

## Editorial: A Dialogue About Aesthetics

Arthur: 'I have felt him to possess a philosophical intelligence of an intoxicatingly high order. He could not touch anything without at the same time touching the very boundaries of thought, at the very least thought about art.'

Andy: 'I've never been touched by a painting. I don't want to think. The world outside would be easier to live in if we were all machines.'

Arthur: 'He brought artistic practice to a level of philosophical self-consciousness never before attained.'

Andy: 'If you want to know all about Andy Warhol just look at the surface: of my paintings and films and me, and there I am. There's nothing behind it.'

Arthur: 'He was the nearest to a philosophical genius that twentieth century art had brought forth.'

Andy: 'I don't think many people are going to believe in my philosophy because the other ones are better.'

Arthur: I want first to explain what makes *Empire* finally so philosophical a film. Nothing in the film relevantly changes at all, in fact, although since the film was taken over an eight hour stretch, something could have changed irrelevantly. What was left was pure film. In *Empire*, narrative time and real time are one. The time in and the time of the film are the same. There is, as with *Brillo Box* and the cartons of Brillo, no interesting perceptual difference between the two. With *Empire* we become aware of the material properties of the film, of the scratches, the grain, the accidental luminosities, and above all the passing before our eyes of the monotonous band. I think Warhol had an almost mystical attitude to the world: everything in it had equal weight, it was all equally interesting.'

Andy: 'The acquisition of my tape recorder really finished whatever emotional life I might have had, but I was glad to see it go. I think that once you see emotions from a certain angle you can never think of them as real again. That's more or less what happened to me.'

Arthur: 'A man sees what looks like an ordinary soap-pad carton in a shop window, and needing to ship some books, asks the shopkeeper if he can have it. The shop turns out to be an art gallery and the

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shopkeeper a dealer who says: “That is a work of art, just now worth thirty thousand dollars.”’

Andy: ‘My work won’t last anyway. I was using cheap paint.’

Arthur. ‘He turned the world we share into art, and he turned himself into part of that world, and because we *are* the images we hold in common with everyone else, he became part of us.’

Emile (on Andy’s behalf): ‘He loved to see other people dying, This is what the Factory was about: Andy was the Angel of Death’s Apprentice as these people went through their shabby lives with drugs and weird sex and group sex and mass sex. Andy looked and Andy as voyeur *par excellence* was the devil, because he got bored just looking.’

**Note:** Arthur is Arthur C. Danto, and his words are taken from ‘The Philosopher as Andy Warhol’ in his *Philosophizing Art* (University of California Press, 1999). *Empire* is the ultimate Warhol film (or, perhaps, the ultimate film, though not a movie): eight hours of a stationary camera pointed at the Empire State Building. Andy’s words are all his own, though we cannot vouch for his intentions in uttering them. Although not the fashionable art-historical view, it is interesting and not unreasonable to take them at face value. Why couldn’t Andy have believed what he was saying? After all it is bathetic enough, Emile is Emile de Antonio, quoted in Victor Bockris’s 1988 biography *Warhol*. On the longevity of Warhol’s works, restoration and conservation proceed apace, in the best fine art tradition. There is, though, this difference: that while the odd crack and blemish are, nowadays anyway, allowed to remain on a Titian canvas, the echt-Warhol surface must be pristine and unscarred.