

in 'Imperial Heroics', might have worked well in 'Face to Face'.

The juxtaposition of different categories and idioms works better in the superb catalogue (its only fault being the failure to illustrate a number of exhibits). Reduced to a sequence of similarly scaled illustrations on the printed page, the works seem easier to engage with, and their multiple meanings are comprehensively explored in a series of stimulating sectional introductions and catalogue entries.

<sup>1</sup> A selection of works co-curated by Tate Britain and the National Gallery Singapore will be presented in Singapore in October 2016, focusing on a Southeast Asian context.

<sup>2</sup> Catalogue: *Artist and Empire*. Edited by Alison Smith, David Blayney Brown and Carol Jacobi, with contributions from Gus Casely-Hayford, Annie Coombes, Caroline Corbeau-Parsons, Paul Gilroy, Nick Thomas and Sean Willcock. 240 pp. incl. 170 col. ill. (Tate Publishing, London, 2015), £40 (HB). ISBN 978-1-84976-343-1; £29.99 (PB). ISBN 978-1-84976-359-2. See p.13.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.41.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9.

<sup>5</sup> For example, Samuel Bourne, active in India 1834–1912, and William D. Young, who opened studios in Mombasa in 1899 and Nairobi in 1905.

## Andy Warhol from the Hall Collection

Oxford

by GILDA WILLIAMS

'IS THERE REALLY anything more to say on the subject of Andy Warhol?' asked the New York Times back in 1990, three years after the artist's death.<sup>1</sup> In fact, in the wake of the Museum of Modern Art's hotly debated exhibition *Andy Warhol: A Retrospective* of 1989, the most probing Warhol research was arguably just getting underway.<sup>2</sup> MoMA's selection of three hundred paintings, drawings and sculpture, alongside a smattering of films and photographs, established a canon but was accused by some of misrepresenting the artist.<sup>3</sup> Overlooking his so-called 'non-art' activities – from publishing to his MTV talk show, *Andy Warhol's Fifteen Minutes* – while glossing over the open secret of his homosexuality, MoMA's streamlining of the artist's life and work has since been considerably broadened. Later exhibitions have retold the Warhol story from revised perspectives, even though these can prove equally skewed. In sum, heavy-handed institutional curating has not always best served Warhol's multifarious career. Any slice through his wide-ranging and intertwined works in many media seems doomed to miss some crucial aspect.

This pre-history is good news for *Andy Warhol: Works from the Hall Collection* at the **Ashmolean Museum, Oxford** (to 15th May), which features 126 paintings, drawings, films, prints and a *Brillo soap*

*pads box* (1964; cat. p.31) spanning the years 1959–86. This small overview openly admits the idiosyncratic nature behind its selection, drawn solely from the private collection of Andrew and Christine Hall. The curator, Norman Rosenthal, has sensibly installed the three medium-sized galleries chronologically, divided more or less by decade – 1960s, 1970s, 1980s – and, laterally, by genre. There is minimal commentary and no claim for some over-arching thesis. Given how well acquainted art audiences are with the *œuvre*, it comes as a welcome relief not to wade through the usual slew of *Campbell's soup cans* and *Marilyns*. Instead, prominently displayed are lesser-known but important canvases such as *The American man (Portrait of Watson Powell)* (1964; pp.88–89; Fig.53). Vaguely resembling the artist's bespectacled mother Julia Warhola in drag, this commissioned portrait of a middle-aged Iowan insurance salesman is a little known yet significant part of Warhol's inventory of everyday America, more usually connected with his paintings of packaged food, Hollywood stars, dollar bills, car crashes and more.

The merit of this modestly sized Warhol survey lies in giving such overlooked gems as *The American man* their due attention. Many of them are known mostly from reproduction, and the exhibition drives home the enduring value of seeing Warhol's art in the flesh.

A small turquoise *Self-portrait* (1967; p.97) has been adopted as the mascot for the exhibition, plastered on promotional posters and banners *ad nauseam*. Yet in the flesh, this lifesize three-quarter profile of a sweet and boyish Warhol is powerful. Created about a year before the devastating attempt on his life, and full of innocence and optimism, this self-portrait carries all the 'beautiful [. . .] heart breaking' impact that Michael Fried had ascribed to the *Marilyn* portraits made in 1962.<sup>4</sup>

The unfamiliar selection sparks new connections between Warhol's early and late output. The artist's shifting social milieu over the years has never seemed so apparent. His circle widens from the *Screen tests* (1964–66), film portraits in which there is a preponderance of downtown poets, musicians and art world hangers-on, to a 1967 sequence of notable New York artists (*Roy Lichtenstein* and *James Rosenquist*, both p.94; *Frank Stella*, p.95). The next decades' Polaroid-based commissioned portraits includes minor celebrities such as starlet *Pia Zadora* (1983; pp.138 and 139) and singer *Paul Anka* (1976; pp.108–15), who is amply represented in six similar paintings. Sharing the gallery with the then-Empress of Iran, *Farah Diba Pahlavi* (1976; p.105), are portraits of the international art superstar *Joseph Beuys* (1980; pp.126 and 134; c.1983; p.135). Beuys, wearing his unmistakable hat, is flanked by silkscreens of the state-approved



53. *The American man (Portrait of Watson Powell)*, by Andy Warhol. 1964. Acrylic and silkscreen on linen, 41 by 41 cm. (The Hall Foundation, New York; exh. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford).



photograph of *Mao* (1973; p.51) These all point towards Warhol's fascination with charismatic figureheads who developed recognisable self-images to help spread their message. Their famous faces carry as much ideological force as the abstract symbols on view nearby and painted around the same period, whether the *Hammer and sickle* (1976; p.53), *Dollar sign* (1981; p.71) or *Crosses* (1981–82; p.73).

A spectacular wall of large-scale outline drawings (p.205; Fig.54), most dated 1986 and traced from projections of the Polaroids, recalls the artist's delicate 1950s pictures of beautiful boys. With their unusual oblong format – Warhol generally favoured the square for portraits – they seem to be the unadorned, grey-on-white versions of Richard Bernstein's glamorous mid-1970s head-shot cover illustrations for Warhol's *Interview* magazine. Although these exquisite ghostly portraits, created months before he died, might help dispel long-held assumptions regarding Warhol's artistic decline, even the most forgiving supporters of the later work will struggle to defend the last room. The final gallery is overhung with black-and-white canvases that expand *ad infinitum* Warholian themes centring on low-grade magazine advertising begun in his 1950s pre-Pop period. Anthony E. Grudin has persuasively interpreted those early paintings inspired by working-class advertisements that promised life-changing formulas ('Be a Somebody with a Body . . . !') as fuelling the artist's own belief in radical self-transformation from ugly-duckling illustrator to world-renowned fine artist.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, the twenty-eight canvases crammed into the final gallery are



54. *Unidentified woman*, by Andy Warhol. 1986. Graphite on paper, 80 by 60.5 cm. (The Hall Foundation, New York; exh. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford).

even duller than the ten over-familiar *Flowers* (1964; pp.36–47) unnecessarily included in the first room. Even potential stand-outs – such as the curious *Map of the Eastern U.S.S.R. missile bases (negative)* (1985–86; p.175; Fig.55), perhaps a tongue-in-cheek riposte to Jasper Johns's *Map* (1961) – are swamped in this display. The

last, colourless gallery would have benefited from a drastic edit.

Anthony Huberman has recently researched the exhibition that Warhol guest-curated in 1969, titled *Raid the Icebox I*.<sup>6</sup> When selecting items from the Rhode Island School of Design's collection, the artist had the motley assortment of artworks and objects gathering dust in the School's storerooms moved upstairs to the museum's galleries and reinstalled unchanged. For Warhol, the objects' random inclusion in a single collection provided a good enough reason to display them publicly together. Following this very same loose curatorial principle, *Works from the Hall Collection*, and its accompanying catalogue,<sup>7</sup> may well have met with Warhol's approval.



55. *Map of the Eastern U.S.S.R. missile bases (negative)*, by Andy Warhol. 1985–86. Synthetic polymer paint and silkscreen ink on canvas, 183 by 203 cm. (The Hall Foundation, New York; exh. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford).

<sup>1</sup> G. Glueck: 'The Artist as Icon, Busybody and Chief Executive: review of Bob Colacello, *Holy Terror*; Andy Warhol *Close-Up*', *New York Times* (9th August 1990).

<sup>2</sup> Reviewed by Lynne Cooke in this Magazine, 131 (1989), pp.505–08.

<sup>3</sup> See S. Watney: 'The Warhol Effect', in G. Garrels: *The Work of Andy Warhol*, Seattle and New York 1989, pp.115–23.

<sup>4</sup> M. Fried: 'New York Letter', *Art International* 6, no.10 (1962), p.57.

<sup>5</sup> A.E. Grudin: "'Except Like a Tracing': Defensive-ness, Accuracy and Class in Early Warhol', *October* 140 (2012), pp.139–64.

<sup>6</sup> A. Huberman: 'Andy Warhol, "Raid the Icebox I, with Andy Warhol", 1969', *Mousse* 48 (2015), pp.1–20.

<sup>7</sup> Catalogue: *Andy Warhol Works from the Hall Collection*. By Norman Rosenthal, Andy Hall, Alexander Sturgis and Eric Shiner. 240 pp. incl. 98 col. + 63 b. & w. ills. (Ashmolean Museum Publications, Oxford, 2016), £25. ISBN 978-1-910807-04-0.