

ISCKMC 2022**International Scientific Congress «KNOWLEDGE, MAN AND CIVILIZATION»****ANDY WARHOL IN THE MIRROR OF LITERARY AND
DOCUMENTARY HERITAGE**

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Abstract

The paper explores the personality of Andy Warhol through the prism of his literary and documentary heritage presented in interviews and autobiographical fictions *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (from A to B and back again)*, *Popism: The Warhol Sixties* (together with P. Hackett). The study is based on analytical and biographical methods of research. They reveal Andy Warhol's existential principles, which are often impossible to detect due to his silence and isolation. The main vital rules of the artist put emphasis on close attention to and admiration for the surrounding things of everyday life. According to A. Warhol, truth and beauty are found in the everyday world. Due to this understanding, the artist derived meaning from what people around him did not attach importance to. By fixing things/images on canvases, Andy makes viewers emotionally perceive them by experiencing things/images in art. The technique of multiple repetition of the image attracts the attention of people not only to the thing/image, but also to their meaning thus teaching the art of understanding life. As a result, the illusory Nothingness of a thing/image acquires an ambiguous meaning in the form of Something, which contributes to the poetization of everyday life and the elevation of a mass audience in their own eyes. The advertising of A. Warhol's works increased their cost. The analysis revealed that behind his briefness Andy Warhol was a commercial artist who wanted to be rich and famous.

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1. Introduction

People of art often turn to documenting their lives in the form of diaries and detailed autobiographical fiction featuring an artistic narrative. Such a practice has quite a few objectives. This is a fixation of your own vision of the historical era and its events, memories of significant meetings with people who influenced fate, knowledge of yourself, the search for the origins and essence of creativity, an explanation of the motives of behavior and plots of your own works. Such a legacy provides invaluable assistance in interpreting the personality of the creator and his masterpieces not only by contemporaries, but also by the next generations of people interested in art.

2. Problem Statement

Among the artists who left quite an extensive literary and documentary heritage is Andy Warhol (1928–1987). A bright representative of pop art did everything to mystify his personality. But the study of his memoiristics allows understanding the existential principles of the artist.

This poses the question: what provisions of life philosophy and personality traits manifest themselves in the literary and documentary heritage of Andy Warhol?.

3. Research Questions

It must be recognized that the personality of Andy Warhol and his work rarely fall into the optics of scientific interest. Nevertheless, there are some works that variously position the artist. So, Korsakov (2017), studying the biography of Andy Warhol, draws attention to his Ruthenian roots and the link to Ruthenian culture. Velikanov (2014) addresses the problem of the selfie phenomenon in the work of Andy Warhol, which has become an attribute of modern culture and a particular personality code. Leung (2003) reflects the idea that the strategic relief of the meaning of Andy Warhol's works and self-denial of depth in creativity are nothing more than a desire to identify not only the artist himself, but also for the viewer to understand himself. Some works are devoted to the specifics of the film art of Andy Warhol, in which spontaneity and unexpected interpretations take place (Gilbertson, 2003), photographs and canvases of the artist demonstrating changes in ideas about the sexual aspect of life in the USA in the 20th century (Siegel, 2003), the phenomenon of whiteness on canvases that is gaining power (Nettketon, 2003). The novelty of the study is the reconstruction of the philosophy of Andy Warhol's life through the prism of his literary and documentary heritage, which no author wrote about.

4. Purpose of the Study

The object of the study includes the personality of Andy Warhol, the subject – his literary and documentary heritage. The artist left quite a lot of materials about himself. Among them, we shall highlight the autobiographies-confessions *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (from A to B and back again)* and *Popism: The Warhol Sixties* (together with P. Hackett), numerous diaries and interviews. They make up for Andy's frugality with words by interpreting his secrecy and silence.

5. Research Methods

The study is based on analytical and biographical methods, which reveal some features of life and creativity, features of the artist's character carefully hidden from his surroundings and, possibly, from himself.

6. Findings

Andy Warhol was distinguished by careful detailing of descriptions in documenting the events of his life. This method testifies to the artist's reflection on the eventuality of life and his practices of self-knowledge. Despite the positioned idle nature of being and the frivolity of his perception, Warhol was a nice observer, a serious and reflecting person. In his thinking searches he tried to get to the point: "You are sitting here ... and seriously thinking about all sorts of simple things" (Warhol & Hackett, 2012, p. 77). It was simple things and everyday life that became the objects of his attention, reflection and creativity. As a representative of pop art, A. Warhol built his creative process around "a positive attitude to all sorts of things", and his catchphrases were "everything is great", "that's great, cool!" (Goldsmith, 2016, p. 188). Andy himself preserved the children's optics of the worldview. He was fascinated by the world and accepted everything *as it is*. Justifying the shortcomings of existence, A. Warhol proclaimed: even "everyone who does something not very well is probably doing it very well" (Goldsmith, 2016, p. 188). But the moral unscrupulousness of Warhol's thinking hid the "ability to choose the right things", which, according to him, was appreciated in art circles (Warhol & Hackett, 2012, p. 265). Andy regretted: "no one in the world really considers anything – they are reluctant to bother them with it" (Goldsmith, 2016, p. 189). Unlike most, Warhol was able to look at the world, its phenomena and things, thus sensitively capturing ideas for creativity in his chosen objects. It should be noted that a phenomenological thesis: "Back to the things themselves!" is at the heart of the Warhol's creative method (E. Husserl).

The *principle of chance* plays a special role in looking into being and its daily practices. It helps to rise to the invisible, ordinary. Being in unpredictable situations the creator can learn spontaneous ideas from the things he encounters and deals with. Andy admitted that the main task of an artist is "not to miss the right idea at the right moment and understand how to correctly imagine it" (Bokris, 2019, p. 138). He emphasized that "knowing how a thing that was missed by others was used is a talent that you can be proud of" (Warhol & Hackett, 2012, p. 127). The artist himself had the gift of giving aesthetic value to everyday things and objects, combining high and low, exclusive and massive, beautiful and vulgar in his paintings.

Andy resorts to *merciless repetitions* in order to focus attention on routine things and find their meaning. He repeatedly replicates the same idea/thing/image in his silkscreens thus trying to make people look at an object and think about its essence. Warhol emphasizes that "people do the same thing every day, this is their life" (Goldsmith, 2016, p. 190), but certain metaphysical meanings are hidden behind this repeatability. Andy believes that with his work he can teach those who want to "have a conscious attitude to life": "people better understand that it is necessary to work on life perception, because life is so short and sometimes passes too quickly" (Bokris, 2019, p. 48). This is the Warhol's understanding of the phenomenological principle of "Back to the things themselves!" (E. Husserl).

The fact that Andy Warhol addresses everyday things in canvases contributes to the democracy of his art, while valorizing the mass audience. The artist drew special attention to the relevance of people: “a pop view made people understand that they themselves are part of history”, and “to become part of culture, you just need to buy it (like a record, a TV or a movie ticket)” (Warhol, 2014, p. 95). The positive view, accessibility and drollness of A. Warhol’s pop art were quite popular among the mass audience thus quickly capturing its attention. The things/images captured on his canvases demonstrated consumer equality: “you watch TV and see Coca-Cola, and you know that the President drinks Coca-Cola, Liz Taylor drinks Coca-Cola, and just think – you can drink Coca-Cola too” (Warhol, 2014, p. 96).

Warhol saw the source of his own creativity and the standard of ontological aestheticism in childhood. At the same time, Andy did not immediately realize that he has *always dreamed of drawing his mother’s kitchenware*. The sudden memory of his mother making tin flowers from the used cans made the artist to picture them. The artist gradually realized that he likes to work with waste, because they can be turned “into something good or at least interesting” (Warhol, 2014, p. 96). It is no coincidence that when asked about choosing an image, Warhol replies: “I wanted to portray nothing. I was looking for something that would embody nothing, that’s all” (Bokris, 2019, p. 50).

The reason for the hysteria around Warhol’s works was that “things” there are “pushed aside” from the “blurred” picture of reality and combined into expressionistic compositions” (Andreeva, 2019, p. 302). The term is *pushed aside* introduced by Shklovsky conveys a *way of experiencing a thing/image* in art. This method of imaging and perception gives rise to the poetization of things as the fetishes of modernity despite their flat representation.

Through art Warhol promotes the idea of *admiring things* produced in an industrial way. Though remaining itself a thing is transformed into an intrinsically valuable aesthetic object. It is in the focus of attention, while the person recedes into the background. Following the trends of time Andy Warhol’s art demonstrates a new attitude towards things, which is based on hidden *commodity fetishism*. A certain worldview is formed in the consumer society, according to which the dependence of man on things can resist the transience of being and the ephemerality of the world around. It is not fortuitous that A. Warhol begins to demonstrate everyday things as objects of high art, and his realistic *aesthetics of all kinds* makes them valuable and memorialized.

At the same time, the nature of Warhol’s art is much more complicated. It is connected with the practice of “taking off the infinite being from things in existence, in which nothing else arises, there is no other existence, but only Nothing, nothingness, which is here and not here” (Derrida, 2012). But even the Nothingness of things in art “represents existence”, which “always remains detached, or extraneous, or non-natural, i.e., ghostly” (Derrida). At the same time, Warhol’s Nothing is manifold: it is demonstrated in the illusion of Nothing with regard to meaning/form/thing/function/expression. Moreover, the transformations that create Something from Nothing are quite diverse. As Derrida (2012) notes, “a thing transferred to art, to the space of symbolic, becomes multifold”.

The interest in the thing and its illusory Nothing in art reinforces the philosophical background. According to Warhol, “the less a certain thing has to say, the more perfect it is” (Goldsmith, 2016, p. 88). According to the artist himself, everything that becomes the Andy Warhol’s object of art must be perceived entirely, without selectivity, because “everything is nothing” (Bokris, 2019, p. 209). A paradox

is thus created. The fact is that ideas and concepts in pop art “no longer mean anything, but this means something” (Baudrillard, 2019, p. 145). The artistic images of Warhol’s pop art, when viewed superficially, create the illusion of the absence of deep philosophical meanings: “pop art enters the stage when the result has already been summed up, it offers such an aesthetic consumption of reality that does not add anything to it and does not deplete it at all” (Carriero, 2010, p. 53). But for all the banality of Warhol’s works, they reflect the *meaning as a non-existent entity* (Deleuze).

Nothing(ness) of thing gives birth to Something in the form of meaning. According to one art-history interpretation, Warhol’s “soup can is a symbol of the maternal womb, expressing... a hidden desire to return to the embryonic state” (Goldsmith, 2016, p. 90). The above interpretation explains the artist’s affinity for his mother. The realization of the impossibility of returning to the embryonic state forced Andy to create the illusion of this (most likely unconsciously). The artist lived most of his life with his mother, at times finding it difficult, but, at the same time, not letting her off himself. Characterizing his own canvases with the cans of soup, Andy admitted that they “contain the image of truth and beauty” (Goldsmith, 2016, p. 92). Based on the above, we can conclude: the mother and her kitchen space personified the *truth and beauty of life* for Warhol. The artist made an attempt for poetization of the everyday life of his childhood. With this Warhol expressed his sentimental attachment to things in their unhypocritical essence and accessibility.

But often things/images shown on A. Warhol canvases were mediated by mass media, including various glossy magazines, photographs, cinema, television and advertising. A. Warhol was one of the first creators to benefit from the media, masterfully adapted it to create the works of art, and putting the created works into circulation. For example, “with the help of photography and photomechanical processes such as serigraphy, Warhol undermines the canonical values of scientific culture in favor of the values of pop culture” (Rouille, 2014, p. 179). It was photography that drew art *into the orbit of technology and industry* (E. Andreeva) thus creating a replacement for reality and helping to replicate the image. As it is known, quite often Warhol resorted not to the things/images themselves, but to their photographs, which played the role of the *previously used images*, because pop art implies the “use of... a popular... image” (Goldsmith, 2016, p. 94). As a result, on the example of the work of Andy Warhol we observe the controversy of the author’s positions and his individual style. Mechanized art comes to the fore. It allows replicating the artist’s canvases, use them as advertising and sell masterly at favorable prices. Producing a mass from a single piece of art, A. Warhol created canvases that caused cultural shock and were in demand. Andy Warhol emphasized, “Nothing is perfect, because Nothing can be opposed to this”. This thesis extends to the artistic image that erases the portrayed. Warhol’s canvases are considered “both figurative and abstract”, “representing both high and mass culture” (Groce, 2020). In this regard, there is the intersection of the functions of art and advertising, which expands the boundaries of art and contributes to the creation of spaces of a total artistic environment. Things that became the objects of art “ironically began to explain themselves, easily getting rid of their meaning” (Baudrillard, 2019, p. 101), and advertising turned them into goods. There was a “collapse of banality into art and art into banality” making the world totally aesthetic (Baudrillard, 2019, p. 101). People of the consumer society were ready to buy up any advertised goods and absorb Andy Warhol’s portraits of things/famous people replicated in the media.

And here opens another feature of Warhol's character related to his attitude to money. Andy proclaimed, "money-making is art and work is art, and good business is the best art" (Warhol, 2014, p. 98). The above statement indicates the connection of his work with advertising that contributes to the capital increase. Advertising helped popularize his art and increase sales, which made the artist a rather rich and famous person. Andy admitted: "It is much more pleasant to do Business Art than Art per se" (Warhol, 2014, p. 98).

It must be recognized that the main criterion for success in life for Warhol was gains in equity (both social and financial). It is no coincidence that money became the objects of his paintings testifying to their fetishization in the life of the artist himself. Andy was in awe of the money, as evidenced by the next episode. Steve Rubell, one of the owners of the iconic Studio 54 nightclub, presented a bucket filled with eight hundred crumpled one-dollar bills for the artist's fiftieth anniversary and poured them on the head of the hero of the day. The latter collected banknotes on all fours and carefully put them back to the bucket, which became an exhibit of his "Factory".

It was the money that gave Andy confidence in himself and life thus opening the door to the world of rich and successful people. Warhol believed that money is a *moment* and *mood*. Till the last the artist earned money with fanatical passion. He worked hard following the principle: "Do not think about creating art, just create it. Let the rest decide whether it is good or bad... While they think, create even more" (Bokris, 201, p. 139). The artist's words speak of the urgency of the creative act, which allows creating works, replicating them and, due to this, increasing the owner's capital.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, it is worth noting the following aspects. Andy Warhol's literary and documentary work helps reconstruct the existential principles of the artist's life. The world and everyday life, in which the artist looked sensitively and perceived positively was in the optics of his attention. The thing of everyday life turning into a key object of aesthetic image, understandable to mass audience created the commercial success of Andy Warhol. The artist not only liked to fix the details of everyday life, but also tried to teach people around him to carefully look at everyday life and its things/images. For this he resorted to the technique of replicating his works thus trying to keep the view of the mass audience on the Nothing(ness) of things/images with meaning. The need for wealth and capital growth was hidden behind the performance capability of Andy Warhol, his replication of paintings and appeal to advertising. In his understanding, this made him famous and successful. This makes Andy Warhol to be considered a commercial artist who worked at the intersection of art and advertising actively using the methods of the advertising industry (photographs, replication of paintings). But behind the commercialization of art was work with meanings and the need to draw the attention of the mass audience to them.

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