

## INTRODUCTION

Warhol's Nonhuman Life

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**F**EW TWENTIETH-CENTURY ARTISTS are more closely associated with the anti-ecological categories of technology and profit than Andy Warhol. Didn't he insist that art was completely commercial—no more than a commodity, like a can of soup, a bottle of soda, or even a form of currency? Hadn't he called his studios “factories,” and infamously declared that he “wanted to be a machine,” that he “love[d] plastic” and “want[ed] to be plastic?”<sup>1</sup> Wasn’t his greatest innovation fundamentally technological: attempting to collapse all distinctions between mechanical reproduction and fine art? What better artist than Warhol, “the Henry Ford of a new form of capitalist art,” to emblemize an age in which human technology and the capital that underwrites it threaten to destroy all formerly viable ecosystems, since, as he proclaimed, “making money is art, and working is art and good business is the best art”?<sup>2</sup> It stands to reason that Andy Warhol, whose mechanized style “is a tribute to the machine and its take-over of natural occurrences,” might be the anti-ecological artist par excellence.<sup>3</sup>



FIGURE 1

Edward Wallowitch, *Andy Warhol with Kitten*, c. 1957. Photo by Edward Wallowitch. ©2021 Paul Wallowitch. All Rights Reserved.

Against the grain of this common knowledge, this book argues that Warhol was a “biocentric” artist in Margot Norris’s sense, fundamentally concerned with the related themes of anthropocentrism, animality, and nonhuman life.<sup>4</sup> (See figure 1.) These are central and persistent concerns in Warhol’s work, problems that he examined from two main directions: questioning the prerogatives granted to humans over nonhuman life-forms, and exploring the expression of nonhuman spirits and perspectives.<sup>5</sup> In so doing, he disputed the traditional claim that culture distinguishes the human from the merely animal and vegetal, and anticipated the contemporary scientific consensus “that humans are not unique in possessing the neurological substrates that generate consciousness.”<sup>6</sup> The preponderance of nonhuman life in Warhol’s work is thus neither haphazard nor merely metaphorical; it is central to his redefinition of artistic theory and practice, and to his interests in technology and profitability. What’s more, Warhol demonstrated a lifelong fascination with the erotic worlds of nonhuman life-forms, particularly as they related to queer forms of love and kinship and to the abject Other. For Warhol, the ultimate pornography would be animalistic or even vegetal: “If I had wanted to make a real sex movie

I would have filmed a flower giving birth to another flower. And the best love story is just two love-birds in a cage.”<sup>7</sup>

None of this should be taken to mean, however, that Warhol ought to be celebrated as an ecological visionary, or a champion of anti-speciesism. Whereas he lived during an age of rapidly accelerating ecological devastation, and although he “seemed to care as much about animals . . . as about people,” and could sometimes even empathize with the suffering of vegetal life, this book will demonstrate that Warhol’s interactions with nonhuman life-forms were profoundly ambivalent and contradictory, imbued with all the tension and volatility conveyed by Nicole Shukin’s concept of “animal capital.”<sup>8</sup> This book will attempt to track the complexity of these interactions: the various and contradictory “rendering[s] of animal figures and animal flesh” that tend to characterize human-animal relations under capitalism, but also capitalism’s increasing efforts to “economis[e] not only the striving of *Homo sapiens* but of other species as well.”<sup>9</sup> Warhol’s relationships with other life-forms were certainly marked by these tensions, vacillating between “‘sympathetic’ technologies of representation and ‘pathological’ technologies of control,” among other ambivalent bonds and associations.<sup>10</sup> As we will see, this wild and unwieldy mélange is apparent from the beginning of Warhol’s life, in the ways in which he was introduced to animals and their sexual and artistic reproduction, all the way to its end, when he came face to face with the possibility of extinction as a gay man living in the time of HIV/AIDS.

Along the way, this book will trace a variety of ways in which Warhol’s artistic, personal, and imaginary interactions with nonhuman life-forms challenged “the discourse of the jungle”: a popularized Darwinist-Freudian worldview that predominated in US culture during the early twentieth century.<sup>11</sup> This worldview imagined all life as being driven by narrowly evolutionary imperatives: “‘naturally’ violent in the name of survival, and heterosexual in the name of reproduction.”<sup>12</sup> Warhol ought to be seen as a late addition to the list of cultural figures who resisted this imperialist version of biology—insisting in various ways that life cannot be reduced to this restrictive model. What’s more, the scope of Warhol’s investigations of an expanded vision of biology radically exceeded those of his predecessors, touching on strange and profound questions regarding a variety of behaviors that are difficult to reconcile with the evolutionary perspective, including the exuberant use and abuse of illicit drugs, sexuality that is not only nonprocreative but also physically hazardous, interspecies eroticism, and the production of shame.

There are at least three main layers, then, within Warhol’s complex and contradictory relationship to nonhuman life-forms. First, a pervasive antihumanist effort to imagine art as an earthy and organic force: fundamentally interested rather than disinterested, imbued with appetite and desire at every node (artists, materials, themes, audiences), and thumbing its nose at almost every social and aesthetic convention.<sup>13</sup> Second, a recognition that the standard evolutionary understandings of appetite, with their emphasis on heterosexual reproduction and violence in the name of survival,

would not accurately account for the complexity of organic life, desire, intoxication, and suffering, in all their various unpredictable and counterintuitive forms. And third, in great tension with these sympathetic moments, a propensity for the exploitation and domination of other life-forms in the service of profit and transgression. Despite his sympathy for and interest in nonhuman life, Warhol's interactions with other life-forms were in large part infected by the capitalist tendency to treat these lives as "natural resources," since capitalism is "profound[ly] contingent on nonhuman nature," and Warhol was (among many other things) a highly productive capitalist.<sup>14</sup>

The relationship between nonhuman life and the machine in Warhol's production is therefore far more complex than it would at first appear, and so is the interplay between sympathy and pathology. The first three chapters of this book trace the surprising ways in which Warhol's erotic and artistic interests in nonhuman life were cultivated by his mother, Julia Warhol; the force these interests exerted on the aberrant world of his Silver Factory; and the ways in which they stimulated his scandalous embrace of machinic, financial, and ecological processes in his artistic production. I argue that these unusual psychobiographical connections between mother, Factory, and nonhuman other—between shame, machine, and transgression—although rarely remarked by art historians, have long been visible, and that they deepen the relevance and complexity of Warhol's life and work. Drawing on a range of creative and theoretical precedents, the book's final two chapters investigate Warhol's two major late projects that explicitly advocated for animals facing extinction, demonstrating that this closer attention to precariousness and death in the time of the HIV/AIDS epidemic intensified many of the tensions explored in his earlier work.

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Warhol's artistic production returned almost compulsively to the representation of nonhuman life-forms, to a degree that is unsurpassed among his contemporary peers. The work he produced during college, and afterward as an advertising illustrator, is laced with animal and vegetal figures—most prominently flowers, plants, cats, and dogs, but also birds, rabbits, fish, worms, butterflies, eels, snakes, and many others. Animal and vegetal figures remain prominent in his classic Pop paintings (lightly disguised as ingredients on the labels of many of the iconic soup cans), and they return with a vengeance in the *Cow Wallpaper* (1966) and the over ten thousand *Flowers* he produced over the course of his career. Animals appear frequently in his work on film—sometimes in cameos, sometimes in supporting roles, and sometimes as stars in their own right. The second reel of Warhol's 1965 film *Horse*, which predates Jannis Kounellis's *Untitled (12 Horses)* by four years and Marcel Broodthaers's *Interview with a Cat* by five, is composed of a thirty-three-minute long shot of a horse accompanied by its trainer, with a microphone raised to the horse's mouth. (See figure 2.)

But Warhol's interests in nonhuman life-forms extended well beyond these thematic boundaries. We learn from his diaries, interviews, and books that he was fasci-

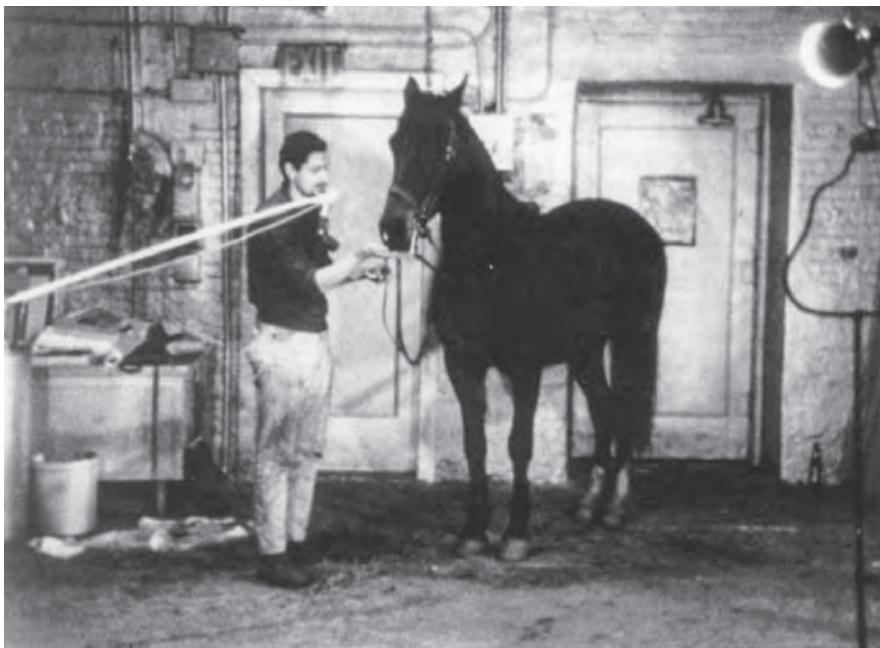


FIGURE 2  
Still from *Horse* (Andy Warhol, 1965).

nated by the vulnerability of animal and vegetal life, and by the ways in which this vulnerability undermines anthropocentric hierarchies; by the queer possibilities posed by nonhuman and cross-species eroticism; by the collaborative, scavenging, amphetamine-fueled, sadistic, and masochistic swarm of energies gathered in the Silver Factory; by the regressive and animalistic pleasures of mimetically and indiscriminately “liking things”; and by the limitations and contradictions of aesthetic anthropocentrism—the idea that artistic creativity and receptivity distinguish human life from the animal- and vegetal-machines that grow from dirt and muck, and (supposedly) can only react and never truly respond. Warhol, of course, was constantly proclaiming his own inability to be anything more than reactive, anything more than a muckraking animal- or vegetal-machine making his way in a world ruled by humans, tracking and tracing the marks left by others.

From a humanistic perspective, there were also sinister overtones to Warhol’s embrace of machinic production, and particularly to his enthusiasm for commodification and marketing. Humanism, as Achille Mbembe points out, had “understood that the human person (who the West mistook for the white man) was neither a thing nor an object . . . [nor] an animal or a machine.”<sup>15</sup> With Warhol, we see the inklings of what Mbembe describes as a neoliberal worldview, in which “all these dikes collapse, one after the other. It is no longer certain that the human person is very distinct from the object, the animal, or the machine.”<sup>16</sup> The intensity of Warhol’s imaginative and

artistic interactions with nonhuman life meant that both of these trajectories—the possibility of a new artistic biocentrism and the grim specter of a completely objectified and commodified world—could simultaneously be active in his work.

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Warhol had an unusually vivid animal and vegetal life. He was preoccupied with the predicaments of nonhuman life-forms, and he often imagined his own life and art in creaturely or ecological terms. Others agreed. An early portrait by Roger Anliker, entitled *Mute Song*, depicted the young artist delicately holding a cheap toy bird—both figures in profile, beak to ear, as if Warhol were expecting the mechanical bird to sing to him. (See figure 3.) This would be among the first of many such cross-species portraits and self-portraits of the artist, including some in which the artist held flowers in front of his face, as if they could stand in for him. In 1962, Emile de Antonio described Warhol as “a super intelligent white rabbit.”<sup>17</sup> Marcel Duchamp made a similar connection immediately upon meeting Warhol in 1966: “He looks like a Merino [sheep], a white rabbit with pink eyes.”<sup>18</sup> David Bowie sensed a very different kind of creature: “I extended my hand and the guy retired, so I thought, ‘The guy doesn’t like flesh, obviously he’s reptilian.’”<sup>19</sup> Kennedy Fraser thought he was a habitat unto itself: “His face was like a woodland creature’s, under a stork’s nest of hair.”<sup>20</sup> Carol Blanchard apparently dubbed him “Warthole”; Valerie Solanas addressed him as “Toad.”<sup>21</sup> Donald Newlove said that he had “the big, batting brown eyes of a querulous lemur,” eyes that were “absolutely *strange*. . . . Almost never hav[ing] an emotion, only a gentleness.”<sup>22</sup> Warhol’s own passion for other life-forms was unequivocal: he worried repeatedly over the suffering of plants, and claimed to have “never met an animal I didn’t like”; we’ll see that there were exceptions, and that liking didn’t always mean defending or cherishing, particularly when there was money to be made.<sup>23</sup>

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In a previous book on Warhol’s relationship to social class and egalitarianism, I traced the various purposes and implications of what Warhol’s contemporaries called his “working-class” or “peasant mentality,” which they associated with his alleged propensity to “[do] everything for money.”<sup>24</sup> As Betty Asche Douglas, one of Warhol’s only Black classmates at Carnegie Tech, argued, “There was an ambivalence of attitude at that particular moment in history, as to what degree one should celebrate rising above one’s common lower-class background, and to what degree one should stay with it and celebrate it. Like Courbet . . . Andy wore his peasant heritage like a badge of honour. His use of the working-class vernacular was part of it.”<sup>25</sup>

In many ways, my book could have been extrapolated from Douglas’s insightful words: it argued that the “ambivalence” regarding class that she rightly sensed in their lifeworld necessarily infected the “peasant heritage” and “working-class vernacular” that Warhol deployed “like a badge of honour.” As Douglas emphasized, Warhol



FIGURE 3

Roger Anliker, *Mute Song (Andy Warhol)*, 1949. Collection of Dale O. Roberts.

understood the power of these signs of class while also sensing that, in a society defined by economic deception and exploitation, this power would necessarily be strange and contradictory. A “working-class vernacular” could be simultaneously truthful and deceitful, for instance, since even as it recorded one person’s class experience (which in Warhol’s case changed drastically over time), it also marketed it to others who did not share it and who might hope to co-opt it in various ways. What’s more, Warhol’s “amateurish and vulgar” work hyperbolically embraced a stereotypically working-class interest in fame, success, and upward mobility that forms a red thread through his work.<sup>26</sup>

Working-class life was never a simple or heroic subject in Warhol’s production, but it persisted throughout his career. In his final years, he was still searching for a way to address it: as he put it in a late book, “I wish somebody great would come along in public life and make it respectable to be poor again.”<sup>27</sup>

Just as he was never a working-class activist, Warhol was by no means an exemplary environmentalist. If nonhuman life-forms have long been exploited by humans as a “zoo-proletariat,” Warhol never managed to embrace revolution, or the “the emancipation of all instrumentalized living beings” that contemporary voices have championed.<sup>28</sup> Prior to the 1980s, the closest he came to environmental activism was agreeing to design a poster for the German Green Party in 1978, at Joseph Beuys’s request. But crucially, in both contexts, Warhol explored some radically queer and egalitarian ideas that were practically unthinkable for most of his peers. In much the same way that his work records an unusual critical viewpoint on class and social inequity in America, it also provides novel and nuanced perspectives on the conceptually related problems of animal and vegetal life.

And yet, like his reflections on human egalitarianism, Warhol’s imaginings of non-human life were typically expressed in a tragicomic tone, as if he understood them to be literally utopian—desirable but unattainable. This mood may be partly attributed to his own bodily limitations. Health problems rendered him especially vulnerable to the outdoors from an early age, a circumstance that Warhol and those around him recognized and ridiculed. When Beuys—a truly committed biocentric activist—convinced Warhol to endorse the Green Party, Bob Colacello teased him relentlessly for “turn[ing] purple” at the beach, losing his breath in the mountains, getting “itchy” in the woods.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, Warhol told an interviewer in 1980, “I think it’s horrible to live.”<sup>30</sup> The related problems of shame, death, transgression, desire, and advocacy in Warhol’s investigations of nonhuman life are recurring themes in the chapters that follow.

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Chapter 1, “Like a Little Dog,” tracks Warhol’s animal and vegetal interests and interactions from his impoverished childhood in Pittsburgh, through the controversial work that he produced in college, to his extraordinarily successful first career as an advertising illustrator in New York. Warhol’s life and work during these decades were

densely populated with nonhuman life-forms: dogs, cats, plants, and chickens, but also mice, insects, worms, and various much more exotic living things. As his family struggled to bootstrap themselves out of a socioeconomic position that was widely viewed as bestial, Warhol chose to embrace animality—animal companions and animal desires—as an escape from the predicaments he encountered as a queer child with a problematic body, living in a homophobic world.<sup>31</sup> In the face of extreme economic, racial, sexual, and bodily insecurities, he turned to two main sources of solace: his mother, Julia, and the real and imaginary animals that were available to him. As it happens, these two refuges were closely linked: Julia administered Warhol's animals when they lived together, both during his childhood and during their decades of cohabitation in New York: drawing them, procuring them, feeding and cleaning up after them, breeding them, butchering and cooking them, disposing of them when they became inconvenient or profitable. In a variety of playful ways, Warhol and his mother experimented with the possibilities of overturning the heteropatriarchal hierarchies associated with anthropocentrism: hierarchies of abjection and propriety, of gender, of species, of creativity, authorship, and reproduction. In the process, they developed a fertile new approach to art and artistry, one that prioritized the traditionally animal and vegetal qualities of appetite and mechanicity over the humanistic priorities of disinterest and creativity. But they often did so under pressure, with Julia treating Andy as a surrogate daughter, husband, and animal whose transgressive productivity ultimately belonged to her. These early interests and interactions became central elements of Warhol's artistic self-fashioning, from which he would continue to draw over the course of his career.

Chapter 2, “Factory Badlands,” investigates how animal and ecological themes, spirits, and figures remained central to Warhol’s collaborative production as it transitioned into one of the most influential and iconic sites in postwar culture: the Silver Factory of the mid-1960s. While nonhuman life-forms remained active in Warhol’s work during this period, they became less obviously central as his attention shifted to mass media and commodity forms. But Warhol’s Silver Factory also encouraged another form of animality, only recently recognized by scientists as a nearly universal aspect of animal existence: intoxication, which Warhol and his collaborators imagined as a technique for becoming animal.<sup>32</sup> This drug-fueled experimentalism was embodied and chronicled by three of Warhol’s most important Silver Factory collaborators: Billy Name, Mary Woronov, and Ronald Tavel. Name modeled intoxicated animality in a variety of ways: he was a consummate recycler (what Warhol called “a good trasher”), profoundly collaborative, and (fueled by ungodly quantities of methamphetamine) almost superhuman in his speed and endurance.<sup>33</sup> Woronov, in her remarkable memoirs, chronicled the Factory as a pharmaceutical menagerie, bestial in its sadistic and masochistic appetites and interactions—which were also directly explored in Tavel’s screenplays and the films that resulted from them, like *Horse*. In all of these ways, the Silver Factory provided Warhol with a fascinating laboratory for ecological/

artistic production, a model that he could administer and admire but never fully embody. He would profit from the transgressive productivity of these factory animals, much as his mother did from him, even as the Factory's primary commodity—film (photographic and cinematic)—directly relied on the residue of animal slaughter: gelatin, what the Kodak corporation called its “Image Recorder.”<sup>34</sup>

Chapter 3, “Machines, Animal and Vegetal,” proposes that Warhol’s signature commitment to all things machinic ought to be understood as deeply inflected by his interest in nonhuman life, and more specifically by the ways in which animals and plants have traditionally been demeaned in Western thought as fundamentally mechanical and subordinate. Western anthropocentrism defines these life-forms as subhuman, driven by instinct and appetite, unreflective and mechanistic. Where “the human” writes, speaks, and creates, “animals” and “plants” leave only traces. This long-standing prejudice forms a powerful component of various ideologies—including patriarchy, classism, racism, ageism, and homophobia—that rely upon invented hierarchies of species and type to justify themselves, with “the animal” always lurking near the bottom of each scale, and “the plant” even lower than that.<sup>35</sup> Warhol challenged this tradition from two directions. First, he persistently wondered over the capacity of other life-forms, both individually and in networks, to exceed the merely mechanical in their experiences of affection, desire, death, language, memory, and aesthetic production and reception. Second, with at least equal persistence and in a similar range of areas, he explored and emphasized his own animality, and even his own links to the vegetal—his inability as a “human” to transcend his earthly origins. Across a wide variety of media, Warhol seemed more interested in tracing than creating, in the automatic rather than the thoughtful or planned, in appetite rather than disinterest. At the limit, Warhol didn’t just prioritize animals and plants in his art; he became an animal- or vegetal-machine to those around him. In the process, he attempted to reconcile two of his most important edicts—his drive “to be a machine” and his sense that Pop Art is “liking things”—with his concurrent awareness that these ambitions marked his work as “queer.” When his public efforts to communicate this queerness were censored, he turned to the strange possibilities of ecological, vegetal, and mimetic production, defined by collaboration, reuse, and hoarding rather than the humanist and capitalist ideals of individuality, creativity, and exchange. In each of these areas, becoming an animal- or vegetal-machine allowed Warhol to celebrate his instincts without worrying about their social acceptability in a homophobic world.

The fourth and fifth chapters form a pair focusing on Warhol’s only two major projects that can be described as explicitly environmentalist. Produced in collaboration with Rupert Jasen Smith, they were intended to draw attention to the plight of species facing extinction: *Endangered Species* (1983), a portfolio of silkscreen prints, mostly of charismatic megafauna; and *Vanishing Animals* (1986), a series of silkscreen prints of mostly lesser-known creatures, some of which were used to illustrate a book by the scientist Kurt Benirschke. Although they have rarely been discussed by scholars,

these projects epitomize Warhol's shifting attitudes toward animal suffering and political advocacy, and his unusually expansive, if inconsistent, empathy toward animal life. While *Endangered Species* and *Vanishing Animals* have typically been treated as interchangeably forgettable, chapter 4, "Philosophy of the Fragile," will show that they represent disparate approaches to an explicitly advocacy form of artistic production, and that the second series broaches a resonant collection of queer themes.

Chapter 5, "Queer Beauty and Extinction," concentrates on a specific set of prints produced for the *Vanishing Animals* project: those depicting an okapi (*Okapia johnstoni*) dam and calf. As Benirschke's text emphasized, these extraordinary animals faced grave challenges when held in captivity. Provided with food, water, and security, and therefore without any competing threats or distractions, a dam would incessantly clean her calf's anus and rectum with her tongue, often to the point of rectal prolapse and lethal infection. The okapi prints, completed the year before Warhol's death, seem to have allowed him and Smith to return to some of the strange and challenging questions regarding animality, the abject, mortality, maternity, productivity, shame, taste, and retribution that had long troubled his career. In this regard, they form a constellation with related works by Leonardo da Vinci, Sigmund Freud, Julia Kristeva, Alfred Hitchcock, Michel Foucault, Toni Morrison, Judith Butler, and Ocean Vuong, and constitute one of the most sustained and provocative investigations of queer sexuality in Warhol's oeuvre.

The book's conclusion, "The Python Priestess," proposes one additional animal Warhol: the snake. Across his work, his career, and his personal life, Warhol explored and embodied a variety of serpentine qualities, including those catalogued by Aby Warburg in his research on the Hopi serpent ritual—camouflage, resurrection, unexpected strength and venom, phallic presence—but also others linking snakes to neoliberal individualism and queer ecologies. These serpentine qualities, widely remarked in positive and negative ways by Warhol's friends and acquaintances, are perhaps his most enigmatic link to animal otherness.

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In his 1985 book *America*, cowritten with Craig Nelson, Warhol lamented television's tendency to provoke frustratingly inaccessible dreams in its audience. Unlike movies, which Warhol described as fundamentally unrealistic and thus harmless, television offered images of life that *seemed* to be attainable for its viewers. The fact that these images remained unattainable made television a deeply mendacious and disappointing experience: "People with television dreams are really disappointed with everything in their lives."<sup>36</sup>

In my work on Warhol and social class, I thought of this verdict as something like a foundational thesis for Warhol's understanding of US culture. Television, he seemed to be arguing, was like Lacan's mirror stage writ large: a series of experiences that

installed a fundamental frustration in the viewing subject, who would always be striving to approximate an ideal that seemed realistic but could never actually be attained.<sup>37</sup> These powerful and frustrated dreams would become formative for the phenomenology of US culture: its ever-renewing and ever-profitable appeal, and the forever-deferred satisfactions it promises. Unlike movies, television dreams were reinforced through regular repetition, the same time every week, “like learning something by having it drummed into their heads over and over.”<sup>38</sup>

At the time, I hadn’t started considering Warhol as a biocentric artist, and thus didn’t think much about the lines that followed. Now they are difficult to ignore:

[S]ome people have found a way to satisfy their TV dreams. They have pets, and having pets is just like having a television family. TV parents never have any real problems with their children, and owners don’t have too much trouble with pets. Pets make a family that’s always loyal, will do just about anything to make you happy, never criticize, love you till the end of the earth, and never expect much in return. You can get a cat that calls to you every morning when you go out the door, just like a TV mother; a dog that always has that sad, cute face when you scold it, just like TV children; a pet that comes running to the door all excited just because you’re coming home, like a TV wife; and one that sulks in the corner when it doesn’t get its way, just like a TV husband or father. Most of the time one pet can even do all these things. So even if you’re sort of poor, but you have all these television hopes and dreams, pets are really the answer.<sup>39</sup>

Just as the previous section of *America* seemed to sum up Warhol’s theory of US cultural malaise, this section responded with a comforting proposal regarding the possibility of the pet as an accessible solution. Pets, Warhol argued, could solve these problems by providing a family that replicates the pleasures and satisfactions of a television family, providing loyalty, cheerfulness, acceptance, love, generosity—all the feelings Warhol apparently missed in his own family. Pets could also fulfill each family member’s role, becoming the mother who says good-bye, the children who are “sad [and] cute” when scolded, the wife who greets, and the “husband or father” who mopes. These roles are revealing: the female adult is split into two loving roles (mother and wife), while the male takes the form of one sullen and withdrawn figure. The pet child is reminiscent of the regressive behavior Warhol’s friends noticed in him when he was near his mother, with the “sad, cute face when you scold it.” What’s more, by the section’s conclusion, Warhol is claiming that one pet can take on all of these various roles for economy’s sake, “if you’re sort of poor.”

With its “wife” and “husband,” the passage is at least superficially heteronormative, as was television in the 1980s. But, by posing the adoption of a pet or multiple pets as a satisfying alternative to the frustrating realities of the heterosexual nuclear family, Warhol was sketching out the possibility of pets as “companions in queerness” who can satisfactorily replicate the pleasures of a television family while bypassing its heter-



FIGURE 4

Andy Warhol, *Cats and Dogs (Pom)*, 1976. The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh; Founding Collection, Contribution The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. © 2022 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc./Licensed by Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

onormativity.<sup>40</sup> At the limit, one pet could fill the disparate roles of husband, wife, mother, father, and child, sidestepping all the messy requirements of human romance, exogamy, and reproduction. They would be “simple but reliable ‘affection machine[s].’”<sup>41</sup> During the mid-1970s, Warhol had seemingly commemorated this perspective by expanding his profitable business in society portraiture to include

paintings of his wealthy patrons' pets, granting these dogs and cats the same focus and attention that their owners expected. (See figure 4.) He practiced by painting portraits—or still lifes—of taxidermized animals.<sup>42</sup>

Warhol's book *America* contains a chapter called “Natural History.” In it is the section on television dreams, illustrated exclusively with pictures of pets: a bichon frise alone in the back seat of a Mercedes; a pug on a desk posed with a Marlboro between its lips; Warhol's dachshunds, Archie and Amos, startled by the flash of his camera; a dapper man kneeling down to touch a parrot. *America*'s pets seem to be enjoying the pampering their humans bestow in their efforts at self-soothing—“getting into the spirit of a neoliberal order of things which grants them opportunities to flourish, in exchange for . . . their souls.”<sup>43</sup> Tellingly, however, the passage on pets is juxtaposed with a very different photograph: an eerie Warhol snapshot of an anatomical model—male, with exposed musculature and, in the right leg, bone—arm upraised as if hailing the viewer or a cab. As is typically the case in Warhol, the possibility of animal/human intimacy is accompanied by an acknowledgment of the fundamental vulnerability of the biological human body—the precariousness it shares with nonhuman life-forms. These twin themes of biological precariousness and the possibilities of a queer animal or vegetal family—whose modes of relation “cannot be determined in advance”—persisted throughout Warhol's animal life.<sup>44</sup>

For his part, despite the fact that critics sometimes described him as being “obsessed” with “human presence” and “the human face and body,” Warhol was painfully aware that he tended to see nonhuman life-forms everywhere, in himself and others; that they dominated his imagination; and that this tendency would be held against him as a limitation by many.<sup>45</sup> Asked by an interviewer what he saw when he looked at his own Rorschach paintings, he responded, “All I would see would be a dog's face or something like a tree or a bird or a flower. Somebody else could see a lot more.”<sup>46</sup>