s films, in-depth analysis of some of Warhol’s films, as well as analysis of Warhol’s own love, or obsession, of television in the new age.

The changing paradigm of interpreting art has become apparent in popular culture- just as interpretation of popular culture *itself* is evolving. Asa Briggs et al., in the article, "What is the History of Popular Culture?" believes the most popular definition of popular culture involves a consumption by many, or most, people. It traces a history of popular culture- one that was historically meant for the “vulgar” masses, which has evolved into a mass consumption by everyone in Western society. Now, there is no real distinction between media material for the high and low class (Briggs, 1985). Leroy Ashby, author of the work, “The Rising of Popular Culture: A Historiographical Sketch,” states the way in which we study mass consumerism- popular culture- radically changed within the twentieth century. What Ashby
refers to as “histories of entertainment” began surfacing in society during the 1960’s and 1970’s. Ashby’s work aids in validating Warhol’s reflection of the changing landscape of popular culture and its interpretation in the twentieth century: Warhol presents his own “history of entertainment” when he creates a Warholian history of popular culture in his 1980 book, *Popism*.

Lawrence W. Levine argues popular culture should be academically considered as folklore to rationalize the study of popular culture, as opposed to focusing on “high” culture. In studying popular culture, one listens to the voices of the mass and the mass produced. By determining the importance of understanding and interpreting creations for mass culture, one creates a way to further explore contemporary humanity as it evolves with rapidly growing technological advances. Stimson believes Warhol became the leading pop figure to emerge from the 1960’s; thus, the “leading basis for the legitimation of art as a high cultural occupation in a mass-cultural world was transformed” (Stimson, 2001).

**Warhol as Cultural Contributor**

Andy Warhol’s artistic and philosophical contributions to the legitimation of art in our mass-cultural, technologically-driven, and social media-obsessed society will be the focus of this thesis. Warhol’s repetition images, throughout his decades of work, have a specific theme in common: they are all a response of being acted upon. Events are happening, and Warhol’s artistic symbolism of such is the response. In his glorification of celebrities to a divine status, Warhol illustrates the connection between contemporary art, religion, and mass culture. His fascination with repetition and banality led to how his work now symbolizes the state of iconism found in social media- particularly visual sites like Instagram that glorify the lives of
everyday people. Andy Warhol sought to open people’s eyes to the sacred in the profane - the beauty in the banal. With contemporary society’s cultural focus on technology, it becomes important to recognize developing relationships within seemingly unrelated fields. Technology forces aspects of culture to interact in new ways, thus forming unique relationships among various realms in society. Social media allows for a Warholian obsession with the everyday realm; what was once banal now becomes beautiful.
CHAPTER III

Theoretical Framework:

“The Role of the Individual in Modernity”

Introduction

Much of the purpose of the humanities focuses on developing a consilience of information between various, seemingly separate, disciplines of study. There possess theories of art in one corner, while theories of religion become known in another corner. Those involved in the humanities, recognizing the similarities within these theories, attempt to fashion a solid understanding of human nature and society. This study utilizes several theories in its development of research. Discussing the intersection between religion, art, and technology, allows for valid theories from each realm to continue the discussions of high art versus low art, the individual’s place in this “post-art” and “post-internet” society, and how Andy Warhol’s art works may contribute to this dialogue.

The Harmonious Nature of Individuals and Religion

“For society, of which the gods are merely the symbolic expression, can no more do without individuals than individuals can do without society” (Durkheim, 258).

Emile Durkheim relates how society functions to the notion of religion- specifically, the dichotomy of the sacred and the profane. The “sacred” deals with the religious realm of life, while the “profane” is everything else- our banal and every day secular existence. Durkheim observes the sacred cannot exist in the same realm as the profane, though their relationship is harmonious in nature- in that, there would be nothing sacred if not compared to the profane. Durkheim states, “The sacred world sustains an antagonistic relationship to the profane world”
(Durkheim, 236). The sacred world permeates the profane, while at the same time excluding it from its own world. “Even as it repels it, it tends to flow into it as soon as it comes near” (Durkheim, 237). He explains of the contagiousness of religious forces- the, “phenomena of contagion” (Durkheim, 242). Durkheim believes the sacred aspects of society possess the ability to enter any other realm of life- even the profane banality of the everyday. Aspects of the sacred are contagious, meaning they infuse their way into the profane realms of life. Yet at the same time, Durkheim stresses, the sacred and the profane kinds of life “must not mingle in consciousness” (Durkheim, 238).

Durkheim establishes his theory that the relationship between religion and society is forever entwined- he states, “Action dominates religious life for the very reason that society is its source” (Durkheim, 313). In becoming aware of the influence society possesses over individuals, society becomes the building block of religious conviction, or, “the soul of religion,” (Durkheim, 314). Therefore, Durkheim is arguing there is an undisputable relationship between society, religion, and the individual. Durkheim speaks of the power of the collective (Durkheim, 343). He argues it is through a fixation of the sacred unto forces in nature that man creates society for collective use. By essentially creating religion through the establishment of a “unified set of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things,” man is unconsciously creating society (Durkheim, 46).

Bellah et al., in their book, Habits of the Heart, proposes the idea that America has formed into a secular nation that is completely focused on the needs of the individual, rather than the community. “The question is whether an individualism in which the self has become the main form of reality can be sustained” (Bellah et al., 143). Individualism is the dominant
cultural trait in America, and thus the collective experience of religion has suffered in the wake of the “American Dream.” The fixation on materialism in American society has led to religion taking a backseat role in the lives of many Americans. Bellah et al. argues that because of the increasing focus of relying on oneself in a capitalistic society, religious individualism gained popularity, as religion had to vie for attention and significance in a consumer-driven marketplace, in an attempt to stay relevant to society.

Such a shift in cultural values hinders the progress of mankind, as religion creates a bond within communities and allows for virtuous traits such as compassion and kindness to flourish. Bellah et al. writes,

Through reminding people of their relationship to God, it established patterns of character and virtue that should operate in economic and political life as well as in the context of worship. The community maintains itself as a community of memory. (Bellah et al., 227)

Bellah et al. establishes the shift of valuing the individual over community has led to a great “disestablishment of religion in the United States” (Bellah et al., 222). However, psychologist and philosopher William James believes the individual religious experience, rather than the collective experience, forms the basis of religious life. William James defines the subject of religious experience as belonging to the individual. This theory falls in line with the individualism Bellah et al. believes to be abounding in America- hence, according to James, religion should flourish quite well in our modern era.

Bellah et al. state of the mindset of American culture, “We believe in the dignity, indeed the sacredness, of the individual” (Bellah et al., 142). Thus, when utilizing both Bellah et al. and
James’ theories of society and religion, the establishment of a growing relationship between America’s worship of the individual and a need for religion in culture may begin to cultivate. William James brings forth the notion that one’s attitude towards religion is the result of the “objects of our consciousness,” which he describes as fragments of one’s reality that they believe to exist (W. James, 61). One’s relationship with such objects elicit reactions, of which James states, “the reactions due to things of thought is notoriously in many cases as strong as that due to sensible presences. It may be even stronger” (W. James, 61). James’ connotation introduces the idea that an individual’s thoughts about a subject are as real as the subject itself, as it is only through the experience and understanding of an event or object that it becomes reality.

Durkheim states a similar notion when he writes, “Objects themselves take on a religious value which is not really inherent in them but is conferred upon them from the outside” (Durkheim, 241). James and Durkheim agree an object becomes sacred in nature due to a certain group believing, and thus establishing, it to be so. By believing in the power of such religious objects and experiences, mankind alters their own reality, or experience of reality. Durkheim states, “Sacred beings exist only because they are imagined as such” (Durkheim, 256). When one loses faith, their belief subsides and the sacred being will “exist to a lesser degree” (256). Sacred entities, according to Durkheim, “While superior to men, can only live in human consciousness” (257). Man, through a credence in the unseen, creates his own perception of an intangible world.

**Perceiving Art in the Post-Historical Period**
“What Warhol’s dictum amounted to was that you cannot tell when something is a work of art just by looking at it, for there is no particular way that art has to look” (Danto, 5).

The way art is perceived by an individual or community establishes the art as “high” or “low.” Hence, art is comparable to Durkheim and James’ connotation of religious objects being established by humans. Arthur C. Danto argues Andy Warhol’s 1964 art piece, *Brillo Box*, establishes the end of Western art; the way art is created, experienced, and exhibited has radically altered within the past century. With the rise of Bellah et al.’s notion of religious individualism, the concept of art has altered as well. Danto states of this relationship with Warhol’s work, “Warhol’s thought that anything could be art was a model, in a way, for the hope that human beings could be anything they chose, once the divisions that had defined the culture were overthrown” (Danto, 4).

Danto provides his argument that establishes the “End of Art,” in the sense that the meaning of art now belongs to the academic discourse of philosophy, rather than art criticism. Danto believes art has reached an “historical end,” in that it has evolved into something else. Contrary to art being dead, Danto clarifies the culture of the West allows for more art-making now than in any previous period of history. After the focus of art shifted from movements, to begin lingering on individuals and their relationship with their art and society, the entire notion of who creates art, and how art may be exhibited, transformed. Danto argues Andy Warhol’s impact on the relationship between art and consumer culture, and the future of art- both the creation and presentation (ex., museums)- in our technologically-driven society cannot be denied.
A major question Danto attempts to answer regards Hegel's remark that art needed something other than its mere tangibility to create a satisfaction, that “not for the purpose of creating art again, but for knowing philosophically what art is” (Danto, 8). Hegel claims art should be interpreted within the context of culture rather than in isolation, thus, creating a holistic approach to both art criticism and the study of cultures (Gaiger, 2011). In keeping with Durkheim and James’ theory that religious objects are created by human consciousness, Hegel theorizes life as humanity experiences it—through language, imagination, and exercising freedom—is self-conscious, what Hegel refers to as Geist. Rationality is inherently human, and through the use of imagination (in the form of art, for example), the essence of humanity is formed by every individual whom engages in the act:

Human beings, for Hegel, are thus not just accidents of nature; they are reason itself—the reason inherent in nature—that has come to life and come to consciousness of itself. Beyond human beings (or other finite rational beings that might exist on other planets), there is no self-conscious reason in Hegel's universe. (Houlgate, 2016)

Through the study of art, utilizing a philosophical lens, the uniqueness of the individual unveils, and spiritual questions of mankind’s purpose develops relevance to scholars and the mass public alike. Those who experience an artistic piece of work experience life and self-consciousness.

In the “Post-Historical Period of Art,” as Danto refers to our contemporary times, art has evolved to be a narrative of individuals, rather than movements. This, as argued by Danto, was spurred on by the radical and bold moves of Andy Warhol’s blatant use of repetition and idolization of the banal during the 1960’s Pop Art movement. “It was a transfiguration of the
commonplace and, at the same time, an aestheticize" (Danto, 6). Warhol’s interest in the trite realm of everyday life caused his audience to experience an entirely new paradigm of thinking about the world. Through Andy Warhol’s aesthetic, the notion that art can grow with a focus on the individual rather than specific art movements, transformed the landscape of art we experience today.

**Evolving in a Networked Society**

“Obviously, one likes the internet in the first place because it is not selective — or at least much less selective than a museum or a traditional publishing house” (Cornell, 357).

Lauren Cornell and Ed Halter ask, “How have self-identification and representation evolved in contemporary culture, where the multicultural goal of achieving visibility has become inflicted by the anxiety of being overseen?” (Cornell, xvii). It is this study’s goal to answer such, within the framework of analyzing Andy Warhol’s work with celebrity and repetition. Andy Warhol may be considered a modern-day prophet, through his accreditation of the phrase, “In the future, everybody will be famous for fifteen minutes.” In contemporary culture, the notion of sharing on social media websites has changed the way in which art is viewed, and how celebrities become accepted as famous. In this “future,” anybody may become “Insta-famous,” through the easy accessibility of their work on social media sharing websites. Within a setting of the drastically expanding Western society obsessed with technology and social media, Cornell and Halter wonder, “how an artist might exist outside the confines of the art world” (Cornell, xix). They wish to, “tentatively propos[e] that an answer might lie in the distribution networks of mass culture, which now include[s] the internet” (Cornell, xix).
Warhol’s celebrity portraits and his philosophies on various aspects of life may be compared to our modern era’s obsession with celebrity social media, like Instagram and Twitter, and the glorification of the banal in celebrity life. Gene McHugh transcribes in Cornell’s anthology, “Almost all contemporary art is influenced by the fact that we live in a networked society” (Cornell, 185). McHugh defines “post-internet” art as any art that is influenced by the culture of the internet. Post-internet art occurs when art responds to the social condition of the internet as not a “novelty,” but “more a banality” (Cornell, 187). This distinction is important, because such art is created within a different frame of mind: “Post-internet art does not just bend itself to work as “art,” it also changes one’s conception of “art”” (Cornell, 186).

The theorists utilized in this study share a focus of how individuals interact with society, through either the realms of religion or art. This study recognizes an intersection of art, religion, and social media may aid in creating a holistic theory of art’s place in the post-internet world. Andy Warhol’s prophetic phrase, “In the future, everybody will be famous for fifteen minutes,” accurately describes the atmosphere of social media culture today. Warhol’s use of repetition in his portraits and silk screen paintings contributes to the discussion of the intersection between art, religion, and social media, specifically, the idolization of the profane - essentially, turning everyday objects and images into a piece of art. Such idolization falls in line with Durkheim’s treatment of the sacred and the profane. With the overabundance of both the internet and material items, can there be a new meaning of art created, similar to Danto’s theory that art died with the opening of the Brillo Box exhibit in 1964? In reforming the social paradigm that art can be created, experienced, and exhibited through the lens of the individual,
rather than art movements, art, in this new millennial, will be an integral part of self-expression.
CHAPTER IV

Research Design:

“A Warholian Paradigm”

Andy Warhol aided in radicalizing the way art is perceived. In analyzing aspects of Andy Warhol’s life and selected art works, patterns of modern culture are recognized to aid in developing a working theory of the contemporary relationship between art, religion, and social media. In utilizing a correlational design, the realms of art and religion are converged to demonstrate the consilience of disciplines and form a working theory of both art and religion’s place in our modern secular and post-internet society. An associative type of organization leads to a pathway into this frame of mind. In developing these pathways, the future of religion in secular America may find a new place in culture, and the role of art will evolve to account for the change in art exhibition on the internet. The dichotomous relationship between these two issues - religion in America and future art exhibition - is a fruitful topic to be explored as contemporary, “post-internet” and “post-art” American society develops increasingly advanced technologies.

An inclusion of selected Andy Warhol biographies and Warhol’s own writings is utilized to demonstrate the comparable patterns between Warhol’s life, his work, modern individuals, and the future of both art and religion. Secondary literature is used to document comparisons between theorists Emile Durkheim, William James, Habits of the Heart authors Bellah et al., Arthur C. Danto, and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, among a few minor contemporary scholars. Employing these scholars is useful because their validity and expertise in their respective fields match well with their relevant theories that pertain to the topic.
It cannot be denied there are potential biases when conducting a study focused on one person’s life and works- especially a person whose artworks may be considered so easily recognizable, as well as being known for his elusiveness to the public. However, Andy Warhol possessed a keen mind for observations on American society, and his obsession with celebrities and the banal of life (two seemingly contradictory realms) may prove to be the answer to modern day society’s conundrum of secularity, intense individuality, and a collective disregard for the arts as a field worth pursuing with active interest. Another limitation of this study would be the inclusion of three separate fields of study- art, religion, and technology; the obtaining of literature has been a struggle- as a text must relate to at least two of the three realms of study in question. Hence, gathering information to support this study has been organized to showcase the train of thought needed to fully understand the issue at hand: in utilizing an analysis of pop artist Andy Warhol’s life and selected works- specifically, his work in repetition and iconography, the relationship between art, religion, and modern technology may be converged to showcase the dichotomous relationship between these sectors of life. By allowing culture to become more integrated in various factions of our increasingly global and technologically-driven American society, the role of art and religion will continue to play an important role in popular culture as the future unfolds.
CHAPTER V  
Discussion  

What is Popular Culture?

Warhol appropriated aspects of popular culture and redistributed it as art, thereby prompting the question, “What is popular culture?” There are numerous definitions of popular culture, though scholars typically agree that “popular” implies a mass appreciation, while a definition of culture may describe the traditions and values of a group of people - how and why these people live as they do. There are some scholars who believe there to be a distinction between “art” and popular culture - an argument of high versus low art. Peter Burke writes, “Where high culture has ‘art,’ popular culture has ‘artefacts:’ not only images but tools, houses, the whole man-made environment” (Burke, 40). These “artefacts” make up facets of popular culture that Warhol utilized for the subject of his artworks: Coca-Cola, hamburgers, the Empire State building, and the Campbell’s soup can, for instance. Warhol broke the barrier between high and low art by playing with elements of popular culture and revamping “artefacts” as art. Warhol was explicitly concerned with what makes an individual or object popular. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh writes,

One of Warhol's lifelong preoccupations was the question, never posed explicitly but always latent in every image he conceived, of what it actually took for an object or an image to acquire mass magnetism. That question of the mass-media aura had been posed by Warhol both in terms of his iconography (e.g., Elvis, Marilyn, Jackie) as well as in many provocative statements in which he explicitly fused the living conditions of
totalitarian state culture with the icons of Western capitalist consumer culture (e.g., Coca Cola, McDonald's). (Buchloh, 2009)

The answer to what it takes to achieve “mass magnetism” has become transparent in contemporary society: with social media as a mainstay in popular culture, the ability to analyze a popular social media figure’s persona becomes readily available. Warhol’s discussion of the “mass-media aura” continues its relevance in this technologically-driven modern society.

Who determines what is “high” and “low” art in a given community? As Smith writes of popular culture—comparable to “low” art—“It is the culture of most of the people as opposed to the culture organized, thought and transmitted by various elites” (Smith, 42). Henceforward, with the rise of fame in Warhol’s works, the domain of popular culture obtained a relevance in the art world not previously experienced. Warhol appropriated popular aspects of culture to idolize in his works—creating the worship of the sacred in the profane realm of life. In idolizing these profane facets of life, Warhol illustrated to the world what was important to American culture, post-Industrial period: commodities, celebrities, and the status quo. He created a cult of the popular in American society that wasn’t negative or positive, as Durkheim describes religious realms to be, but mundane in every aspect. As Smith writes, “Popular culture was equated with the mechanical, the vulgar and the masses;” and the likes of Andy Warhol, his Factory, and, eventually, the whole of Western society celebrated such mechanics and vulgarity (Smith, 43).

The study of popular culture has augmented as a serious topic of discussion in our modern age. With the rising popularity and normality of the internet and internet social culture, popular culture has evolved into a culture controlled by the public, rather than the artistic elite.
Popular culture includes a variety of topics— it is not “exclusive like high culture” (Burke, 40). Such culture encompasses “performances,” as Burke states; which includes manners of behavior, songs, or “any kind of talk or action directed to an audience” (40). Popular culture involves how individuals interact with the numerous realms of life. Leroy Ashby lists the facets of popular culture as, “evolving technologies; varied entertainment forms; competing companies; censorship; politics; laws and public policies; the concept of celebrity; altered demographics; shifting audiences; changing public tastes; fresh talent; and issues of race, class, and gender” (Ashby, 2010). Ashby argues the study of popular culture begets a new way to study American history— through the paradigm of the mass public, rather than the elite. Such a varied collection as suggested by Ashby allows for a fluid definition of popular culture to arise; then the question becomes, who determines what is “popular?”

Some argue popular culture to be artificially created for the masses, those who, “no longer had an organic community capable of producing culture” (Levine, 1370). Essentially, there are those who contend the study of popular culture entails observing those producing the popular aspects of a culture, rather than observing the consumers subjected to the effects of this culture in their everyday life. As Levine writes, critics argue that popular culture “should be used primarily to represent the consciousness of its producers, not its consumers” (Levine, 1370).

On the other hand, Levine himself contends the study of popular culture may equate to an analysis of “the relationship between the producers of the culture and their audiences” (Levine, 1370). Consumers and producers alone do not affect popular culture; it is the evolving relationship that occurs between the two realms as time goes on that causes the greatest
development. This relationship becomes more acute when internet technology develops into a pertinent aspect of society, as social media allows producers to determine what consumers tangibly desire, based on the mass of consumers’ own direct feedback. This feedback observed by the producers determines the “popular” in popular culture; as Levine so puts it, “Popular culture is culture that is popular; culture that is widely accessible and widely accessed; widely disseminated, and widely viewed or heard or read” (Levine, 1373). Such feedback is more easily accessible in the modern age of the internet and thus proves worthwhile to the producers. Therefore, this modern era arguably represents the closest popular culture has ever gotten to truly representing the collective consciousness of the people.

Popular culture is not based upon chance, just as patterns in culture and human life are “not merely random or capricious,” as Marvin Harris argues (Harris, 4). Patterns develop within a society for reasons, so the growth of popular culture points to a rising “middle-class” in American society. While studying at the Carnegie Institute of Technology, professor Robert Lepper introduced young Warhol to a 1934 book, Patterns of Culture, in which anthropologist Ruth Benedict discusses the concept of “Middletown.” This fictional town, according to Benedict, represents the “usual urban fear” of acting differently than one’s neighbors or peers (Benedict, 273). Displaying originality of any kind is frowned upon; “Every sacrifice of time and tranquility is made in order that no one in the family may have any taint of nonconformity attached to him...The fear of being different is the dominating motivation recorded in Middletown” (Benedict, 273). While Benedict observes standards of normalcy vary across cultures, “these norms tend to be actualized in a way that is absolute and exclusionary,” within each respective society (Powers, 54). “Middletown” represents the stagnant normality that
occurs within a culture as traditions establish. Warhol would eventually aid in breaking apart the illusion of Middletown that dominated during his childhood and young adult life in mid-twentieth century America.

Even as a college student, Warhol demonstrated emotions of despise towards such a conformist fictional town. In an early Warhol work, *Caricature of Robert Lepper*, he depicts his professor sticking out his pointed tongue and stylizing his hands in a gesture of holding a cigarette. Such countenance “apparently expresses Lepper’s derision of Middletown” and solidifies Warhol’s own uncomfortableness with such social normality (Powers, 54). Warhol always felt like an outsider. While in college, his homosexuality constrained him from making friends with other art majors, as homosexuality in the art world was kept covert during that time (with masculine figures such as James Pollack dominating the scene). Benedict’s discussion of cultural relativism and her advice to those whom do not fit societal standards of a given society—“abnormal” individuals—aided Warhol in embracing his own “individual differences” (Powers, 55). In fact, Benedict’s emphasis on the individual viewpoint urges the “misfit” to “cultivate a greater objective interest in his own preferences and learn how to manage with greater equanimity his deviation,” from his respective society (Benedict, 272).

As Warhol grew older and developed a presence within the art world and popular culture, he indeed cultivated his differences. When his hair began to thin, he donned a bright silver wig that soon became his trademark. He cultivated groups of friends also considered "misfits," such as transgendered individuals and homosexuals, to aid in his artistic and social endeavors. Rather than conform to the artistic styles of the day, Warhol became intrigued with the Pop art movement and established his own niche in the game. Benedict urges the misfits of
society to “attain a feasible course of behavior,” and Warhol certainly managed to do so as he transformed his image into a popular icon (Benedict, 272). Warhol truly cultivated his differences when he cemented his art into the popular culture and maintained his Warholian brand through his rapid-fire silk-screen painting method and branched out into other mediums of art, including photography and film. A major focus of his was the deviant individual—those who did not, or could not, conform. This focus mimicked a underlaying focus of society as well. As Western society becomes more focused on the individual and celebrates differences, the ethical foundations of religion that held the nation together slowly disintegrate.

When individuals become more focused on themselves, the realms of the church become less prevalent and new forms of entertainment and ways to feel connected arise. The producers of consumer goods create tangible and intangible commodities—objects such as skateboards or makeup, and intangible consumption such as music, movies, or celebrities—to celebrate and reinforce popular culture. Does this render the masses of society—those consuming this popular media—passive patrons in a capitalistic commodified community? Levine thinks not, and suggests a Warholian solution to this conundrum:

Modernity dealt a blow to artisanship in culture as well as in material commodities. But to say this is not to say that, as a result, people have been rendered passive, hopeless consumers. What people can do and do is to refashion the objects created for them to fit their own values, needs, and expectations. (Levine, 1373)

Popular culture highlights “the experience of the majority,” as Ashby quotes Russel Nye (2010). “It has been an unusually sensitive and accurate reflector of the attitudes and concerns of the society for which it is produced” (Ashby, 2010). The study of popular culture arose
around the 1960s- paralleling a rare instance of popular culture merging with the elite, “high art” culture (Richards, 41). Warhol and the Pop Art movement indirectly led to the study of popular culture in the academics. The unique redistribution of materials in society- such as utilizing Brillo boxes or Campbell’s soup cans to create art- led people to question the nature of mass popularity.

Ashby goes on to reiterate Nye’s belief that, “popular culture reinforces the familiar - unlike "elite art, which tends to explore the new"” (Ashby, 2010). Warhol loved the familiar- his mother’s choice to serve him Campbell soups for years as a child may have influenced his choice to deem the Campbell’s soup can as the subject of his first Pop Art exhibit (Koestenbaum, 44). The familiar eventually morphs into banality, when one becomes used to it. Yet, Warhol was a lover of the banal- of the boredom that comes with reality. Warhol biographer, Wayne Koestenbaum presents the idea,

Warhol’s ability to enjoy boredom is a secular artistic translation of saintly patience, of stoicism- the willingness to wait for the Messiah. Warhol’s tolerance for boredom is a spiritual virtue; so, his willingness to relinquish control, to shelve his own momentary idea of what is amusing, to cede control to the other, the superstar, the narcissistic monolith. (Koestenbaum, 10)

Such stoicism demonstrated in Warhol’s personality and his art work subjects leads to an appreciation of the moment- even while enjoying the banal aspects of life. As stated above, Koestenbaum believes Warhol’s enjoyment of the banal, of boredom, equates to a “spiritual virtue” (Koestenbaum, 10). Being able to live in the moment and enjoy simple facets of life in such a stoic fashion draws to mind the Zen nature of a Buddhist monk or chastity of a nun.
Worshipping the moment becomes the most valued practice by such an individual who appreciates the banal. In employing this argument of virtue, Koestenbaum draws similarities to Warhol and religion: Warhol attempts to showcase the sacred in the profane realms of society. By creating works of art that iconize everyday consumer objects and celebrities—two subjects that are well-distributed throughout society—a new paradigm of viewing these profane aspects of culture arises.

**The Individualistic Religion**

In addressing the immensely vast realm of religion, the focus of this paper lies on the religious experience as it relates to the modern secular state of America. There are many aspects of a religious experience, as outlined by theorists Emile Durkheim and William James, though this research relies on the concepts of the sacred being and the relationship between the sacred and the profane. The way Durkheim, in his work, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, describes aspects of these topics is, arguably, like the way Warhol presents his idea of the celebrity in his artistic works. Durkheim states, “Sacred beings are, by definition, separate beings” (Durkheim, 221). In this, he means the realm of the sacred—all things religious—and the realm of the profane—all things accessed in ordinary life—must always remain at a distance. In the same way, Warhol creates a distinction between normal people and celebrities when he places certain stars on pedestals by iconizing them in his works of art—arguably, the Warholian images of Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley, and Elizabeth Taylor, for example, all achieved even greater recognition for their presentations in Warhol’s paintings. In creating these portrait auras around already established individuals, Warhol demonstrates his innate ability to glorify a celebrity to the point that if they develop an association with Warhol, they become essentially...
“Warholian” and sacred to the popular cultural landscape. Durkheim states of the act of establishing religious traditions to create this boundary between the sacred and profane, “A whole set of rites exists to bring about this crucial state of separation” (Durkheim, 221). In Warhol’s world, these rites would be the silk screening of pictures, film-making, and photography. Warhol’s dedication to his work created the opportunity for a plethora of artistic content to be created under Warhol’s name. His individual drive, his method of creation, and the dedication of both himself and his employees allowed for these artistic rites to flourish.

Philosopher William James writes, “The pivot round of which the religious life, as we have traced it, revolves, is the interest of the individual in his private personal destiny. Religion, in short, is a monumental chapter in the history of human egotism” (W. James, 534). James believes the practice of religion focuses on the individual and his or her own experience with religious forces. Such a focus may point to how religious individualism— as outlined by Bellah et al. in Habits of the Heart— now reigns dominant in modern America. The freedom to choose one’s religion or spirituality, or simply remain unaffiliated, is now more prevalent than ever in modern American society.

Varied ways arise in which an individual may join a religion, just as there are many reasons why one may develop interest in an art piece, a facet of popular culture, or a glorified icon. S.I. Shapiro lists the various reasons an individual living in the Western world would utilize in justifying the practice of the Eastern religious concept, Zen: “Rebellion, search for authority figure, seeking resolution of personal crisis, peace of mind, alternative to drugs, attraction to aestheticism or esotericism, seeking truth, spiritual fulfillment, overcoming the root of suffering, insight, enlightenment” (Shapiro, 268). Many of these reasons similarly fall in line
with motives of those who decide to practice the arts. In the case of Andy Warhol, he became fascinated with the artistic world from a young age, though his introduction to Pop Art was spurred on by one man who, arguably, would lead Warhol down the path of artistic enlightenment.

Andy Warhol met Emile de Antonio- De- while engaging work as a commercial artist in the 1950’s. At the time, De was an agent for artists in New York. In Warhol’s 1980 book, *POPism*, he relates an afternoon with De- a moment Warhol would deem, “an important one for me” (*POPism* 6). De arrived at Warhol’s apartment around five o’clock that afternoon, and Warhol poured Scotch for the two of them. Warhol unveiled two large paintings- about six feet in length and three feet across- that were facing the wall. Warhol writes of the recollection,

I turned them around and placed them side by side against the wall and then I backed away to take a look at them myself. One of them was a Coke bottle with Abstract Expressionist hash marks halfway up the side. The second one was just a stark, outlined Coke bottle in black and white. (*POPism* 6)

De takes in these two paintings for a moment. When he speaks, he bluntly tells Warhol, “One of these is a piece of shit, simply a little bit of everything. The other is remarkable- it’s our society, it’s who we are, it’s absolutely beautiful and naked, and you ought to destroy the first one and show the other” (*POPism* 6). This meeting with De gave Warhol the inspiration and encouragement to believe in his own- individual- vision. Warhol possessed an idea of the society around him, based on his observations that began as a child and continued to form as he experienced life, and he translated these notions onto the canvas as he developed his methods of artistry and became a known figure in the art world.
“The life of religion” consists of “the belief that there is an unseen order, and that our supreme good lies in harmoniously adjusting ourselves thereto” (W. James, 61). James’ theory of religion focuses on the individual and individualistic needs. In focusing on the individual in society, the purpose of religion takes on a distinctive quality of serving the individual to create a harmonious reality for oneself. Reactions to “the objects of our consciousness, the things which we believe to exist, whether really or ideally, along with ourselves” cause one’s religious attitudes (W. James, 61). Such objects recall Warhol’s use of mundane objects transfigured to sacred objects of art. Warhol’s Brillo boxes, hamburgers, and Coca-Cola bottles are examples of a distinctly Warholian manner of appropriating common objects from culture and giving it back to his audience in a slightly different manner. The Warholian touch deems these objects to now be art. An audience’s artistic attitudes, similar to James’ belief of religious attitudes, shift to compensate their belief that these objects have obtained a higher status in culture.

James writes, “The reaction due to things of thought is notoriously in many cases as strong as that due to sensible presences. It may even be stronger” (W. James, 61). Essentially, James is saying that one’s thoughts of a thing are stronger than the actual thing or experience of the thing itself. Therefore, Warhol’s appropriations of culture are inherently stronger in a spiritual sense than the objects themselves, as they take on new meaning with Warholian association. A religion consists of both tangible objects of worship- which “are known...only in idea” -and intangible, “abstract” objects “which prove to have an equal power” (W. James, 62). All objects of a religion are abstract, as the only power they possess is the power created by the minds of the individuals forming the collective of worship.
As Durkheim reiterates, “The profane must not touch the sacred” (Durkheim, 224). In modern American society, such sentiment seems to be true: separating the church and state is a commonly accepted phenomenon. In many ways, this sentiment rings true in the “individualistic religious” mindset that Bellah et al. claim is occurring in modern America. “Individualism, the first language in which Americans tend to think about their lives, values independence and self-reliance above all else” (Bellah et al., viii). The role of the church pales in comparison to the modern individual’s commitment to their everyday existence. So what role can religion- a facet of society that originally brought people together as communities- play in the lives of the focused individual?

Mysticism and appropriating Eastern ways of life by Western society allows for an individualistic paradigm of viewing and practicing religion. Therefore, in some ways, one may allow spirituality to guide them in various activities in their life, like creating art- as many do. Durkheim even addresses such notion when he writes, “The private, individual cult is the only one that mingles rather intimately with secular life” (Durkheim, 229). Interacting with a god or other such spiritual entity on an intimate level allows for various interpretations of the divine to come into form.

Religious followers worship icons that possess connotation for individuals, allowing them to lead more meaningful and productive lives. In the same way, Warhol created a pop phenomenon of glorifying celebrities and the celebrity lifestyle in such a way that the worship of fame and celebrity became a thing that transcended culture through his work. As Durkheim writes, “One establishes relations with a thing simply by gazing on it: the gaze is a way of making contact” (Durkheim, 226). By creating his brand and then spewing out factory artworks
that allowed for easy mass consumption, Warhol aided in creating a new paradigm to emerge-one in which a celebrity is worshiped for their mere image; the idea of a respective celebrity’s aura constitutes their consuming audience accepting the celebrity.

The celebration of the celebrity may be explained by the eminent American value of individualism. One may rise above the norm by working hard and maintaining focus on goals and success. The phenomenon of the celebrity-of fame-illustrates this value perfectly in that anyone may gain such status if one works at it. “Work is the preeminent form of profane activity: its only apparent aim is to meet the secular necessities of life; it connects us exclusively with ordinary things” (Durkheim, 228). Warhol loved to work- and he loved art. Warhol created what he dubbed “Business Art,” by running his artistic life as a business. Warhol maximized his output through use of silk-screening and hiring a multitude of assistants to aid creating his various modes of art. As Warhol claims in The Philosophy, “business was the best art” (The Philosophy 92). By dubbing his artistic endeavors as business- and money-centric, the artistic community criticized Warhol, claiming his art was corrupt. However, Koestenbaum argues Warhol’s “hunger for lucre…drove his productions” (Koestenbaum, 5).

Warhol was one of the first to view his art-making as a business. In doing so, he broke through the barrier that distinguishes high and low art. Before Pop Art and Andy Warhol, “high” art was for the art world and the elite of society. “Low” art constituted the creations for the masses-pop music, films, etc. With Warhol’s background as a commercial artist, he foresaw a potential for creating a distinctive type of art that both the art world and the general population accepted. His portrayals of everyday, banal, objects- hamburgers, Coca-Cola bottles, celebrities, and Campbell’s soup cans- resonated with the public in a way not yet done by his
predecessors. As Durkheim said, “Religious life and profane life cannot coexist in the same space;” similarly, the art world and the banal world had not coexisted in the same realm before Warhol (Durkheim, 228).

One may consider Warhol’s Factory to be his sacred space—where ideas took formation, friends congregated, and masterpieces created. The Factory has become synonymous with the ideals of Warhol himself. Durkheim writes, “The institution of temples and sanctuaries: these spaces are assigned to sacred things and beings, and serve as their residence, for they can claim this ground for themselves only by appropriating it entirely within a specific radius” (Durkheim, 229). Obtaining such a space allowed Warhol to further establish himself into the realm of fame. Friends and acquaintances would stop by and wait at the Factory all day while Warhol and his workers created his art pieces, and they would go out at night to party. Warhol speaks of the ideal location of the Factory: “There was a modeling agency nearby, so there were plenty of girls with portfolios around, and lots of photography labs in the area” (POPism 78). Such a setting made it the perfect workplace for Warhol and his company.

Warhol embodied the identification of Business Artist. His work ethic and dedication to his ideals lead to the rapid rise in Pop Art as a distinctive art form. “He takes part in the rites, he has acquired a sacred character” (Durkheim, 231). In the embracement and idolization of fame, Warhol obtained celebrity status himself. By establishing the celebrity as a cultural icon in such a way that it is now a part of the art world, Warhol broke through the barriers that distinguish high from low art. Warhol established his business art through an agreement with a local theater that Andy Warhol Enterprises will provide them with one movie a week. “This made our movie-making commercial and led us from short movies into long movies into feature films”
(Warhol, 92). America, as Bellah et al. argues, transformed into its secular state through establishing individualistic religion. Likewise, the Western world saw a transformation of the way individuals perceive and accept definitions of art, with the rise of Andy Warhol. Warhol created art about the culture- the experiences of everyday individuals- which allowed for an understanding and acceptance of his art by these individuals. The practice of idolizing the profane aspects of life slowly rubs away the barriers that separate what constitutes art and sacredness to showcase a mirror of the culture- essentially, the rise of Warhol’s fame forces society to witness and worship their everyday existence.

Another similarity connecting Warhol’s methods to religion would be the power of speech. Durkheim writes, “Speech is another way of entering into relations with persons or things” (Durkheim, 226). Formal ways of addressing religious figures, such as a god, a saint, or even a priest, transpire and become the norm when speaking to them. These rituals of religious speech- prayer- further create a separation between the sacred and the profane realms of life. The act of praying is sacred time that one handles in a formal matter. Many times, one must go through rituals transitioning from the profane place into the sacred to address these religious beings. Durkheim goes on to write, “Profane beings are forbidden to address speech to sacred beings or even to speak in their presence” (Durkheim, 226). Similarly, fans are often “star struck” when meeting a celebrity and are unable to talk. Fame is a realm of its own, where glorifying celebrities is the norm in modern secular society. Celebrities essentially replace the role of religious figures in contemporary life. Warhol aided in this transformation by utilizing the figure of popular celebrity icons to demonstrate the metaphoric pedestal these icons now sit upon.
By a similar token, the power of names may also be associated with Warhol and the idolization of the celebrity. “Any proper name is considered an essential element of the person who bears it. The name is so closely associated in people’s minds with the idea of that person that it participates in the feelings the person inspires. So, if that person is sacred, the name itself is sacred” (Durkheim, 226). One may argue the names of popular celebrity icons demonstrate this more so than a normal individual’s name. Sometimes it may take only a single name to associate with a figure; names such as Cher and Madonna conjure up such an image to those familiar with popular culture that the singer’s songs and style are instantly associated in an individual’s mind. Andy Warhol, born Andrew Warhola, attempted to create a similar namesake with his own being. In dropping the 'a' from his name, Warhol demonstrates acute self-awareness of his image from an early stage in his career. The namesake he would eventually create for himself was that of Andy Warhol- establishing his Warholian brand upon everything he interacted with.

“The Beauties:” Warhol’s Icons

Warhol was especially fond of stamping his Warholian association onto the people he befriended, admired, and worked with. He took to dubbing people “beauties,” if they struck Warhol as possessing unique beauty. Most of Warhol’s people were of the eccentric type- he enjoyed the craziness and spontaneity of engaging with those whom lived on the edge. Lou Reed’s 1972 song, “Walk on the Wild Side,” immortalizes a handful of Warhol’s transgendered friends. Reed sings, “Holly came from Miami F.L.A./ Hitch-hiked her way across the U.S.A./ Plucked her eyebrows on the way/ Shaved her legs and then he was a she/ She said, hey babe, take a walk on the wild side” (Reed, 1972).
Warhol interacted with these types of individuals because he felt them to be the most real, even when they were exuding fake emotion. These were the people not afraid to be themselves or show off their insecurities and desires. Everyone possesses insecurities and desires, though the crowd that hung with Warhol for much of his party-going phase reveled in the underbelly of life. “To borrow a religious vocabulary, often useful in Warhol’s case: he understood that people were fallen” (Koestenbaum, 3). The people who celebrated their fallen qualities were the most transparent and interesting to work with. William James writes, “Apart from all religious considerations, there is actually and literally more life in our total soul than we are at any time aware of” (W. James, 555). Warhol enjoyed those whom demonstrated such vibrant life in all aspects of their aura. His ventures into painting celebrity portraits and picking “Superstars” to act in his movies validates Warhol’s innate fascination with certain people possessing such mass magnetism that their mere image or name incites a response from the culture.

Warhol developed specific methods of depicting his models and muses. Warhol expert Thomas Kiedrowski establishes a theory of connection between Warhol’s celebrity portraits and Byzantine icons. As a child, Warhol attended the St. John Chrysostom Byzantine Catholic Church. The church setting depicted religious saints, Christ and Mary. Kiedrowski argues these Byzantine icons provided visual influences for Warhol’s eventual masterpieces. There are certain visual elements typical of Warhol’s portraits one may find in traditional Byzantine iconography. Warhol depicts his subjects flat with no depth. Kiedrowski states, “To make it easier for him to paint his subjects flatly, Warhol made [his models] apply thick white Pan-Cake to their face and used a polaroid camera,” (qtd. In Doherty, 2017). The faces are essentially
flawless, with little to no wrinkles or pimples- similar to the Photoshopping of celebrity figures in magazines today, or the unrealistic depiction of saints in religious art. Blue, gold, and red grace the Byzantine icons- symbolizing “the Earth, divinity, and resurrection” (Doherty, 2017). Kiedrowski points out Warhol’s portraits often utilize these three colors as well. The most popular image that comes to mind is Warhol’s *Gold Marilyn Monroe* (1962): a Pop Art styled, small image of Monroe’s face (donning blue eyeshadow) set against a deep gold backdrop. *Gold Marilyn Monroe* becomes the perfect example to illustrate Warhol’s utilization of his Byzantine influence to demonstrate the insane extremes of popular culture celebrity worshipping. Painted after Monroe’s suicide, Warhol fashions Monroe as the Byzantine-inspired Virgin Mary- a “Madonna” of the 1950’s Hollywood glamour era (Doherty, 2017).

In modern secular America, religious iconography does not play a central role in society. Rather than shown images of the Virgin Mary, individuals participating in culture- or even just trying to get by- are bombarded, daily, by images presented through both the mass media and social networking websites. Oversexualized images of the female body are now the norm in popular culture, and old institutions, such as the church, need to evolve with the times to stay relevant to the public. Sidney Callahan states, “Today the church is beginning to confront the worldwide feminist movement, and this soon brings to the fore deeper theological questions of embodiment, gender and sexuality” (Callahan, 10). Female embodiment- acceptance of one’s self as a female possessing a body, mind, and soul- has become an important issue in this contemporary society. Social movements, such as the #metoo social media phenomenon, establishes a safe cultural environment for women to speak out against rape and sexual harassment. Callahan goes on to discuss how a reinterpretation of the Virgin Mary as a religious
saint may aid in transforming the religious realm to achieve greater relevance in modern society:

Mary's freedom from sin, her bodily assumption into heaven, gives witness to the goodness of the female human body and the truth of the promised resurrection of all bodies. But what are the implications for bodies and the body-mind unity of the human being here and now? Marian shrines have been noted for healing, but healing ministries have not yet become a central concern of the church. (Callahan, 10)

In reforming the way individuals in society interpret and worship both religious and celebrity icons, the church and popular culture/art may converge to create more a harmonious relationship between the two realms, as well as aid in creating a more communal and empathic group of citizens participating in society.

Warhol’s use of iconography in his artistic works points to his innate obsession with the celebrity form, as well as articulates answers to his friendships and relationships, his desire for friends while at the same time his purposed projection as a loner, and his hidden sexuality. Such articulations may provide insights into the modern way society views the celebrity icon and its role in society. Warhol’s most notable celebrity treatments and depictions were of women, which is interesting when one considered his homosexuality as a contributing factor in creating his own celebrity personality.

Warhol’s depiction of female celebrity figures- Edie Sedgwick, Marilyn Monroe, and Jackie Kennedy- illustrates both an admiration for the female identity and a commentary on how society treats the female celebrity form. Warhol’s female celebrity depictions are, arguably, similar to artistic interpretations of the Virgin Mary and illustrate the changing views
of both religion and society in modern America. “The word *virgin*, according to many Greek translations and interpretations, actually means “one unto herself”” (Beak, 30). In this way, Warhol’s female celebrity art pieces- the iconic figures of Edie Sedgewick, Marilyn Monroe, and Jackie Kennedy represent such females unto herself. In representing these celebrities in his works, Warhol iconizes them and essentially brands his Warholian mark upon them, stamping the Warhol Virgin unto his brand.

Warhol’s initial interest in the celebrity icon- specifically, in the female form- traces back to his childhood. Warhol was a sickly child and did not have many friends growing up. He sought comfort in the fantasy world of movies and celebrities. Warhol’s obsession with Shirley Temple alluded to his adult fascination with the notion of fame. The aura of child actress Shirley Temple was the perfect “abstract object” for the attention of Warhol’s mind to rest upon (James, 62). Temple’s commercial success is comparable to Warhol’s, when one considers the magnitude the two late stars continue to hold on culture today.

Warhol possessed “a special and long-lasting obsession with the child star Shirley Temple” (Stimson, 2001). Temple, coincidentally born only a few months before Warhol in 1928, starred in films during the 1930’s Depression Era- providing film-going audiences with a simple little sparkle of child-like joy and innocence amidst their typical disadvantaged lives. Temple was the most photographed person in the world in 1936, and she achieved a level of success that many adult film actresses have never experienced (Stimson, 2001). Blake Stimson explains the child star’s Hollywood films achieved record box office success and paved the way for the marketing of an array of Temple merchandise, including, “The tremendous sales of the coats, hats, shoes, dolls, books, toys, dresses, under-wear, soap, hair ribbons, and tableware

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produced in her name, together with her films, which grossed between one and one and a half million dollars each” (Stimson, 2001). The aura of celebrity proved beneficial in the case of one of the first major Hollywood stars, allowing for a boom in the economy during the otherwise deprived Depression era.

Warhol was an avid fan of Shirley Temple, participating actively in the “mass-cultural economy” of the child star’s realm of reach. He illustrated his innate obsession with the celebrity aura by, “regularly attending Shirley Temple movies, joining the Shirley Temple fan club, collecting Shirley Temple merchandise and promotional materials, and contributing his share to the four thousand fan letters that deluged the child star each week” (Stimson, 2001). Because Warhol was a sickly child growing up, the celebrity icon of Shirley Temple provided an outlet for the young Warhol to develop and indulge in his interests. Utilizing the realm of fame as a means of escapism began a lifelong obsession of Warhol’s that would eventually lead a path to fame for Warhol himself.

The essence of Temple’s celebrity icon- that of a child displaying an illusion of mature physical and emotional qualities- provided Warhol with the inspiration for contrasting personality traits that would serve Warhol well throughout his later artistic career. Stimson writes of Temple, “She modeled a manner of operating in the world-a style or comportment- that mixed both child and adult functions and attributes, both innocence and savoir faire” (Stimson, 2001). Warhol’s initial obsession with Shirley Temple opened the gate for a lifelong affair with the celebrity icon- those whom displayed this same dichotomy of childlike attributes, such as model and Warholian “Superstar” Edie Sedgwick.
Andy Warhol met Edith Minturn Sedgwick in January of 1965 at a party and experienced a kind of “fascination” that “was probably very close to a certain kind of love” (Warhol, The Philosophy 27). Warhol developed such a fascination to Edie because she was unlike anyone he had ever experienced before—“She was a wonderful, beautiful blank. The mystique to end all mystiques” (Warhol, The Philosophy 33). Such fascination lead to Andy involving Edie in many of his artistic endeavors during the time of their close friendship. An analysis of Edie Sedgwick’s quick rise of “Superstardom” may prove valuable in comparing such to the similarities of the modern-day fifteen-minute famers so prevalent in our social-media centered society.

Edie came from old money. Her family, according to Warhol, dated to the Pilgrims and achieved great levels of success in business since that time (Warhol, POPism 119). Before traveling to New York City, Edie was residing in Cambridge studying sculpture and attending “beautiful rich kid” parties (POPism 119). Even during this pre-Warhol time, Edie held the fascinations of those around her. A friend of Edie’s recalls to Warhol a night at the Ritz-Carlton for dinner with Edie and some friends. Out of nowhere, Edie starts dancing on the tabletop and management “very very politely asked them to leave” (POPism 120). As they left, Edie and her friends stole of the silverware and stuffed them in their pockets and purses. Warhol goes on to reiterate the friend’s story,

As they were leaving, Edie tripped at the top of the stairs and all the knives and forks and spoons spilled out of her purse and went avalanching down the stairs. Even with that the management was polite to her because they knew her father- it was just “Tsk, tsk, don’t do this again, dear.” (POPism 120)

Another mutual friend, Danny Fields, recalls to Warhol the first time he met Edie:
The radio was going full blast; the Beach Boys were singing ‘I Get Around.’ When Edie came in and saw her girlfriends, she started jumping up and down and pretty soon everyone was jumping up and down and hugging and kissing each other... Edie was so pretty and bubbly and big-eyed. (*POPism* 122)

Edie became a unique subject for the mass media because of a few reasons: her association with Warhol, her rich-kid party lifestyle, and her revolutionary sense of minimalist fashion featured in *Vogue, Life,* and *Time.* Her “long, long earrings with dime-store T-shirts over dancer’s tights, with a white mink coat thrown over it all,” accented a lifestyle of glamour and innovation (*POPism* 124). Her child-like, petite frame allowed for such clothing to fit and accent her look in such a way that others wished to emulate her. Edie’s personality and physical attributes worked together to create a mythical aura, rising her up to celebrity status with the aid of Warhol’s innate interest.

She starred in Warhol’s films: *Poor Little Rich Girl, Beauty #2, Camp, Afternoon, Inner and Outer Space, Space,* and *Lupe* (Koestenbaum, 92). However, Edie’s first Warhol film appearance, in the 1965 torture film *Vinyl,* broadcasts her “elite indifference” as a desirable trait; portraying Edie and her dancing regime as “woman as a work of art” (Koestenbaum, 92). Warhol allowed Edie to have this role in *Vinyl*—which originally included only males, though Warhol convinced the main actor, Gerald Malanga, that Edie would fit in because she looked like a boy (Koestenbaum, 94). Her slim frame and childlike facial features allowed such an androgynous illusion to occur.

In Warhol’s 1965 film, *Beauty #2,* Edie lounges in bed, underwear-clad, kissing actor Gino Piserchio, while an offscreen voice taunts her—“Do better than that, Edie!”
distinguishing the #2 in the title of the film, one may question the nature of such- is the
audiences’ hand being twisted to choose who is beauty #1, Edie or Gino, as Warhol biographer
Wayne Koestenbaum suggests? “Warhol presents male and female beauty side by side and lets
us choose” (Koestenbaum, 97). Warhol's theme of beauty attempts to distinguish what gives an
individual mass magnetism- what aesthetic qualities create traits deemed admirable by the
public. Koestenbaum argues Warhol utilizes beauty as “an instrument of torture,” in his
metaphorical commentary on society (Koestenbaum, 98).

Warhol further explores this concept of beauty in his Marilyn Monroe artworks. One of
his first silk-screen pieces, as well as one of his first forays into celebrity painting, *Gold Marilyn
Monroe*, distinctly glorifies Monroe as a pop celebrity icon, while at the same time establishes
Monroe as a tortured soul- appropriate considering her recent suicide. Koestenbaum writes,
“Andy tortures Marilyn by portraying her, so soon after her suicide; also, Monroe’s beauty
tortures him, her death mask a grimacing high-gloss multi-color gibe at his pallor”
(Koestenbaum, 98). As Warhol became more established and obtained a level of celebrity
status, he continued to utilize similar still shots to create his collection of Marilyn Monroe
portraits. Warhol would purposely print pictures with the color off-register, to further illustrate
the distorted feeling. This off-kilter vibe, along with printing the same image multiple times in
different colors, strongly suggests a major theme of repetition to be present in Warhol’s
the same exact thing, the more the meaning goes away, and the better and emptier you feel”
(*POPism* 72).
Warhol once again utilized the method of repetition when he created *Jackie (Four Jackies) (Portraits of Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy)* (1964) soon after Lee Harvey Oswald assassinated President John F. Kennedy. Rather than creating a work that commemorated the late president—whose death created a media uproar—Warhol decided to focus on the female viewpoint in this national tragedy. Warhol utilized four images taken of First Lady Jacklyn Kennedy surrounding the time of her husband's assassination; the first photo is of Jackie before the assassination, and the next three portray her after the event, each photo portraying more and more grief— the last, a close-up of her down-trodden face, eyes cast down in sullen defeat. In portraying such a strong female icon experiencing tragedy, Warhol once again showcases his admiration for the female form, as well as demonstrates the media’s ability to shape the way its participants view the culture. Bellah et al. writes, “The cultural tradition of a people—its symbols, ideals, and ways of feeling—is always an argument about the meaning of the destiny its members share. Cultures are dramatic conversations about things that matter to their participants” (Bellah et al., 27). Warhol participates in the dramatic conversation between the media and its consuming public with such feminine portrayals.

Warhol’s *Four Jackies* was not so much a commentary on the iconic First Lady, but the media interpretation of such a monumental American icon’s fall. The media represents the cultural tradition of America. Arguably, what constitutes as relevant in the media subsequently relates to what is relevant among the people. Warhol uncovers the manipulative media during this tragedy by taking newspaper pictures of Jackie surrounding Kennedy’s death, blowing up the image so it captures the innate detail of her expressions. He places them in an array of
pictures stylistically capturing Jackie’s deteriorating mental state after her husband dies and the media bombards her with reminders of the tragic event.

Certain people fascinated Warhol. Some of these individuals he dubbed his “Superstars,” like the aforementioned Edie Sedgwick. When one reads Warhol’s autobiography recounting the 1960s, POPism, it becomes evident Warhol measured his life’s worth according to the people who surrounded him. Rather than focus on how he obtained his inspirations, or how Pop Art changed the landscape of the modern era, Warhol recounted stories of his friends that defined the decade for him. He utilized those around him to cement his place in popular culture. Stimson describes such appropriation of Warhol’s fascinations as, “adopting an identity in order to gain access to a realm of legitimation and authority not otherwise available” (Stimson, 2001). Warhol surrounded himself with beautiful people, so society would consider him beautiful as well. He appropriated popular consumer objects and icons to uncover a liberal paradigm for the 1960s—*the freedom of choosing how to perceive life*. As Ruth Benedict’s observed patterns of culture are replaced and cultural relativism becomes practiced, Warhol’s artistic model fuses with the popular culture, and the boundary between high and low art dissipates.

**The End of Art**

Arthur C. Danto argues modern society is experiencing the Post-Historical Period of Art, by which he means that in the mid-twentieth century, Andy Warhol’s exhibit of *Brillo Box* in 1964 establishes “the End of Art.” Warhol’s appropriation of a common banality in American consumer culture broke down the wall between high and low art, creating a validation of Pop
Art into the artistic community, as well as created a serious art that was still relatable for the everyday people. Danto writes,

The *Brillo Box*, it seems to me, demonstrated that the different between art and non-art is philosophical and momentous, by constituting itself as an example of the kind that always implies a philosophical boundary. It had always been taken for granted that one could distinguish works of art from other things by mere inspection...this straightforward way of learning cannot work. (Danto, 7)

Danto introduces a consilience of art and philosophy- essentially stating that art theory and interpretation now belongs to the realm of philosophy rather than art criticism. Warhol’s work and his method of creating art- rather mechanical in the process- allows for a relationship between art and science to continue establishing in this secular and technologically advanced Western society.

There are several innate relationships of art and science seen throughout history. The Renaissance was a rebirth of both the arts and sciences. The discovery of the Earth’s relationship in accordance to the Sun and the universe was monumental; Sheldon Richmond states these scientific discoveries and theories by Copernicus and Galileo aided in transforming art onto the canvas. Art is no longer created in accordance to “some hierarchal scheme of value” (Richmond, 81). Objects are not placed within a painting according to their degree of importance. Richmond states, “Rather, objects filled the space of the canvas according to their relationship to the eye of the beholder, as defined by the universal scheme of perspective” (Richmond, 81). Another such relationship between the arts and sciences occurred with the “Einsteinian revolution,” when the question of “Where are we?” dominated the minds of
scientists and philosophers alike (Richmond, 81). In answering such a question, the use of imagination—such as that required when creating abstract paintings or frame-working a storyboard into a film—gains relevance.

There are contrasting ways of viewing the unifying relationship between art and science: that of art as a subdivision of science, and science as a subdivision of art (Richmond, 82). This study focuses on such a unifying relationship because in establishing a basis of the harmonious differences between these two distinctive realms of thought in our society, a consilience of paradigms may allow for developing different frames of perceiving the world. While science is rational in manner, Richmond argues a quest of both truth and knowledge similarly fuels art. He writes, “Art uses symbols or signs to represent truth...art expresses or represents truth in a manner that differs from science” (Richmond, 82). While art and science may go about these quests in different ways, cognitivists believe art is not merely a shallow paradigm of science’s rational and factual basis. Richmond argues, “The artist is a scientist in his own manner” (Richmond, 82).

Such a statement articulates the role of the humanities well. The social sciences provide a rational space to study and articulate theories of culture and art. In creating a theory that links the use of technology to exhibiting art, the realms of science and art merge once more. Art aids in developing science, just as science aids in developing art. Richmond writes, “Science prompts art to create new visions; art provides science with visions for articulating and testing” (Richmond, 83). Imagination is an important trait to possess for both science and art—providing “a direct and powerful influence” on these respective realms (Richmond, 83).
As the societal landscape continues to radically evolve in the new millennia, how one interacts with various facets of culture must evolve as well. Changeux offers a unique perspective in that he believes the field of art criticism benefits from an analysis of neuroscientific research and how such relates to theories of beauty and aesthetics. He comments on possible neural origins of aesthetic pleasure: “Viewing a painting involves the highest of functions in the hierarchy of the brain, that of reason, because it necessitates a perception of the global rhythm of shapes and forms and an assessment of the stylistic code as well as of the numerous levels of symbolic interpretation—and also because it is endowed with the faculty of simulation” (Changeux, 192). Such information is important and relevant because including a scientific paradigm may aid in facilitating a tangible premise for the critical analysis of Warhol’s theory of art and what makes art and artists popular. Including scientific thought adds validity to a purely theoretical argument, as a consilience of disciplines aids in creating more solidified theories. Warhol utilizes a systematic method when creating his silk screen paintings. By appropriating images from his photography or the media, Warhol created his masterpieces through arranging colors in radical and flamboyant ways, many times making great use of exuberant colors and distortions. Changeux provides a scientific definition of a painting, which seems to accurately describe the method of Warhol’s creative process: “Physically speaking, a painting can be defined as a differentiated distribution of colors on a flat surface” (Changeux, 189).

Warhol took this distribution of colors to a different level when he specifically used vivid colors reminiscent of Byzantine religious art to convey various meanings into his paintings. Portraying his subjects, usually just one at a time, onto the canvas as the centerpiece defines
this subject as important. Changeux explains, “The eye captures physical data on the colored surface and the light radiations it gives off, then converts them into electrical impulses that travel to the brain and its cortex. There, progressively, a mental object, an inner representation of the painting, will take shape” (Changeux, 189). So essentially, paintings are merely collections of colored surfaces created by the artist to appease an audience’s eye.

The way in which Changeux describes the physical sensation of viewing a painting, defines any visual surface created by man as art. Therefore, other mediums of artistry such as photography and woodworking go through the same processes in the human eye when viewed and interpreted. One may argue that any representation of a real object is art- such as the vast amount of content posted on social media. Changeux goes on to write, “A painting offers a plurality of meanings and is coded in many ways; for this reason, viewing it is in no way an act of passive submission” (Changeux, 191). This seems to be more relevant in our modern internet society than any other time in history. When an individual views an artist’s work on any social media platform, there is an option to express admiration or appreciation of the piece—whether through liking, sharing, or perhaps retweeting. Art appreciation is no longer a passive event; individuals may interact with the art in ways that were never available in museums and art galleries of the past.

This evolution of how society interacts with art has no doubt changed the landscape for modern artists. Changeux states, “Creating a painting is a kind of “scientific experiment,” it is the result of a complex development in time, an evolution-or, rather, a cascade of nested evolutions—that the painter undergoes in his or her dialogue with the canvas” (Changeux, 194). This dialogue has shifted with modern society coming into the "post internet" era. Internet
culture affects the popular culture of the day- for example, when one watches a television show, it is likely that there is a hashtag for Instagram and Twitter in the corner to interact with the show on these media platforms. Art and popular culture has melded to include all appreciators of both "high" and "low" artistic endeavors onto these social media platforms.

Changeux describes the art making process in an interesting way. This process accurately illustrates Warhol's mindset when creating some of his most famous works of repetition, celebrity glorification, and the worship of the banal. Changeux writes, “The artist calls to mind images and representations, dissociating them only to combine them anew, sometimes almost without being aware of it, until the ideal pattern... becomes set in his or her brain” (Changeux, 194). This describes the way in which Warhol utilizes mass media images from newspapers and magazines to create art pieces such as his Marilyn Monroe and Jackie Kennedy works.

Describing and analyzing art within a scientific paradigm allows for new connections to develop within the culture as well as promote a consilience of disciplines. Such a scientific paradigm is relevant because Warhol's work was mechanical both in nature and in the process of making such. Warhol's view of art-making, at least in the latter half of his career, was as business art or art as a business. His company- his actors, assistants, and friends whom worked at the Factory- all fell under the business scheme of Andy Warhol Enterprises. He treated his artistic career as a business: his popular silk screening method allowed for assistants to help in creating Warhol artworks, and writer Pat Hackett was the co-author for most of his books, though Warhol dictated while Hackett wrote the actual text of the books.
In this day and age, “art” is loosely classified; one may argue Arthur C. Danto proves to be correct in his argument that the exhibit of Warhol’s *Brillo Box* at the Stable Gallery on East Seventy-fourth Street in late spring of 1964 marked the “End of Art,” in a traditional, artistic, sense. Danto argues the meaning of art, since that spring in 1964, now belongs to the realm of philosophy, rather than to the artists themselves. In contemporary times, with the rise of social media and growing use of technology, and thus access to information, what role does art serve in our daily lives? As Danto states, in his work, *Beyond the Brillo Box: The Visual Arts in Post-Historical Perspective*, “What the end of art means is not, of course, that there will be no more works of art. If anything, there has been more art-making through the last decade than in any previous period of history” (Danto, 10). Being that Danto wrote his work in 1992, it is valuable to argue the ability to produce art has rapidly grown with the rising technologies of the new millennium. The concept of sharing pictures and other media on social networking platforms allows for one to find more artistic inspiration and create one’s own artistic brand online.

Danto explains, “Art was no longer possible in terms of a progressive historical narrative. The narrative had come to an end” (Danto, 9). It is interesting to look at art in this way because art, whether it be on canvas, music, or film, is now available to the masses in ways not seen before Warhol's time. By abruptly and obviously appropriating popular mundane objects in consumer culture- specifically, facets of the advertising realm that he previously immersed, Warhol stole a name for himself in the mist of the Pop Art movement and altered the way both the elite "high" culture world and the "low" popular culture world imagined and viewed itself in relation to the other. This idea that art had reached a "sort of historical end," and morphed into something else- "it in fact turns into philosophy"- was, as Danto credits, first developed by
Hegel in his aesthetic lectures in 1828 Berlin (Danto, 7). Danto believes Hegel “felt that there was a time when art, all on its own, yielded full satisfaction” (Danto, 8). However, as societies progress, there comes a time when art requires “something other than itself to yield satisfaction, and that, “not for the purpose of creating art again, but for knowing philosophically what art is” (Danto, 8). As Hegel predicted and Danto further elaborated, art now belongs to the realm of philosophy and searches within the individual to develop answers about humanity.

Andy Warhol and the Pop Art movement created a cultural shift in how one perceives art. Art became a thing for the masses, and not merely a privilege for the elite and well-off. This shift in perspective altered the display of art as well. Danto writes, “It was as if the whole face of popular culture were a museum without walls, with the message that art is everywhere” (Danto, 165-166). Art is now not strictly reserved for the museum space- it may find a home in a variety of places, from political statement graffiti to an artistic sketch posted on social media. In creating works of art that highlighted everyday culture- Campbell’s soup cans, celebrities, Coca-Cola bottles, hamburgers, and Brillo boxes- Warhol iconized the banalities of life to set art free for the masses. Warhol writes in POPism, “Pop Art took the inside and put in outside, took the outside and put it inside” (POPism 3). The growing interest in Pop Art and Warhol’s success as a “business artist” illustrates society’s shift in paradigm from, “an economy of production, to one of consumption and waste” (Buchloh, 23). In society recognizing its own consumption and waste, society becomes self-aware, essentially aiding in developing Danto’s theory of Warhol’s Brillo Boxes being the End of Art: with society becoming self-aware, the purpose of art shifts
from the collective to the individual- from defining art by movements, to focusing on the
individual artist and a piece’s multiple meanings and functions.

The commonplace banality of life has become Western culture’s new religion. In the
secular nation of America, the peoples’ collective obsessions lie in celebrities, self-
 improvement, and social media. Andy Warhol aided in this collective transformation of the
consciousness; Danto writes of Warhol’s influence, “It was abruptly revealed that popular
culture is a massive symbolic system that condenses the meanings of modern life as lived by
modern men and women. It was a transfiguration of the commonplace” (Danto, 166). Through
social media, modern celebrities attempt to showcase the trivial aspects of their life, to relate
more clearly to their audience.

This dynamic relies on the ideal that as society progresses, consumers are more in tune
to such banalities, and celebrity life must evolve into possessing a more transparent nature to
stay relevant. Warhol states *The Philosophy*,

I never fall back to sleep. It seems like a dangerous thing to do. A whole day of life is like
a whole day of television. TV never goes off the air once it starts for the day, and I don’t
either. At the end of the day the whole day will be a movie. A movie made for TV. (*The
Philosophy* 5)

In the post-internet era, where every aspect of our lives is broadcasted on social media, our
lives may as well be made-for-TV movies. If not for the artistic realm, life would be a constant
cycle of obtaining money to consume goods. In this consumer-driven culture, the worship of
the everyday, banal, aspects of society reign supreme. In Warhol’s mind, it is not that life was
interesting enough to be on television, but that television- and all popular culture- was banal
enough to constitute any aspect of life to be relevant and “popular.” Warhol recognized this phenomenon and outlined the idea of the sacred in the banal, as a theme in his career.

Arguably Warhol’s most iconic and recognizable work, 32 Campbell’s Soup Cans (1962), illustrates Warhol’s obsession with such banality, and would set a theme of the use of repetition throughout the bulk of his art career. Warhol utilized mundane objects of everyday popular culture to convey a stark outlook of what it means to live in the modern America. Rather than the cultural landscape consisting of religious icons and demanding political figures—for instance, the kings and queens of historical Europe—consumer goods such as Coca-Cola bottles, hamburgers, and the new cultural icon: the celebrity, dominates the modern America of Warhol’s time and beyond. Arthur C. Danto comments on the influence of the Pop Art movement and Warhol’s eventual rise to fame when he states, “It really did mean that anything could be art, in the sense that nothing could no longer be excluded” (Danto, 9). Any banal object that may possess meaning to even one individual may now become part of the artistic conversation that dominates the current cultural landscape of the Western world.

Warhol was an intense collector of items—“cookie jars, jewelry, superstars, drawings, cardboard-boxed time capsules,” to name a few (Koestenbaum, 50). These collections he acquired were essential to his being; when friends gathered at his house after his death, they displayed shock at the discovery of the vast horde of shopping bags stuffed with objects that littered the floor of Warhol’s house. Perhaps a cause of this hoarding was Warhol’s intense insecurities about himself; the material items he acquired would compensate for his waning self-love. “Andy kidded himself that he was in Christ’s position: he too, wanted to disappear while remaining a static image, to make his eroded body an emblem” (Koestenbaum, 197). So it
is with modern individuals: the constant documenting of their lives on social media allows for one to preserve a time capsule of their everyday lives in the vastness of the modern-day bible: social media. In this secular society, religion plays a tiny part to the realm of technology and banality that strikes its way through every aspect of our lives.

Danto argues Andy Warhol’s 1964 work, *Brillo Box*, establishes the “End of Art,” in the sense that the meaning of art now belongs to the academic discourse of philosophy, rather than art criticism. Danto believes art has reached an “historical end;” it has evolved into something else. A major question Danto attempts to answer regards Hegel’s remark that art needs something other than its mere tangibility to create a satisfaction- it needs a philosophical meaning. In the “Post-Historical Period of Art,” as Danto refers to our contemporary times, art has evolved to be a narrative of individuals, rather than movements. As argued by Danto, the radical and bold moves of Andy Warhol’s blatant use of repetition and idolization of the banal during the 1960’s Pop Art movement spurred such evolution.

Danto theorizes that after Warhol’s *Brillo Box*, the manner in which we process and critique art shifted from looking at such in terms of movements, to terms of the individual artists. According to Danto, an art piece no longer needed to possess innate cultural relevance and stylistic quality to fit into one category of art, but rather convey a sense of meaning to their audience. As Warhol began engaging in these vital cultural discussions through the unveiling of his masterpieces, an evolution in the conversation of art criticism occurred: “Everything was permitted, since nothing any longer was historically mandated. I call this the Post-Historical Period of Art, and there is no reason for it ever to come to an end” (Danto, 9). This is the period that we are still in today, as it is easier than ever to have access to new art shared on social
media websites such as Instagram and YouTube. Art has become a realm of life for the individual, and it allows those integrating art and social media to develop connections with other like-minded individuals. In providing a sense of connection to individuals, art has, arguably, replaced religion in the religious individualistic America. Such a shift in the artistic culture gives art- and those participating in it through creating, exhibiting, or appreciating- new meaning. As Danto writes of this shift in the landscape, “It liberated artists from the task of making more history” (Danto, 9). Moving past this history allows the medium of art to merge into other realms of life, as we are seeing in social media today.

Social Media and the Post-Internet Era

A relationship between the internet and space occurs when one takes notice of the pure vastness of the internet. Imagine if everything on the internet- all the content- were to occupy physical space on earth. There would be no room for it all. In the post-internet era, the amount of content found online equates to the cultural morality of our time: materialistic and consumer-focused. Warhol states in The Philosophy, “When I look at things, I always see the space they occupy. I always want the space to reappear, to make a comeback, because it’s lost space when there’s something in it” (144). The amount of both tangible and intangible objects present in the modern world causes a shift in how individuals perceive experiences.

The process of video-recording, either through a smart phone or computer cam, allows for a quick and convenient medium of creating space in modern society; through posting Instagram or Snapchat “stories” for others to view at their leisure, individuals are infiltrating both the banal and exciting aspects of their lives into the lives of those around them. There are positives and negatives for society regarding this phenomenon. In our modern world, the
individual tunes into the external. By posting videos and pictures online that document our daily lives, society is constantly consuming the banal contents from an array of sources—friends, acquaintances, and even celebrities. In participating in this constant bombardment of content on social media, individuals are contributing to this act and belittling it at the same time. The more content, the less valuable this content becomes. Wayne Koestenbaum writes, “Andy wanted imperially to occupy time and space, fill them to capacity, as if with heavy stones. Perpetual filming was a technique for wasting space, laying waste to it, junking it, and clutching it” (Koestenbaum, 165).

There is no denying Andy Warhol’s impact on both art and consumer culture, as well as the future of art—both creating and presenting art in our technologically-driven society. His obsession with the contrasting realms of the celebrity icon and the banal led to a harmonious reevaluation of these two aspects of culture as we perceive them today. As social media infuses into daily life, personal and mundane aspects of acquaintances’ lives may bombard individuals as they go throughout their day. Such interest in the banal aspects of life—what one had for breakfast, one’s latest successes or failures, and simply what is on one’s mind—is not reserved for the everyday individual. Celebrities actively engage in social media as well, and it seems a major aspect of engaging in such is to illustrate to their fanbase, the respective celebrity’s own mundane nature. Simply put, celebrities may utilize social media to showcase just how similar they are to their fans, to make their celebrity brand more relatable and marketable. Our contemporary society is the time of the individual, and so in order to stay relevant to the rapidly revolving popular culture, one must utilize social media to understand and emulate the current trend of the masses. Now more than any time in Western society, the popular trends of
fashion, music, movies, etc., are more likely determined by the actual mass public through involvement on social media, rather than simply relying on a celebrity’s word in a magazine.

It is interesting how Warhol’s initial interest in the grandiosity of life - Hollywood movies and Shirley Temple - eventually led to a cultural breakdown of the roles of such societal molds. Now, anybody may become famous through utilization of social media websites and phone apps. One may post art online by taking pictures of it on Instagram, creating and posting videos on YouTube, or fashioning clever poetry on Twitter. With these new popular modes of exhibiting and perceiving art, the role of the artist and audience has evolved as well. Lauren Cornell proposes the function of art in society has “fundamentally shifted” in the past years (Cornell, ix). Now, as social media becomes an integral aspect of our modern Western culture, anyone may call themselves artists and begin an artistic career online. Cornell asks the question, “Where should we draw the boundaries of the art world when artists are increasingly apt, with each new generation, to circulate their work on platforms far removed from traditional institutional frameworks?” (Cornell, xi). How do we create distinctions between high and low art in this contemporary, technologically-driven society? Are such distinctions even necessary anymore?

Arthur C. Danto believes not, as he calls this modern era the “End of Art,” and celebrates this evolution of humanity (Danto, 6). Danto utilizes Hegel’s proposal of the End of Art, found in Hegel’s Berlin lecture on Aesthetics, to demonstrate the rapid revolution of artistic creation, perception, and exhibition. David James elucidates Hegel’s belief that art has evolved to a new form. He expands upon Hegel’s theory that, “the everyday has come to form an essential aspect of art, so that the range of its objects has become unlimited” (D. James, 79).
Hegel argues “art’s growing preoccupation with the prosaic” reflects the “political and religious independence” of nations whom revolt, such as Hegel’s example of the Dutch nation’s freedom from Spanish domination (James, 79). Art slowly evolved since Hegel’s time to reflect the growing independence of modern nations and the changing ethical values of a modern community.

Now more than ever, Danto’s observations of a post-art world ring true, as art becomes mass-produced due to images on social media becoming available for maximum viewing capacity by a selected social group. Internet users producing more and more content challenges artistic creation to evolve, as well as forces the individual’s own capacity for creativity to expand. Anyone can now create art, so the artistic quality of a piece must possess unique qualities to stand out in the crowd. As Cornell asks, “How have self-identification and representation evolved in contemporary culture, where the multicultural goal of achieving visibility has become inflicted by the anxiety of being overseen?” (Cornell, xvii).

With the great excess of people interacting on social media in contemporary society—from teenagers to their grandparents- the online world has become an extension of tangible reality. To be part of the online world of social media is to always be up-to-date with news, gossip, and friends’ lives. The role of the artist has also evolved to take advantage of this extension of reality. Being able to create a piece of visual art- on canvas or video- and then immediately posting it online for viewers to enjoy and interpret allows for a more intimate relationship between artist and audience. This furthers the cultural ideal of the individual as the driving force of society because the experience of art may be more accessible: on the screen of a smart phone or computer, rather than the walls of a gallery that requires one to commute.
and pay for its viewing. By pressing the “like button,” double-tapping a picture, or retweeting a post, fans may demonstrate their appreciation for an artwork more easily than in the past.

Many famous artists utilizing the ease of accessibility of YouTube propelled their careers to stardom. Musical agents discovered Canadian pop singer Justin Bieber after viewing his YouTube channel, where he posted videos displaying his musical talents. Bieber later signed with established singer Usher and became a pop sensation through the help of social media. Celebrities and artists receive direct feedback from the public through social media; while such feedback may be positive or negative, there’s no denying the evolving popular culture now belongs more fully to the masses, as opposed to controlled by an artistic elite.

While there are undeniable positive aspects to this new flow of control, such control by the masses causes internet users to copy one another while creating content to gain likes, shares, and retweets. Warhol states, “Sometimes something can look beautiful just because it’s different in some way from the other things around it. One red petunia in a window box will look very beautiful if all the rest of them are white, and vise-versa” (The Philosophy 72). In today’s constant stream of content, artistic or otherwise, things tend to flow in similar manners and emulate one another. While a style or an art concept may be accepted as beautiful or inspiring when first introduced, by the time it has circulated its way through the unforgiving eye of the internet, it reiterates in so many ways that it, whatever it is, loses its initial unique beauty.

Another aspect of social media and the celebrity’s relationship involves the fans’ perception of a respective celebrity. Warhol writes, “In the early days of film, fans used to idolize a whole star- they would take one star and love everything about that star. Today there
are different fan levels. Now fans only idolize parts of the stars. Today people can idolize a star in one area and forget about him in another” (The Philosophy 85). Because there are so many “stars,” of many different varieties - music, film, television, YouTube, Tumblr, and Instagram for example - individuals of consumer culture may pick and choose aspects of famous individuals to admire and emulate. As Warhol goes on to philosophize, “New categories of people are now being put up there as stars” (The Philosophy 85). Such an observation has never rung truer than in today’s era of the celebrity, as someone may become famous from a scandalous event, such as Kim Kardashian’s leaked sex tape.

Such scandalous events leading to fame may only be possible in modern culture. Warhol makes a keen observation, “Nowadays if you’re a crook you’re still considered up-there…This is because more than anything people just want stars” (The Philosophy 85). Stars in the Western world are icons secular individuals may admire and worship, as one worships a religious god or saint, to find meaning and inspiration in their own mundane lives. Anyone interesting may achieve celebrity status, as they provide both a remedy and a reason to celebrate the banal in everyday life. The purpose of celebrities as distractions for banality in the day-to-day living of the middle class, has disappeared from the public consciousness. Now, one celebrates this mundane rather than hiding from it; and this shift in popular culture, aided by Warhol’s artistic obsessions, has led to individualism continuing to reign as the leading example of the American Dream.

Social media altered the landscape for artists - now, anybody can be “world famous for fifteen minutes.” Danto argues art today possesses “a more immediate contact with people than the museum makes possible - art in public places, specific to given sites - and the museum
in turn is striving to accommodate the immense pressures that are imposed upon it from within art and from outside art” (Danto, 12). Our Westernized “post internet” society realizes this immediate contact of art to the people through the form of social media. Cornell backs up Danto’s argument with the quote, “The role of art has substantially, perhaps fundamentally, shifted in the last several decades” (Cornell, ix). The display of art is no longer confined to museums and art galleries. A mass public may now instantly share art through a plethora of internet platforms, such as, according to Cornell, “Wikipedia (2001); Friendster (2002); Blogger (2003); Myspace (2003); Second Life (2003); Facebook (2004); Flickr (2004); Reddit (2005); YouTube (2005); iPhone (2007); Twitter (2007); Tumblr (2007); Instagram (2010)” (Cornell, xx). These kinds of online platforms allow for artists to share their work with an audience, creating a shared sense of community that has been, arguably, hard to reconnect since the rise of religious individualism and secularism in America. Networked social life, found on blogs and social media phone apps, is now a societal mainstay. Cornell argues these types of platforms have allowed for a “radically changed popular culture;” a popular culture which has evolved “us out of the broadcast television era and into a more democratized media condition” (Cornell, xx).

While there have been many great achievements because of the advancement in technology, the flaws in human nature can never be erased. This was evident before Warhol’s time, during, and of course after, as we continue in the modern era. Warhol states, “I’m jealous of somebody’s blurred Instamatics even when I have my own sharp Polaroids of the same scene” (The Philosophy 49). In the modern world of instant uploading, this narcissistic jealousy has become rampant. Because the collective is so focused as individuals, rejoicing in a shared
happiness over another's achievements is not a strong desire in the modern America. Such jealousy over another's life or work may aid in creating new content by other individuals, however. This is a reason why Danto's prediction of the End of Arts has come true.

Warhol observes in *The Philosophy*, “In the 60s everybody got interested in everybody. In the 70s everybody started dropping everybody. The 60s were Clutter. The 70s are very empty” (*The Philosophy* 26). One may wonder, as history tends to repeat itself, if society's relationship with technology mirrors Warhol's observation. Social media is a platform for a surfeit of new clutter - memes, news sharing, personal opinions, and other mundane practices - to be created. Now that social media itself is mundane, if you will, individuals have garnered a sleek presentation of their social media identity. There are more YouTube Stars, Insta-famous accounts, and viral sharing than ever before. Hence, the focus has shifted from a collective new experience of the internet, to a focus on the individual, their experiences, and their interests. Warhol dictates,

> The acquisition of my tape recorder really finished whatever emotional life I might have had, but I was glad to see it go. Nothing was ever a problem again, because a problem just meant a good tape, and when a problem transforms itself into a good tape it's not a problem any more. An interesting problem was an interesting tape. You couldn't tell which problems were real and which problems were exaggerated for the tape. Better yet, the people telling you the problems couldn’t decide any more if they were really having the problems or if they were just performing. (*The Philosophy* 27)

Metaphorically speaking, Warhol's tape recorder is like the modern individual's social media accounts. If one possesses a problem, no matter how great or small, one may post it on social
media to vent or seek advice. Through this practice, sometimes it may be hard to distinguish between a real problem and a problem blown out of proportion to seek attention. In a way, social media provides an outlet for all of society to perform. One may put on whatever face he or she decides to portray that day to establish a brand— their own self- and put their mark on the world.

In a similar fashion as Warhol's tape recorder, Warhol's television sets also provided great value to him and his psyche. Warhol writes, “When I got my first TV set, I stopped caring so much about having close relationships with other people” (The Philosophy 26). Television allowed Warhol a glimpse into other people's lives, and distraction from his own life. In his childhood, Warhol was a lonely individual with hardly any friends and always cast as the outsider. He writes, “I wasn’t very close with anyone, although I guess I wanted to be, because when I would see the kids telling one another their problems, I felt left out” (The Philosophy 22). As a young child, Warhol was sickly and artistic; as a college student immersed in the art world he so craved, Warhol noticed his homosexuality was not welcome in serious artistry, and thus did not acquire many friends. Ironically as an adult- when the public finally accepted Warhol- he craved isolation. His fascination, and some would argue obsession, with television allowed Warhol to still obtain the drama and connection in life he so desired. In the same way, social media provides that outlet to individuals in our modern society. We may catch a glimpse into people's lives, sometimes even celebrities' lives, as we go through our own isolated, individualistic, journey.

Building off a previous statement, Warhol theorizes, “During the 60s, I think, people forgot what emotions were supposed to be. And I don’t think they’ve ever remembered. I think
that once you see emotions from a certain angle you can never think of them as real again” (The Philosophy 27). Observing these emotions through a computer or phone screen also warps the actual emotion one attempts to convey. There are endless possibilities of content posted on social media that may transform into an interpretation of art. When one posts something on social media, it is out there for the world to see. Anyone who receives access to this content, whether that be friends, acquaintances, or random strangers, may utilize this content in their own way. Memes, sharing, and retweeting is created through such means. Art interpretation becomes anything an individual interacting with the internet, deems relevance or inspirational.

Perhaps a prevalent question when participating in social media is what it takes to become internet-famous, or, as Buchloh argues is a theme of Warhol's works, "What it actually [takes] for an object or an image to acquire mass magnetism" (Buchloh, 2009). How does an image on social media receive millions of likes and shares across social media platforms? What characteristics make someone a YouTube star? Such questions fall in line with Warhol's preoccupation with mass magnetism. If Warhol were around in our technologically-advanced era, he would be just as obsessed with social media as we all are! Questions of what art is, aesthetically and culturally speaking, may soon reveal agreed-upon answers as vast amounts of artwork become instantly available to our culture. The more examples society possesses of social media fame- hence, the more information gathered and studied- the closer we get to creating an accurate definition of art in our modern era.

Cornell poses a serious question for the modern era to ponder as technology becomes more and more part of our everyday, banal life: “Where should we draw the boundaries of the art world when artists are increasingly apt, with each new generation, to circulate their work on
platforms far removed from traditional institutional frameworks?” (Cornell, xi). This line of questioning falls in well with Danto’s prediction of the “End of Art,” and Warhol’s accredited line, “In the future everybody will be world famous for fifteen minutes.” Cornell refers to this modern technological age of social media as “post internet,” where aspects of popular culture, the individual’s everyday life, and artistic inspiration are indistinguishable from the influences caused by the internet. This post internet world not does prophesy an end of the internet, just as Danto’s interpretation of Hegel’s aesthetics theory does not prophesy the literal end of art—just the opposite, in actuality! Danto believes his prediction of the “End of Art” does not mean there will be no more works of art created—rather, there will be more art-making than ever before. Warhol’s popularity—rising in the middle of the civil rights era and the hippies—allowed for an open mind to blossom when viewing and interpreting new visions of artistic freedom. Danto writes, “It was the moment when perfect artistic freedom had become real” (Danto, 9). Rather than focus on art movements, the attention shifted to the individual artist and their own relations with the subject matter.

Now that society views art with the individual in mind, artistic forms take on new modes of expression and interpretation. Social media and other tangible means, such as graffiti (“street art”), allow for the mass distributing of modern forms of visual art. The world is the artists’ oyster, now that globalization and a rapid rise in technological use is in play. What does this mean for the future of the artists’ role? Is it possible for anybody to be famous now—even if only for fifteen minutes? Andy Warhol would, arguably, be tickled to death by the progress of both art and popular in contemporary society. He would constantly upload to social media
platforms. The internet would become his new television set- his new obsession. The internet is the perfect platform for the individual to engage in himself.

This shift of focus to the individual rather than the collective is seen across many realms of life- not just the art world, but the realms of religion and popular culture as well. Warhol writes, “I usually accept people on the basis of their self-images, because their self-images have more to do with the way they think than their objective-images do” (The Philosophy 69). These self-images project more readily on social media platforms than other ways previously experienced. Before the phenomenon of the selfie, how an individual carried themselves portrayed their self-confidence; their body image was subjected to how others treat them and what they see in the mirror. Now, one may create their own self-image by taking selfies, utilizing the many photograph filters available to them on applications such as Instagram and Snapchat, and posting them for their social media friends to interact with. These ready-made filters allow individuals to modify their pictures in any way they please. One may post a selfie that others interpret as a work of art based on the filter they choose and the description they give for that picture. By the same token, individuals who identify as artists may also utilize these filters to give their visual artworks new meaning, or simply enhance them.

Warhol’s method to his madness- the ways in which he created his paintings- was distinctive and, arguably, prophetic in his obsession with appropriation and repetition. “Silkscreening allowed him to appropriate an image- publicity still, press-clipping” (Koestenbaum, 61). This practice compares to the internet era tradition of appropriating pictures and videos to create memes posted on online spaces such as Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter. For example, a popular YouTube upload appropriates a clip from a news channel that
features a gay black man warning his fellow neighbors to “hide yo kids, hide yo wife” after a break-in attempt. YouTube user Schmoyoho appropriated this news clip, upon which Schmoyoho auto-turned the man’s rant and created a song to uploaded on YouTube. The video, uploaded in 2010, became a popular cultural sensation and has garnered over one hundred and thirty-nine million views, as of April 2018. One man’s rant on a local news station made this cultural appropriation, even furthering the argument that the role of the individual holds the most value in accordance to American cultural standards.

For the longest time during the twentieth century, the concept of the “American Dream” fueled the hearts and minds of hard-working Americans, giving them the spirit needed to continue contributing to society. Bellah et al. states, “Religious individualism is, in many ways, appropriate in our kind of society. It is no more going to go away than is secular individualism” (Bellah et al., 247). The individual has been the heart of America and will continue to be so for as long as our technology continues to advance. The way in which the collective most easily gathers is through social media applications, blogs, and media sharing websites. Creating a social media "cult," as it were, allows for the secular public- whether they are individually religious or not is irrelevant, as religious individualism does not aid in creating a sense of community within a culture- to generate togetherness, empathy, and connection. American society lost these feelings since it gradually evolved from traditional religious communities to religious individualism, as Bellah et al. observe.

However, there is a new sense of “community” on the rise in modern America. Social media platforms allow for an altered state of being “connected” to friends and acquaintances all the time, as long as their smart phone is charged. Bellah et al. go on to state, “A free society
needs constantly to consider and discuss its present reality in the light of its past traditions and where it wants to go” (Bellah et al., 307). On social media platforms, an easy and obvious mode of discussing the present reality emerges. Users may share images, videos, and text to illustrate their point of view on everything from politics, celebrities, television shows, cats, or even what they had for lunch. The banal ways one utilizes the internet points to an idea Warhol may have attempted to get across to his audience. In this Post-Industrial age, where the commodities of life are so easily available, middle class individuals are consumed by the material aspects of life; in this secular society, middle class individuals make a habit of idolizing the profane.

It is interesting when one notices a correlation between internet use and decreasing religious involvement and affiliation. A study done by the General Society Survey shows Americans who claim no religious affiliation rose from a mere 8% in 1990 to a drastic 18% in 2010 (Ravitz, 2014). Several reasons cause this change - however, one cannot deny the rapid rise of internet usage since the turn of the millennium, so a correlation between decreasing religious affiliation and rising internet usage may be a possibility. In 1990, internet usage was at essentially zero percent - in 2010 this percentage radically jumped to 80% (Ravitz, 2014). The way in which individuals interact with organized religion in America has shifted, as Bellah et al. proposes with their focus on religious individualism. According to a poll done by Pew, 46 million people in America who don’t belong to an organized religion still consider themselves religious or spiritual (Ravitz, 2014). It is possible to hypothesize that the rising in popularity of internet usage allowed for such a shift in how individuals interact with the concept of religion - perhaps even relying on online sources for spiritual knowledge or fulfillment. Ravitz quotes Cheryl Casey,
When a new technology, such as the printing press or the Internet, unleashes massive cultural change, the challenge to religion is immense. Cultural developments change how God, or the ultimate, is thought of and spoken about...The dynamics of this transformation, however, await continued investigation. (qtd. in Ravitz, 2014)

The introduction and eventual widespread popularity of technologies such as the internet, smart phones, and high-speed wireless connections alters the way individuals in society interpret and interact with those around them. Cornell wonders how “self-identification” will evolve in the post-internet era, “where the multicultural goal of achieving visibility has become inflicted by the anxiety of being overseen” (Cornell, xvii). Warhol, posthumously, provides his own interpretation to this answer in his artistic works involving repetition and celebrity portraits. With this ability to be seen so easily by strangers, acquaintances, and friends, individuals of our modern era become obsessed with themselves in such a narcissistic fashion that we are now posting our lunch on social media in hopes of getting “likes” and validation. We become frightened by the possibility of being irrelevant, so we constantly post on social media platforms to stay in the minds of others interacting in society. Just as Warhol idolized the profane in his famous Campbell's Soup can, Coca-Cola bottle, and filming of delicately eating a hamburger, so modern society is participating in a similar fashion through mundane postings of one's food, "selfies," and memes on social media.

Warhol aided in creating this cultural phenomenon of celebrating the banal by closing the impending gap between the “artistic elite” and the “common man and woman” that separated high class from the middle class in society (Danto, 3). Warhol celebrated the contradicting nature of the banal as interesting, of the popular culture as art. He broke down
the art world by showcasing seemingly unartistic objects as art; Danto describes the notion of Pop Art as, “the commonplace, reassuring, mass-produced things of ordinary life were not to be despised in invidious contrast to the forbidding images housed in the museums of art which ordinary people were diffident about entering” (Danto, 3). Warhol fashioned himself as a Robin Hood figure for the relationship between the common man and the art world: he snatched the notion of art from the elite and fed it to the masses.
CHAPTER VI

Conclusion:

“Cultivating a New Reality”

Andy Warhol altered the way modern society views itself; consumer culture is now self-aware, and thus the relationship between consumer and producer evolves. The art world has radically changed since the rise of Pop Art and Andy Warhol: the focus is now on the individual artist, rather than a particular art movement. It is thought-provoking to consider how the rapid rise of internet usage and social media at the turn of the millennium affected the altered state of art movements and how one perceives artwork. In today’s society, art integrates itself into the very core of popular culture- so much so that museums must reevaluate their role in culture and how guests may interact with the art. As we progress into this social media-driven future, museums will continue to utilize new technologies to showcase its art in newly perceptive ways.

In connecting art, social media, and religion, the decrease in religious affiliation within this new century becomes obvious and explainable: as individuals participating in society become more connected on the internet, knowledge is readily available through websites and diverse connections with a global online community. Methods of displaying artwork have radically shifted, so museums are becoming less relevant to the public unless a more radical revolution occurs within the exhibit methods of this new generation of online artists. An analysis of Andy Warhol’s life and works offers an explanation to how his philosophies of life and art aids in a reconsideration of the way contemporary society views art, social media, and religion in this “Post Art” and “Post Internet” time. With a consilience of these realms of life,
American society may once again achieve a greater sense of themselves and the community they participate in—both online and in tangible reality.

The banal, profane, aspects of life reign dominant in modern popular culture; this is not an argument of whether idolizing the profane aspects of life is productive or counterproductive, but rather that an observation of such proves Warhol's prediction that everybody in the future will be famous for fifteen minutes. As such, the question of what art is on the internet traces back to how Warhol's critics interpret art; as society evolves to heights that we do not yet know, questions of what art and religion are have never been so prevalent, and even demanding, to seek answers to. Warhol broke boundaries within the art world and popular culture alike. Buchloh states,

Warhol's work sang the swansong of a fundamental dialectic of the avant garde in the twentieth century: between an artistic culture with its discursive conventions, genres, and institutional spaces, and the incessantly expanding and encroaching forms of proto-totalitarian consumption. Any such differentiation between the production and perception of an artistic object and an object of industrial consumption could not be maintained any longer. (Buchloh, 2009)

In today's modern world, Buchloh's idea of "proto-totalitarian consumption" infiltrates sacred realms such as the art world (2009). The internet and social media, in becoming a mainstay of our modern society, affects all aspects of Westernized culture. The capitalistic world is slowly seeping into the previously mass public-dominated world of social media. Advertisers buy ad space, and social media companies utilize individuals’ personal information to sell to advertisers or political campaigners. Consuming products and content is now the essence that the modern
America builds upon; the themes and ideas of Warhol's works are more relevant than ever. Do we celebrate or condone this consilience of culture? Do we let our society naturally evolve, or do we take notice of the freedoms taken away from each individual as this social media-driven society continues on its path?

Perhaps the biggest tribulation citizens fear when realms in society mesh together more willingly, is their freedom being constrained or taken away. Freedom is the most valued concept for Americans to hold onto and take pride in. “Freedom from- from people who have economic power over you, from people who try to limit what you can do or say. This ideal of freedom has historically given Americans a respect for individuals” (Bellah et al. 24). Thus, to acquire money and material goods constitutes as highly respectable in this capitalistic American society. As a middle-class way of life becomes more accessible to greater numbers of people, the cult of the celebrity becomes more valued because these stars exude wealth.

Bellah et al. clarify, “To be free [is] to be your own person in the sense that you have defined who you are, decided for yourself what you want out of life, free as much as possible from the demands of conformity to family, friends, or community” (23). One may interpret just how free we are when we engage in social media in a variety of ways. The freedom to post almost whatever we want and create a self-image of ourselves however we please, may be just the kind of freedom individuals in such a fast-moving society need. Yet, there is the contrasting paradigm pointing to the overwhelming conformity of society presented when individuals perceive images by either the mass media or social media that suggests how they should behave and interact with others.
Just how free are we when we portray ourselves on social media to look like everyone else, or at least those that we admire? There are pros and cons to life on social media; there possesses no reason to condone or excessively idolize popular figures engaging in social media. However, perhaps one should consider just how easy it is to manipulate an image, as Warhol did with his silkscreen pieces. Whether one is manipulating their own image, or utilizing another person's content, what we see on social media is not real life. It is a redistribution of the culture in ways to satisfy our desires.

Andy Warhol redistributed popular images in culture to produce artistic masterpieces and fashion his own image into an icon of fame. His interests in banality, fame, and technology allowed him to perceive a future where these three realms merge to form the reality we live in today: one where anybody may be world famous for fifteen minutes. As society continues to evolve into a global network, effortlessly connecting over the internet, patterns of culture leap out to suggest new ways of forming traditions and communities. Art belongs to the realm of philosophy now, as Arthur C. Danto suggests, so a relationship between artistic creation and spirituality aids in evoking communal feelings in Western secular society. By breaking down the barriers of art and popular culture, Warhol made it acceptable to perceive reality in different ways. In utilizing distinctly American aspects of culture, such as the Campbell’s soup can, Hollywood celebrities, and Coca-Cola bottles, Warhol pulls the curtain back on the dominating producer/consumer force dominating American society. Rather than focusing on ethical values, as done in historical America, modern citizens possess no incentive to live empathetic and moral lives in this secular contemporary society- the focus is always on the individual. With a consilience of the art, religion, and technology realms, emerging patterns in culture may gain
popularity and new paradigms promoting empathy and community will dominate the American way.
WORKS CITED


