

La Filosofia di Andy Warhol and the turmoil of art in Italy, 1983

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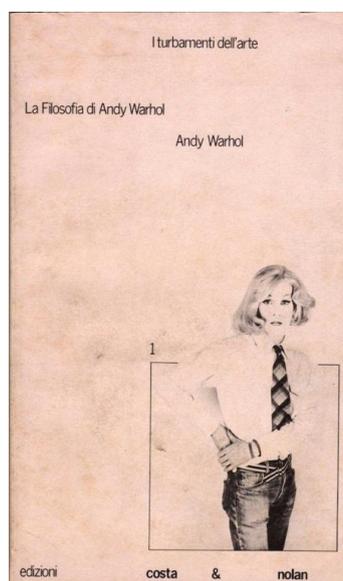


Figure 1 Cover, *La Filosofia di Andy Warhol*, Genoa: Costa & Nolan, 1983.

Titled *La Filosofia di Andy Warhol*, the Italian translation of *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again)* was published in 1983 by Costa & Nolan, a publishing house founded in Genoa in 1981 (fig. 1). The company name combines the last name of Carla Costa with the nickname of the cofounder, Eugenio Bonaccorsi, who used to sign his theatre reviews as 'Nolan'.¹ The American edition of the book had appeared eight years earlier, in 1975. It was the Genoese critic and curator Germano Celant who suggested the publication of the book in Italy. Celant collaborated with Costa & Nolan and was the editor of a collection of books titled *I*

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¹ Unfortunately, not much information about the publishing house is available. Owners varied, the company moved to Milan in 1997, and it apparently ceased publications in 2010. In the early 2000s, Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori in Milan, a foundation specialising in preserving and studying the legacy of Italian publishers, commissioned a survey of all the publishing houses based in Lombardy. It was a long-term project, in which Costa & Nolan was included, resulting in the creation of a database of the archives of each publisher. With regards to Costa & Nolan, contact details have never been updated since the end of the project, and it has been impossible to locate the archive so far (see: <https://lombardiarchivi.servizirl.it/fonds/1205>).

turbamenti dell'arte, which translates as *The Turmoils of Art*. *La Filosofia di Andy Warhol* inaugurated the series, for which the graphic design was elaborated by the architect and designer Pierluigi Cerri, who was a friend of Celant and collaborated with him on several of his exhibition and publication projects beginning with the seminal show *Ambiente arte* at the Venice Biennale of 1976.

In order to properly frame the release and reception of the book, the history of the relationship between Warhol and Italy up to then should be first briefly surveyed. While some moments have been already studied, the whole evolution of the Italian reception of the artist has yet to be fully analysed.

The context

The name of Warhol first circulated in Italy within the exposure to Neo-Dada and Pop art in the 1960s, concurrently with the seminal exhibitions of Pop artists organized by dealers such as Gian Enzo Sperone. Before opening his own gallery, Sperone worked as the director of Galleria Il Punto in Turin, where he organized a pivotal solo show of Roy Lichtenstein, opening on 23 December 1963, thus anticipating the interest in American art, consecrated during the famous edition of 1964 of the Venice Biennale, in which Robert Rauschenberg was awarded the International Grand Prize in Painting.² In conjunction with such initiatives, a few critics investigated the effort of Neo-Dada and Pop artists to reassess the tenets of the representation of reality in art. Contributions authored by Maurizio Calvesi and Alberto Boatto paved the way to the interpretation of Pop art as the epitome of the newly raised awareness of the modification of individual and social life habits induced by the increasing circulation of mass produced objects and mediated images.³ The ideas of Calvesi and Boatto would resonate with those expressed in a book edited by the American art critic Lucy Lippard, published in Italy by Mazzotta in 1967.⁴ Compared to other Pop artists, Warhol looked like an artist with a limited expressive range, yet of undeniable quality ('artista limitato ma sicuro'),⁵ who undertook a deliberate revision of the status of the image, midway between the repetitiveness of mechanical reproduction and the aesthetics of pure painting. His distinctive technique combining silkscreen and paint was analysed as a critique of the proliferation of replicated images and the consumerist nature of the society of mass media. The practice of the artist was compared to the work of sociologists and ethnographers, as providing a comprehensive report on social structures and collective habits.⁶ In the mid-1960s, early insights on Warhol, mainly borrowed from American criticism, started to circulate, such as the profile by Gene R. Swenson

² *Lichtenstein*, Turin: Il Punto arte moderna, 1963.

³ See the three-part essay, 'Un pensiero concreto', which translates as 'A Concrete Thinking', by Maurizio Calvesi ('Un pensiero concreto (1°)', *Collage*, 3-4, December 1964, 65-70; 'Un pensiero concreto II', *Marcatrè*, 3: 16-18, July 1965, 241-51; Calvesi, 'Un pensiero concreto parte terza', *Marcatrè*, 4: 23-25, June 1966, 92-100). After travelling to New York in Fall 1964, Alberto Boatto published a book which radically redefined the terms of the reception of Pop art in Italy: *Pop art in U.S.A.*, Milan: Lerici, 1967.

⁴ Lucy Lippard, ed., *Pop Art*, Milan: Mazzotta, 1967.

⁵ Calvesi, 'Un pensiero concreto parte terza', 94.

⁶ Boatto, *Pop art in U.S.A.*, 214-15.

following the exhibition of *Brillo Boxes* at Stable Gallery in Spring 1964 and published in the magazine *Collage* at the end of the year.⁷ Some of the photographs of the artist at the Factory taken by the Italian painter Mario Schifano during his stay in New York in 1964 illustrated the article.⁸

The general popularity of the figure of Andy Warhol gradually complemented and overshadowed the appreciation of his work, especially when the artist started to travel to Italy in the 1970s.⁹ Until then, the voice of the artist was relatively unknown in Italy, with a few exceptions, such as the interview of 1963 with Gene Swenson for *ARTnews*, which was translated in Boatto's 1967 book on Pop art.¹⁰ The dismissal of a conventional approach to the interview, which would soon mark any conversation with the artist, was especially challenging and would soon be considered as a substantial component of his self-constructed narrative. A rare interview published in Italy in 1966 attested to this approach: 'Do I still paint? I wanted to stop...I can't: how can I find the money to make films otherwise?' the artist said to Juditte Sarkany-Perrett in the interview, produced for a news story on underground cinema in New York that included Warhol among other filmmakers, such as Jonas Mekas, Harry Smith, Gregory Marcopoulos, Stan Vanderbeek, and Stan Brakhage, published in the Italian magazine *Marcatrè* in 1966.¹¹ Rendering ordinary life in an objective and detached style, the films of Warhol aimed to raise in the viewer 'the awareness of things as things, of moments as moments',¹² as Gerard Malanga said in the same interview.

The interview with Sarkany-Perrett was seminal insofar as it signalled the importance of filmmaking in the art of Andy Warhol and introduced the idea that objectivity was distinctive to his vision. In this respect, the article was similar to another publication that marked a turning point towards the broader acknowledgement of Warhol's body of work, and as a public personality in Italy: *New York: Arte e persone* (1967), which was simultaneously published in the United States in English,¹³ and consisted of a collection of stories on the New York art scene, featuring pictures shot by the Italian photographer Ugo Mulas during trips to the city in 1964, 1965 and 1967. The pictures were accompanied by the insightful commentary of Alan Solomon, who introduced Mulas to artists, collectors and other major figures of the New York art world. Mulas captured Warhol surrounded by his

⁷ Gene Robert Swenson, 'The darker Ariel: Random Notes on Andy Warhol / annotazioni casuali su Andy Warhol', *Collage*, 3-4, December 1964, 102-06.

⁸ Francesco Guzzetti, ed, *Facing America: Mario Schifano 1960-1965*, New York: Center for Italian Modern Art, 2021, 7-8.

⁹ In this respect, see Einav Zamir, 'Lucio Amelio and Two Unidentified Men', in *Andy Warhol: Private and Public in 151 Photographs*, ed. Reva Wolf, New Paltz, NY: The Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art, 2010, 98-101.

¹⁰ Boatto, *Pop art in U.S.A.*, 275-76.

¹¹ 'Se dipingo ancora? Volevo smettere ... non posso: i soldi per i film dove li trovo altrimenti?' Juditte Sarkany-Perrett, 'U.S.A. — Cinema a New York', *Marcatrè*, 4: 19-22, April 1966, 90.

¹² 'la consapevolezza delle cose come cose, dei momenti come momenti', Sarkany-Perrett, 'U.S.A. — Cinema a New York', 90.

¹³ Ugo Mulas and Alan Solomon, *New York: arte e persone*, Milan: Longanesi, 1967, and *New York: The New Art Scene*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967.

friends and assistants at the Factory, his canvases and *Brillo Boxes* piled along the walls. Only one photograph captures the artist in the process of silk-screening. The majority of the pictures refer to his use of the movie camera and his production of films. According to the text by Solomon, his paintings and films 'anticipated much of the present spirit of detachment in American art.'¹⁴ Solomon provided a comprehensive portrait of the artist and his life, introducing aspects which would become distinctive of the public recognition of Warhol in the 1970s:

the Factory also doubles as a film studio and an exhibition hall for miscellaneous eccentrics, many of whom appear at all hours, uninvited ... Life in the Factory picks up in the late afternoon. Later Andy goes out with an entourage of his latest super-stars and various attendants. The group is a familiar sight in the parts of the city where the scene night life [*sic*] goes on.¹⁵

Mulas's photographs and Solomon's text emphasized the objectivity of the artist's practice as well as the context of his intense social life and his eccentric entourage of assistants and superstars. Solomon's words resonated with the interview given to Sarkany-Perrett, but also prefigured major aspects of the discussion about the artist, such as the assessment by Maurizio Fagiolo dell'Arco of 1968, in which the critic focused on the coolness and presumed superficiality through which Warhol treated reality in his work and by means of which he frustrated any attempts of interpretation.¹⁶

By the early 1970s, in Italy Warhol's experimentations in film fashioned the debates on his work, due to the circulation of the New American Cinema, championed by intellectuals and artists such as Piero Gilardi and Fernanda Pivano, associations including Club Nuovo Teatro in Milan, Unione Culturale in Turin, and Filmstudio in Rome, theatre and film magazines like *Sipario*, the third edition of the festival of experimental cinema in Pesaro in 1967, and the program of screenings organized by Jonas Mekas at the Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea in Turin from 13 to 21 May 1967.¹⁷ As a result of such initiatives, Warhol was

¹⁴ Mulas and Solomon, *New York: The New Art Scene*, 306.

¹⁵ Mulas and Solomon, *New York: The New Art Scene*, 306.

¹⁶ Maurizio Fagiolo dell'Arco, 'Warhol: The American Way of Dying', *Metro*, 8: 14, June 1968, 72-79.

¹⁷ For Gilardi's analysis, see Piero Gilardi, 'Lettera da New York', *Ombre elettriche*, December 1967, 23-25 [*Ombre elettriche* is an alternative magazine, with no volume or issue nos.]. The following writings by Fernanda Pivano are relevant: 'Manovelle fuori canale: i filmatori italiani da underground a indipendenti a collettivi', *Domus*, 477, August 1969, 42-49; and, 'Obiettivo nell'occhio/coscienza: i filmatori USA dal cinema sperimentale all'underground', *Domus*, 490, September 1970, 51-58. Club Nuovo Teatro was a film club founded by Franco Quadri in 1967; see Renata M. Molinari, ed., 'Franco Quadri', *Panta*, 31, 2014. Filmstudio, a film club in Rome, regularly screened Warhol's films starting from 1968, often for the first time in Italy; see Adriano Aprà and Enzo Ungari, *Il cinema di Andy Warhol*, Rome: Arcana Editrice, 1971, 4. The program of the festival in Pesaro was self-printed by the festival organizers and few copies of it still exist; see *NC New American Cinema. Terza mostra internazionale del nuovo cinema. Quattro programmi selezionati da Jonas Mekas*, Pesaro, 1967. On the screenings organised by Mekas in Turin in 1967, see the local newspaper review, R. Gi.,

regarded as a major figure among underground filmmakers. Germano Celant, too, first acknowledged the artist's pioneering role as a filmmaker rather than a Pop artist, as he noted in one of the earliest essays on the new artistic avant-garde of Arte Povera, in which he highlighted the liberating power of the artlessness distinguishing the adherence to life in the films of Warhol.¹⁸

The film *Chelsea Girls* (1966) in particular aroused the interest of leading Italian intellectuals and writers, including Alberto Arbasino and Alberto Moravia. Both had travelled to New York, where they were informed first-hand on the latest tendencies and wrote extensively on Warhol's films, acknowledging their novelty in the structure and visual vocabulary of filmmaking beyond the provocative, sometimes disturbing, imagery. The reception of the artist's underground films was countered by the early accounts on his public figure and the entourage around him. In the eyes of the commentators, the provocation of the films overlapped with the artist's construction of his identity. Critics would ultimately put an emphasis on cinema, more than painting, as the medium resonating the most with the artist's negotiation of his life vis-à-vis his public persona. In the same article in which he reported on the 1968 attempt on Warhol's life, Moravia reviewed *Chelsea Girls* by defining the specific authenticity of the cinema of Warhol as the technique 'of the unpredictable of the ordinary'.¹⁹ After seeing the film and visiting the artist at the Factory, Arbasino collapsed the analysis of Warhol's art and the person of Warhol, concluding: 'Finally, not only because *Chelsea Girls* is the most extraordinary success of the season (and it cost so little), the "extraordinary" film character is currently Andy Warhol.'²⁰ Arbasino described the main physical traits of Warhol—the hair, the nose, the way of speaking, the indefinable age—and the flawless continuity between artistic creation and ordinary life, setting the tone of later assessments of the artist.

According to these analyses, the films of the artist conveyed no less of a blatant sense of detachment than his person, and this quality inspired untraditional formats to communicate it. Gathering texts and statements to compose a survey on the New American Cinema published in *Sipario* in 1969, Aldo Rostagno and Nuccio Lodato employed a collage technique to present Warhol. The investigation of his work was interspersed with quotations from a diverse range of sources, collapsing notes on ordinary events, references to the scars on his body and insights into a practice which embraced the use of recording systems as the ultimate form of

'Il "nuovo cinema" americano alla Galleria di Arte moderna', *La Stampa*, 112, 13 May 1967, 4 (in 2017, Fondazione Prada in Milan replicated the film program as a celebration of its fiftieth anniversary).

¹⁸ Germano Celant, 'Arte povera', in *La povertà dell'arte*, ed. Pietro Bonfiglioli, Bologna: Quaderni de' Foscherari, 1968, vol. 1, n.p. (reprinted in Germano Celant, *Preistoria 1966-69*, Florence: Centro Di, 1976, 66).

¹⁹ 'L'imprevisto del normale'; Alberto Moravia, 'A mezzanotte con l'ape regina', *L'Espresso*, 14: 25, 23 June 1968, 23. Moravia would later expand on the film practice of Warhol in his book *Al cinema. Centoquarantotto film d'autore*, Milan: Bompiani, 1975, 211-12, 255-57.

²⁰ 'Finalmente non soltanto perché *Chelsea Girls* è il successo più straordinario della stagione (ed era costato pochissimo) il personaggio cinematografico "straordinario" è attualmente Andy Warhol'; Alberto Arbasino, *Off-off*, Milan: Feltrinelli, 1968, 183-84.

realism.²¹ The article diverged from previous attempts to explain Warhol by virtue of its proximity to the 'matter-of-factness' of his statements and works, even while drawing on earlier appraisals of him. It contained a translation of parts of a story written by John Leonard for the *New York Times Magazine* on the occasion of the publication of *a: A Novel* in 1968, for which he interviewed superstars and assistants of Warhol at the Factory.²²

A book published in 1971 marked the transition towards a more original approach to the personality of the artist with a comprehensive survey of Warhol's experimental cinema. It was edited by the critics Adriano Aprà and Enzo Ungari and republished in an updated version in 1978. The book was meant to be a catalogue of all the films directed and produced by Warhol, enriched by the editors' commentaries. They defined his cinema as a 'cinema-limit', in which all the conventions of making and judging films are at stake:

Not only the notions of 'realism', 'verisimilitude', and 'statement' are lacking and inadequate. The concepts of 'work', 'author', and 'discourse', too, are turned upside down and reassessed by films which identify with their process of production and turn this relationship into a theoretical thinking, thus producing knowledge and setting a new field of inquiry (whose effects require tools which old-fashioned critics lack).²³

Aprà and Ungari's anthology on the artist's films included the translation of what became one of Warhol's most famous interviews, with Gretchen Berg, published in *The East Village Other* in 1966, which they probably knew through a version that appeared the following year in *Cahiers du Cinema*.²⁴ The translation of an interview reflects a broader trend of the time.

The same year when the book by Aprà and Ungari was published, an interview that Warhol had given to Joseph Gelmis in 1969 was translated for an

²¹ Aldo Rostagno and Nuccio Lodato, 'Collage per Andy Warhol', *Sipario*, 274, February 1969, 65-66. The article is followed by the partial translation of a review of *The Chelsea Girls*, Toby Mussman, 'The Chelsea Girls', *Film Culture*, no. 45, 1967, 41-45.

²² John Leonard, 'The Return of Andy Warhol', *New York Times Magazine*, 10 November 1968, 32-3, 142-51.

²³ 'In questo senso si può parlare di cinema-limite: non sono solo le nozioni di "realismo", "verosimile", "enunciato" a risultare insufficienti o spurie; sono le stesse nozioni di "opera", "autore", "discorso" ad essere stravolte e ripostulate da film che, identificandosi con il loro processo di produzione e facendo di questa relazione una riflessione teorica, producono un sapere e stabiliscono il campo di una problematica nuova (i cui effetti chiamano in causa strumenti di cui la vecchia critica è sprovvista)'; Aprà and Ungari, *Il cinema di Andy Warhol*, 4.

²⁴ Gretchen Berg, 'Andy Warhol: My True Story', *The East Village Other*, 1: 23, 1-15 November 1966, 9-10, and 'Nothing to Lose, Interview by Gretchen Berg', *Cahiers du Cinema in English*, 10, May 1967, 38-43, republished in Italian in Aprà and Ungari, *Il cinema di Andy Warhol*, 21-26. On the creation of this interview, see Matt Wrbcian, ed., *A Is for Archive: Warhol's World from A to Z*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019, 106-11 (also see the references in Jean-Claude Lebensztejn, 'Warhol in French', *Journal of Art Historiography* 26, June 2022, n2).

issue of *Sipario*.²⁵ Gelmis had published this conversation in his book, *The Film Director as Superstar*, in which he gathered interviews with several emerging filmmakers.²⁶ The interview reinforced the view that Warhol decided to abandon painting to concentrate on film and that he embraced chance and banality by refusing specific involvement as a director.

All the interviews published throughout the years in Italy prefigured the effect of the publication of the Italian edition of *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*. Affirming the control exerted by the interviewee on the final result of the interview, the artist at times blatantly reversed the format of the interview, undermined its presumptive objectivity, and resorted to banality as a creative means of collaboration with the interviewer. As Reva Wolf explained,

With his seemingly banal answers, Warhol constructed [a] space for the creativity of the interviewer. He further encouraged such creativity through reversing and otherwise confusing the roles of interviewer and interviewee. ... [P]recisely when the idea of giving the interviewee more control over the content of interviews was embraced, and just as the seemingly objective question-and-answer format gained wide acceptance within the realm of serious journalism, Warhol, through his apparent evasiveness, showed that its claims to documentary objectivity were trickery. After all, interviews nearly always are rehearsed, edited, or otherwise manipulated, and are not the spontaneous conversations that the question-and-answer format would suggest.²⁷

Up until the early 1970s, the reception of Warhol in Italy was largely based on the integration of interviews and articles published abroad. Publications generated in Italy about the artist began to proliferate with his increasing presence in the country during this decade. In 1972, Warhol was invited by Incontri Internazionali d'Arte in Rome—an association championing international avant-garde, founded by Graziella Lonardi Buontempo in collaboration with Achille Bonito Oliva—to present his latest films (collaborations with Paul Morrissey), *Women in Revolt* and *L'Amour*, and participate in a public debate with critics and intellectuals.²⁸ The program took place on 10-11 April 1972, and was widely

²⁵ Joseph Gelmis, 'I veri film li fanno a Hollywood: Andy Warhol si confessa', *Sipario*, 299, March-April 1971, 24-28.

²⁶ Joseph Gelmis, *The Film Director as Superstar*, Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1970, 65-73.

²⁷ Reva Wolf, 'Introduction: Through the Looking-Glass', in *I'll Be Your Mirror: The Selected Andy Warhol Interviews, 1962-1987*, ed. Kenneth Goldsmith, New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2004, xvii, xxi. Wolf has recently expanded this contextualization of Warhol's approach to interviews within the broader history and problem of artist interview as a genre; see Reva Wolf, 'The Artist Interview: An Elusive History', *Journal of Art Historiography*, 23, December 2020, 21-23.

²⁸ A full record of the roundtable is provided in Bruno Corà, ed., *Incontri 1972. Quaderni del Centro di Informazione Alternativa*, vol. 3, Rome: Incontri internazionali d'arte, 1979, 8-25. On the question of the authorship of the early 1970s films involving Morrissey, see the discussions noted in Jean Wainwright, 'Translating Warhol for television: *Andy Warhol's*

reviewed. The public dialogue with the artist confirmed the impressions produced by the previously translated interviews. Surrounded by his assistants, Warhol acted as an ageless and inscrutable 'wax mask'.²⁹ He said little and avoided answers, these strategies serving to reaffirm his superficiality and indifference to any debates, while he meanwhile obsessively recorded the proceedings with his Polaroid camera and tape recorder.³⁰

Later, other events brought the artist back to Italy and increased his popularity. An exhibition at Palazzo dei Diamanti in Ferrara from October to December 1975, in which his *Ladies and Gentlemen* series of painted portraits of transvestites was presented in Italy for the first time, stands out in this respect. Organized by the director of the museum, Franco Farina, and promoted by Luciano Anselmino, a dealer based in Turin who was championing the art of Warhol at the time, the exhibition was introduced by a roundtable with the artist, whose visit to Italy was documented by the photographer Dino Pedriali.³¹ As usual, Warhol was reportedly evasive in the roundtable, and his assistant Bob Colacello protected him by answering the majority of the questions on his behalf.³² The exhibition was accompanied by a catalogue edited by the art critic Janus, who was based in Turin and collaborated frequently with Anselmino.³³ Janus interpreted Warhol's portraits of transvestites from a political perspective, in light of the ongoing race problem in the United States.³⁴

The *Ladies and Gentlemen* exhibition coincided with a moment of intense political debate in Italy, a context that contributed to diverse interpretations of the work. Anselmino asked Pier Paolo Pasolini, who was one of the most prominent intellectuals in Italy at that time, for an essay on it. The essay was written in October 1975 and published in the catalogue of an exhibition of a small selection of the *Ladies and Gentlemen* paintings held at Anselmino's gallery in Milan in May 1976, soon after the author's death.³⁵ An intellectual deeply rooted in European culture, Pasolini held a distinctive, yet problematic, conservative worldview, which extended also to

America, *Journal of Art Historiography*, 26, June 2022, n34.

²⁹ See Franco Quadri, 'Warhol la maschera di cera', *Sipario*, 313, June 1972, 14-16.

³⁰ Luca Patella and Rosa Patella, 'Films e disattenzione selettiva di Warhol', *Data*, 2: 4, May 1972, 69.

³¹ Maria Luisa Pacelli, 'Ladies and Gentlemen at the Palazzo dei Diamanti in Ferrara, October 1975: An Interview with Franco Farina', in *Warhol & Mapplethorpe: Guise & Dolls*, ed. Patricia Hickson, Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum, in association with Yale University Press, 2015, 43-47. Publications in which the photographs by Pedriali are reproduced include: Gianni Mercurio and Mirella Panepinto, eds, *Andy Warhol. Viaggio in Italia*, Milan: Mazzotta, 1997, 181-200; and, Claudio Spadoni and Estemio Serri, eds, *Andy Warhol*, Bologna: Edizioni Cinquantesei, 2006.

³² Pacelli, 'Ladies and Gentlemen', 45.

³³ Janus, ed., *Andy Warhol. Ladies and Gentlemen*, Milan: Mazzotta, 1975.

³⁴ On the exhibition, the catalogue and Warhol's visit to Italy on that occasion, see Neil Printz, 'Ladies and Gentlemen', in *The Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 4: *Paintings and Sculpture Late 1974-1976*, ed. Neil Printz and Sally King-Nero, London: Phaidon, 2014, 59-60.

³⁵ See Alessandro Del Puppo, *Pasolini Warhol 1975*, Milan-Udine, Mimesis Edizioni, 2019, 11-112. Pasolini's essay has often, even recently, mistakenly been thought to have been written for the catalogue of the exhibition in Ferrara, as Del Puppo observes.

his own homosexuality. In the essay, he interpreted the *Ladies and Gentlemen* series as the representation of the homogeneity of the American view of humankind, in which diversity is absorbed within

a sclerotic unity of the universe, in which the only freedom is that of the artist, who, essentially despising it, plays with it. The representation of the world excludes any possible dialectic. It is, at the same time, violently aggressive and desperately impotent. There is, therefore, in its perversity of cruel, cunning and insolent 'game', a substantial and incredible innocence.³⁶

Another major connection with Italy in the 1970s revolved around the long-lasting relationship between Warhol and Lucio Amelio, a dealer based in Naples, who invited Warhol to the city for the first time in 1976.³⁷ This association resulted in important projects, culminating in a group of portraits by Warhol of Joseph Beuys. Amelio held an exhibition of these portraits, in conjunction with which he organized a public meeting between the two artists, which took place on 1 April 1980. Reporting on the event, commentators couldn't help but notice the diverging attitudes of the two artists, which were seen as representative of a perceived opposition between the utopianism of European art and the superficiality of American art. One writer described the two as, 'the ideological project-making European artist, and the American artist as distant and objective as his mythical camera, his inseparable companion.'³⁸ The journalist Michele Bonuomo dedicated a page of *Il Mattino*, the daily newspaper of Naples, to both artists. The section on Warhol included a collection of excerpts translated from *POPism*, Warhol's memoir on Pop art, which he had just co-authored with Pat Hackett,³⁹ and a poem on Naples. Despite a misleading translation of a portion of it, which appeared in *Domus* in 1980,⁴⁰ the poem was apparently originally published solely in Italian:

³⁶ '...una unità sclerotica dell'universo, in cui l'unica libertà è quella dell'artista, che, sostanzialmente disprezzandolo, gioca con esso. La rappresentazione del mondo esclude ogni possibile dialettica. È, al tempo stesso, violentemente aggressiva e disperatamente impotente. C'è dunque, nella sua perversità di "gioco" crudele, astuto e insolente, una sostanziale e incredibile innocenza'; Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Andy Warhol. Ladies and Gentlemen*, Milan: Luciano Anselmino, 1976, n.p., republished in Del Puppo, *Pasolini Warhol 1975*, 112.

³⁷ On the collaboration between Warhol and Amelio, see: Angela Tecce, 'Warhol e Napoli', in *Andy Warhol. Viaggio in Italia*, Gianni Mercurio and Mirella Panepinto, eds, Milan: Mazzotta, 1997, 21-26; Michele Bonuomo, ed, *Warhol, Beuys: Omaggio a Lucio Amelio*, Milan: Mazzotta, 2007; Zamir, 'Lucio Amelio and Two Unidentified Men', 98-101; and Francesca Franco, 'Diario napoletano e altro', in *Andy Warhol Vetrine*, ed. Achille Bonito Oliva, Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana Editoriale, 2014, 17-20.

³⁸ Angelo Trimarco, 'Warhol e Beuys', *Domus*, 607, June 1980, 56.

³⁹ Andy Warhol, 'Amo New York, cioè Napoli', *Il Mattino*, 84, 1 April 1980, 5. The article translates a few paragraphs from the first pages of Andy Warhol and Pat Hackett, *POPism: The Warhol '60s*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980, 3, 5-6, 16-17, 20, 22, 34-35. The Italian text sometimes diverges from the source, and the last sentence, which reads as 'time has passed, by now I can get to any parties all over the world' ('Il tempo è passato, ormai riesco ad entrare nei salotti di tutto il mondo'), doesn't correspond to any passage of the book.

⁴⁰ Angelo Trimarco, 'Warhol e Beuys', *Domus*, 607, June 1980, 56.

I love Naples because it reminds me of New York,
especially due to the many transvestites and the garbage by the street. Like
New York, it's a city
that falls apart, and regardless the people are
happy as people in New York.
What I love the most to do in Naples is visiting
all the old families in their old palaces, that seem to be standing held
together by a rope, almost giving the impression of falling into the sea at any
moment.
The best seafood is in Naples, too,
the best pasta
and the best wine.
What else could I add?⁴¹

Published at the end of a decade of increasing presence of the artist, the poem encapsulates the defining traits of his attitude. The prose-like style of the verses resonates with the artist's love for references to prosaic, ordinary reality. Despite the ingenuous question in the final line, Warhol totally overlooked the most remarkable aspects of the city, which often recur in literature as a celebration of Naples, such as the breathtaking seascapes, the astonishing light, the pleasant weather, the sense of greatness of the illustrious past, or the beauty permeating its art. The artist focused instead on images of degradation and stereotypes about Italian food. The poem conveys the sense that a literary construction lies behind the ingenuity of the words, as the dullness expressed by the artist's inscrutable expressions concealed the construction of a public persona. Such a disorienting feeling of the artist's double personality, split between banality and awareness, would culminate a few years later, when the Italian edition of his *Philosophy* was released.

The book

The Philosophy of Andy Warhol was published in early September 1975, not long before the exhibition of *Ladies and Gentlemen* opened in Ferrara. Eight years later, by the time the book appeared in Italian translation, Warhol had achieved a solid popularity in Italy, where he was mostly known for his look and his elusive attitude in public situations. His 'mask-like' face had already attracted diverse interpretations and his obsession for recording reality had been noticed.

The spirit of the book, however, resonated with news stories about Warhol's

⁴¹ The original text reads as follows: 'Amo Napoli perché mi ricorda New York, / specialmente per i tanti travestiti e per i rifiuti per strada. Come New York, è una città / che cade a pezzi, e nonostante tutto la gente è / felice come quella di New York. / Quello che preferisco di più a Napoli è visitare / tutte le vecchie famiglie nei loro vecchi palazzi che sembrano stare in piedi tenuti insieme da una corda, dando quasi l'impressione di voler cadere in mare da un momento all'altro. / A Napoli c'è anche il pesce migliore / la migliore pastasciutta / ed il vino migliore. / Cos'altro potrei aggiungere?'; 'Una poesia per "Il Mattino"', *Il Mattino*, 84, 1 April 1980, 5.

social life or his extravagant presentations in fashion magazines, rather than with his apparent evasiveness. The Italian edition of *Vogue* had already introduced the artist as early as 1970. A column titled 'Se ne parla' — which translates as 'Talked about' — included a full-page illustration of a photograph by Cecil Beaton depicting Warhol with Jay Johnson, who was the twin brother of his then boyfriend, and Candy Darling, a well-known transgender actor in his movies, accompanied by a short caption describing him as 'the most famous artist of America [...]. Someone says that the masterpiece of Andy Warhol is Andy Warhol.'⁴² Significantly, the brief note mentioned that the artist was working on his second novel, which might be the novel titled *b*, never completed, for which Warhol had begun making tape recordings in 1969.⁴³

At the outset of the 1980s, stories on Warhol and his life in the Italian edition of *Vogue* resonated with the artist's own way of presenting himself and contributed to his appreciation by the general public. This vision was distinct from attempts made in the previous decade to give his work a political or intellectual interpretation. Daniela Morera, a New York correspondent for *Vogue Italia* and the European editor of Warhol's magazine, *Interview*,⁴⁴ was a dear friend of the artist and authored insightful articles about him. In 1980, she described him as follows:

Vague? For sure, to the fool's eye. Instead, he has been collecting and cataloguing everything for years: recordings, photographs, video-tapes, furniture. ... Inattentive? But how could he be, if he's the first to catch the new waves, to acknowledge, simplify, manipulate, multiply them.⁴⁵

Ending with an excerpt of a recorded conversation,⁴⁶ not unlike some of the dialogues in *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, the article is illustrated by photographs of Warhol at the Factory, surrounded by paintings and copies of *Interview*, and having meetings, thus providing the perfect visual counterpart to the notion of 'business art' that the artist articulated in his philosophy book.

Two years later, Warhol posed as a model for a fashion shoot on the looks of 1982, embodying transformation as a sign of the culture of his time. Acting as a mannequin, the artist wore four outfits.⁴⁷ According to the accompanying caption, in the first photograph he presented 'how he would be for the whole of 1982'⁴⁸. He

⁴² 'Andy Warhol è tuttora l'artista più famoso d'America'; 'Se ne parla: Andy Warhol', *Vogue Italia*, 224, April 1970, 140-41.

⁴³ Lucy Mulroney, 'I'd Recognize Your Voice Anywhere: *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol* (from *A to B and Back Again*)', in *Reading Andy Warhol*, ed. Nina Schleif, Munich: Museum Brandhorst; Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2013, 281; see also Lucy Mulroney, *Andy Warhol, Publisher*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018, 122.

⁴⁴ Pat Hackett, ed., *The Andy Warhol Diaries*, New York: Warner Books, 1989, 3.

⁴⁵ 'Vago? All'occhio dello stolto, sì certo. Invece raccoglie e cataloga tutto, da anni: registrazioni, fotografie, video-tapes, mobili. ... Disattento? Ma se è proprio lui che capta per primo le nuove ondate, le recepisce, le semplifica, le manipola, le moltiplica'; Daniela Morera, 'Andy Warhol', *Vogue Italia*, 356, 15 March 1980, 538.

⁴⁶ Morera, 'Andy Warhol', 540-41.

⁴⁷ Daniela Morera, 'Andy Beauty', *Vogue Italia*, 385, February 1982, 316-19, 372.

⁴⁸ Morera, 'Andy Beauty', 316.

wore his signature ruffled wig and his own clothes—a travel jacket, a vest, a shirt, a bow tie, and blue jeans—and held a camera. In the vein of the process of self-construction undertaken in his philosophy, he impersonated himself, posing as the ‘wax mask’ that one writer had described some ten years earlier. This and the previous article by Morera in *Vogue Italia* shed light on the process of self-construction by means of which Warhol built up the public understanding of his personality by fusing ordinary life and the blatant construction of a public persona.

Retrospectively, it makes sense that *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol* was published in Italian only in the early 1980s. Compared to the efforts of Janus or Pasolini to provide a political or intellectual reading of *Ladies and Gentlemen* in the mid-1970s, just after the book was first published in English and at a time when social upheavals and political violence were spreading in Italy and impacting cultural life at large, the atmosphere at the start of the 1980s, which historians have characterized as the *riflusso nel privato*, meaning the return to a focus on private affairs after the crisis of the utopian ideals of revolution, could resonate with the artist’s attitude. With his typical nonchalance, the artist could combine references to the latest social situation in Italy and stereotypical ideas about Italians, asking Morera in 1980: ‘Do they still pinch your butt and kidnap people in Italy?’⁴⁹ In 1983, when *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol* came out, it was the first of his books to be translated into Italian (*POPism* had already been published in English by then). The book was mostly presented as a means of self-publicity for the artist. Back in 1975,

... the publicity materials circulated by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich [the publishing house of *The Philosophy* book] play on the reader’s desire to get the *real* Warhol. The spring catalog copy reflects Jovanovich’s first impression, contending that the book is not only ‘an incredible potpourri: astonishing, delighting, puzzling, funny’ but also, ‘above all, true.’ The brochure for the book, crafted to generate advance purchases from booksellers, went even further: ‘This surprisingly candid self- portrait reveals a shy, sensible, provocative, and often endearing personality for perhaps the first time ever.’⁵⁰

While the jacket of the 1975 book includes a frontal portrait of the artist shot by Philippe Halsman in 1968 (fig. 2), the cover of the Italian edition shows one of the photographs taken by Christopher Makos in 1981 depicting Warhol in drag (see fig. 1). His severe expression in the picture by Halsman resonates with the presumed seriousness of the book, which the emphatic presentation of the book’s truth in the front flap and the publicity materials emphasized. On the contrary, the image printed on the cover of the Italian edition showed the artist as an impersonator, thus

⁴⁹ ‘Ma in Italia continuano a pizzicarti il sedere e a fare rapimenti?’; Morera, ‘Andy Warhol’, 540.

⁵⁰ Mulroney, ‘I’d Recognize Your Voice Anywhere’, 276-77, and *Andy Warhol, Publisher*, 117. The quote from the press release of the publisher provided by Mulroney resonates with the text written in the front flap of the edition of 1975, which reads as follows: ‘The Philosophy of Andy Warhol is an incredible potpourri: sublimely irreverent, unfailingly funny—above all, true.’

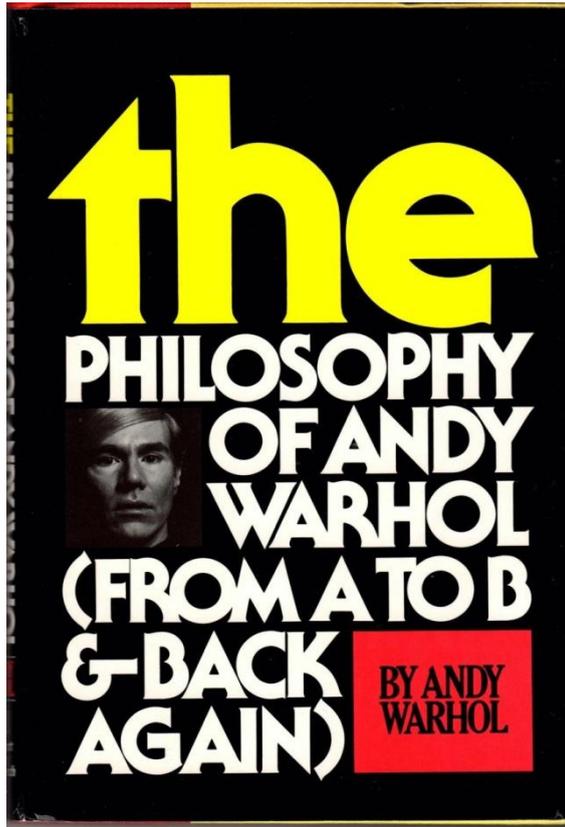


Figure 2 Cover, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975.

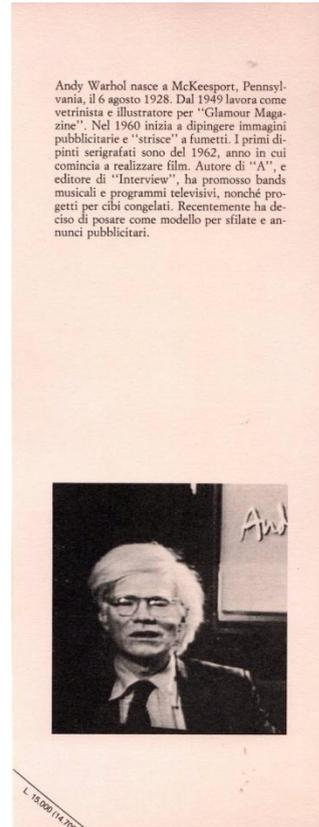


Figure 3 Back flap, *La Filosofia di Andy Warhol*, Genoa: Costa & Nolan, 1983.

alluding to the process of construction laying underneath the transcription of real-life recordings on which the book is partly based. Consistent with the aim to reveal the intent of the artist within a mediated society, the back flap contains a still from the cable TV show *Andy Warhol's T.V.*, which ran from 1980 to 1983 (fig. 3). The Italian edition pointed plainly to the literary process by virtue of which Warhol elaborated his persona. These photographs resonate with aspects of the somewhat obscure description printed on the front flap of the book, which reads as follows:

Employing the cynicism and aggressiveness typical of the most vulgar commerce, and unusual, maybe, to aesthetic research, Warhol treats art according to his monstrosity and success. He dives into the standardized totality of the consumer, and shamelessly seeks for survival in what is reproduced. He pushes the pedal of super-consumerism to the metal and circulates symbols and signs which help define the impermanence of an epoch. The ultra-American (but of Czechoslovak descent) Andy directed his attention to the cadaveric celebrity of 'stars', thus moving in the world of industrial stardom, in which the protagonists are food, sport, death, politics, sex, leftovers, and spectacular flesh. Each of his works has the image of a tombstone, planted with no dignity along the street where the market is located, where the avalanche of images and people symbolize the futility of any life conditions and the cancellation of any values. Even his 'Philosophy'

is configured as a still life. It buries art and Warhol himself under a mountain of ash (the colour of his hair and skin), so as to shatter the ultimate resistance of the aristocratic artist. If in fact death besieges art, then art kills itself. It builds an aesthetic and theoretical catafalque, which is a capital to be exhibited all over the world: a philosophical and sepulchral monument, rewarded for the sensation it causes.⁵¹

This description no doubt was written by the editor of the book series, Germano Celant. Passages in the text had been already employed in an essay on Pop art authored by Celant in the catalogue of an exhibition organized by the dealer and collector Attilio Codognato at Palazzo Grassi in Venice in 1980.⁵² The interpretation provided in the essay is twofold. On one hand, Celant addressed Pop art as an already historicized movement, within the broader history of the avant-garde tendencies emerging in American art in the post-war years. On the other hand, he identified Pop art with the end of the utopias of the modernist avant-garde, thus suggesting a connection with the contemporary moment. Embracing the crisis was part of the inherently artistic value of artists like Warhol, whose 'necrophilia', as Celant called it, responded to the end of individuality and the rise of standardization within an increasingly industrial and consumerist society.⁵³ At the turning point between a *memento mori* of the avant-garde and the avant-garde of *memento mori*,⁵⁴ Pop art resonated with the dissolution of 1960s utopias as envisioned by artists emerging in the 1980s. Celant considered it as the most deliberate act of survival of art, incorporating the sense of death implied by the endless consumption of a society devouring humanistic values (or even the images of them) at the fast pace of communication systems and industrial production.

The front cover flap of the Italian edition of *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol* articulated this same vision. Celant expanded the notion of the monstrosity of

⁵¹ 'Con un cinismo e un'aggressività tipici del più volgare commercio e atipici, forse, della ricerca estetica, Warhol tratta l'arte in funzione della sua mostruosità e del suo successo. Si immerge nella totalità standardizzata del consumatore e, senza vergogna, cerca una sopravvivenza nel riprodotto; schiaccia il pedale del superconsumismo e fa circolare i simboli e i segni che servono a misurare un'epoca come transitoria. Avendo orientato la sua attenzione verso la celebrità cadaverica delle "stars", l'arciamericano (ma di famiglia cecoslovacca) Andy si agita nel mondo del divismo industriale, dove protagonisti sono i cibi, lo sport, la morte, la politica, il sesso, i rifiuti e la carne spettacolare. Ogni suo lavoro tende ad assumere l'effigie di una lapide, piantata nella strada—senza dignità—del mercato, dove la valanga delle immagini e delle persone ricorda l'inutilità di ogni condizione e l'azzeramento di qualsiasi valore. Anche la sua "Filosofia" configura una natura morta. Essa seppellisce l'arte e Warhol stesso sotto una montagna di cenere (il colore dei suoi capelli e della sua pelle), così da frantumare le ultime resistenze dell'artista aristocratico. Se infatti la morte assedia l'arte, l'arte si dà la morte. Si costruisce un catafalco estetico e teorico, che è un capitale da esporre in tutto il mondo: un'arca filosofica e sepolcrale, retribuita per la sua spettacolarità'; Andy Warhol, *La Filosofia di Andy Warhol*, Genoa: Costa & Nolan, 1983, front book jacket flap.

⁵² Germano Celant, 'Il congelatore pop, memento mori dell'avanguardia', in *Pop Art: evoluzione di una generazione*, ed. Attilio Codognato, Milan: Electa Editrice, 1980, 24, 25, 27, 28.

⁵³ Celant, 'Il congelatore pop', 22.

⁵⁴ Celant, 'Il congelatore pop', 26.

society, which Pop art represented from within, and applied it to the process of making art and building narratives developed by Warhol through his strategies of self-publicity. The notion of still life, which Celant identified the book with, resonates with the perceived stillness and lifelessness of the practice of the artist.

La Filosofia di Andy Warhol inaugurated a book series that eschewed literary genres and spanned a diverse range of subjects. The notion embedded in the name of the series, *I turbamenti dell'arte*, was broad enough to apply to publications addressing the social and cultural crisis through perspectives which hardly fit within traditional methodological categories. The Italian 'turbamento' can be translated into English in various ways. The 1986 edition of the English-Italian dictionary compiled by Robert C. Melzi in 1976 listed the following translations under the entry 'turbamento': 'commotion, perturbation, disturbance, breach (of laws and order).'⁵⁵ Its meaning encompasses the crisis's sense of collective turmoil and private disquiet and unease. Significantly, Celant had already used the word with regard to Warhol in the essay published in 1980, in which he defined the artist as the 'Marx' of Pop art, 'who celebrates the lame character, the wheeler-dealer, the star, the businessman, the model, the boxer, the rock singer and introduces the disturbance [*turbamento*] of disengagement and glamour into the politically correct system of art.'⁵⁶

The books that followed *La Filosofia di Andy Warhol* in the *I turbamenti dell'arte* series include a socio-cultural study of subculture by Dick Hebdige, an alternative reading of the infrastructural environment of Los Angeles by Reyner Banham, and an analysis of modernist avant-garde film and painting by the experimental filmmaker and scholar Standish D. Lawder.⁵⁷ The series attests to Celant's variety of interests at that time, reflected in his aim to compose a scattered panorama of fragmented insights, resonating with the sense of lost unity of a moment of transition in Italian culture around 1980. The name of Warhol resurfaced in the fifth book of the collection, titled *Vite d'avanguardia* [Avant-Garde Life], by the art critic Calvin Tomkins, which was released in 1983 as well. In the book, Celant gathered translations of interviews by Tomkins with six protagonists of the New York art scene, published between 1964 and 1980, including a conversation with Warhol that was first published in 1970.⁵⁸ Since the early 1970s, Celant envisioned

⁵⁵ Robert C. Melzi, *The Bantam New College Italian & English Dictionary*, Toronto, New York, London, Sydney, Auckland: Bantam Books, 1986, 349.

⁵⁶ '... esalta il personaggio laido, l'affarista, il divo, il businessman, l'indossatore, il pugile, il rock singer ed immette nel sistema benpensante dell'arte il turbamento del disimpegno e del glamour'; Celant, 'Il congelatore pop', 22.

⁵⁷ Dick Hebdige, *Sottocultura: Il fascino di uno stile*, Genoa: Costa & Nolan, 1983 (originally published as *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1979); Reyner Banham, *Los Angeles: l'architettura di quattro ecologie*, Genoa: Costa & Nolan, 1983 (originally published as *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies*, London: Allen Lane, 1971); Standish Lawder, *Il cinema cubista*, Genoa: Costa & Nolan, 1983 (originally published as *The Cubist Cinema*, New York: New York University Press, 1975).

⁵⁸ Calvin Tomkins, *Vite d'avanguardia: John Cage, Leo Castelli, Christo, Merce Cunningham, Philip Johnson, Andy Warhol*, Genoa: Costa & Nolan, 1983, 229-49 (originally published as 'Raggedy Andy', in *Andy Warhol*, ed. John Coplans, Greenwich: New York Graphic Society, 1970, 8-14, reprinted in Calvin Tomkins, *The Scene: Reports on Post-Modern Art*, New York: Viking Press,

the role of the art critic as a means to support and be sympathetic with contemporary artists, rather than being a distant and normative interpreter of their work.⁵⁹ The format of Tomkins' long interviews resonated with Celant's approach. In Celant's introduction to the collection of interviews, he stated explicitly his desire to reassert the centrality of the life experience of the artist and the interconnectedness between art and biography in the spirit of the tradition of Giorgio Vasari, as opposed to the latest formalist tendencies in Italian art history and criticism of separating the analysis of art from the biography of its creator.⁶⁰ Celant found in Tomkins' interviews an embodiment of his own goals as a critic.

La Filosofia di Andy Warhol was presented as the culmination of the process of identifying the work with the biography of an artist. In this respect, the omission of the English subtitle, (*From A to B and Back Again*), in the Italian edition might be interpreted as a 'betrayal' of the original intentions of the author and the American publisher, in the resulting focus on the individuality of the artist rather than on the conversation between two people, 'A' and 'B', through which the artist articulated his philosophy.⁶¹ Far from being an assertion of superficiality, the translation of 'Nothingness Himself' as 'Nulla in Persona' turned the self-presentation in the first chapter of the book into a statement resonating with the present condition, undermining the very essence of the notion of nothingness applied to the figure of the artist in general, midway between the feeling of a broader crisis of the artist's social role and the ultimate attempt to survive as an individual by impersonating a character.⁶²

One year before the release of the Italian version of *Philosophy*, Warhol underscored the interconnectedness of art and life, on which his vision was based, by articulating the notion of repetitiveness vis-à-vis the seriality of the paintings of Giorgio de Chirico. Interviewed by Achille Bonito Oliva on the occasion of an exhibition of his paintings after de Chirico held at the New York gallery of the Italian dealer Marisa Del Re, the artist stated:

1976, 35-53).

⁵⁹ Two examples of this approach are a monograph on Giulio Paolini, which incorporates a long conversation between the artist and the critic (Germano Celant, *Giulio Paolini*, New York: Sonnabend Press, 1972), and the catalogue of a retrospective of Mario Merz organized at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, in which Celant gathered four major interviews that the artist gave to him at different times (Germano Celant, ed., *Mario Merz*, New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Foundation, 1989, 45-55, 104-10, 178-82, 228-30).

⁶⁰ Tomkins, *Vite d'avanguardia*, 1983, front book jacket flap. On the lineage of the artist interview from previous writings on art, including Vasari's biographies of artists, see Wolf, 'The Artist Interview: An Elusive History', 15-16, 20. Wolf also refers to the research on the subject of the interconnectedness between artist's work and life, relevant here, in Gabriele Guercio, *Art as Existence: The Artist's Monograph and Its Project*, Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2006.

⁶¹ Mulroney, 'I'd Recognize Your Voice Anywhere', 278, and *Andy Warhol, Publisher*, 119.

⁶² Warhol, *La Filosofia di Andy Warhol*, 13-14. The original reads as follows: 'Some critic called me the Nothingness Himself and that didn't help my sense of existence any. Then I realized that existence itself is nothing and I felt better. But I'm still obsessed with the idea of looking into the mirror and seeing no one, nothing'; Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, 7.

I love his art, and then the idea he repeated the same paintings over and over again. I like that idea a lot, so I thought it would be great to do it. ... Most artists repeat themselves throughout their lives. Isn't life a repetition of events. ... Isn't life a series of images that change as they repeat themselves?⁶³

The admiration for de Chirico, whom the artist had met in New York in 1972, is a main chapter in the story of the connections between Warhol and Italy.⁶⁴

Indeed, Italy holds a special place in *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, more than other foreign countries. Sometimes the artist made humorous remarks on the personality and habits of the Italians.⁶⁵ Elsewhere, he recounted memories of experiences he had in Italy: he recalled feeling small before the huge statues of the Mussolini Stadium (which the Italian translators opted to translate innocuously as 'Foro Italico');⁶⁶ an anecdote from his stay in the town of Boissano in Liguria was a sign of his popularity in the country;⁶⁷ the entire eleventh chapter is devoted to memories of his stay in Rome while he was playing a cameo as a British aristocrat alongside Liz Taylor in the film *The Driver's Seat* (known in Italian as *Identikit*), realized in 1974 by the director Giuseppe Patroni Griffi;⁶⁸ he discussed his stay in Turin, upon the invitation of Luciano Anselmino, probably in August 1974, when he was asked to sign portraits of Man Ray and started to think about *Ladies and Gentlemen*.⁶⁹

No information is available concerning the translators of the book, Rino Ponte and Fernando Ferretti, who apparently did not go on to translate other books. The major challenge was to capture the colloquial, ordinary, sometimes trivial tone and language of the original. The result was less than successful in conveying this voice. It is not necessarily the fault of the translators. Some expressions are impossible to render in Italian: for instance, 'young-and-with-it' and 'butterboy'

⁶³ Achille Bonito Oliva, 'Industrial Metaphysics: Interview with Andy Warhol', *Warhol verso de Chirico*, Milan: Electa; New York: Marisa Del Rey Gallery, 1982, 49, 52, 53.

⁶⁴ The two artists most likely met for the first time at the opening of de Chirico's retrospective at the New York Cultural Center, on 9 January 1972. The circumstances were recalled by the painter Gerard Tempest, who studied with de Chirico in Rome; see Michael Taylor, 'A Conversation with Gerard Tempest', *Giorgio de Chirico and the Myth of Ariadne*, London: Merrell; Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2002, 185. On the encounter between Warhol and de Chirico and how the latter inspired Warhol's art, see the video of the lecture on the subject given by Neil Printz at the Center for Italian Modern Art on 21 June 2017: <https://vimeo.com/251394388>.

⁶⁵ Warhol, *La Filosofia di Andy Warhol*, 45, 127-128; *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, 50, 157.

⁶⁶ Warhol, *La Filosofia di Andy Warhol*, 55; *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, 63.

⁶⁷ Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, 79-80. In the summer of 1974, the artist was a guest of the dealer Marie Louise Jeanneret, who ran a gallery in Boissano. On that occasion, Jeanneret convinced the collector and artist Guglielmo Achille Cavellini to pose for a portrait; Guglielmo Achille Cavellini, *1946- 1976: incontri/scontri nella giungla dell'arte*, Brescia: Shakespeare, 1977, 167.

⁶⁸ Warhol, *La Filosofia di Andy Warhol*, 97, 133-40; see *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, 115, 165-72.

⁶⁹ Warhol, *La Filosofia di Andy Warhol*, 151-58; see *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, 189-96.

(being a mama's boy) were transformed into the more generic 'giovane-e-moderna' and 'patata molla';⁷⁰ the assonance of 'either partridge or porridge' could not be kept by translating the words as *pernici* and *polenta*.⁷¹ A few words and phrases were misinterpreted, including Philly (taken as a name of a person instead of a nickname for the city of Philadelphia),⁷² vulgar slang, such as 'blow-job', translated as 'un lavoro del cazzo',⁷³ the sentence 'I want my machinery to disappear',⁷⁴ the word 'comedians',⁷⁵ and the name of the fashion designer Halston, made plural to designate a couple.⁷⁶

Sometimes, adjustments were necessary due to differences in grammatical construction between English and Italian. For instance, the ambiguity of the construction of a negative sentence in Italian, which often implies a double negation, especially in spoken language, resulted in bracketing in single inverted commas the word 'niente', the translation for nothing, in the exhortation to think about nothing which A gives to B, while no such punctuation was needed in the original version.⁷⁷ Elsewhere, the gender neutral of English words couldn't be kept in Italian, so the word 'date' was translated as 'compagno', thus specifying the male gender.

A few major edits betrayed the spirit of the original book. The book alludes to the power of the media to transcend the physical limits of space with this remark: 'People, I think, are the only things that know how to take up more space than the space they're actually in.'⁷⁸ The translators omitted the association of people and things and just kept the reference to people, thus humanizing the indifference expressed by the artist: 'Gli uomini credo siano gli unici che sanno come prendersi più spazio di quello che occupano'.⁷⁹ In another passage, the description of the loneliness of living in the city, split between sitting alone in big rooms and squeezed in crowded subway cars or elevators, is oversimplified in the translation, which entirely omits the contrast of big empty rooms to small crowded spaces.⁸⁰

The major misinterpretation concerns the presence of the tape recorder in the narration. The tape recorder is notoriously presented as Warhol's 'wife' near the

⁷⁰ Warhol, *La Filosofia di Andy Warhol*, 27, 93; *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, 25, 111.

⁷¹ Warhol, *La Filosofia di Andy Warhol*, 87; see *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, 101.

⁷² Warhol, *La Filosofia di Andy Warhol*, 32; see *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, 34.

⁷³ Warhol, *La Filosofia di Andy Warhol*, 50; see *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, 55.

⁷⁴ Translated as if the author looked for a machine to disappear; Warhol, *La Filosofia di Andy Warhol*, 95, and *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, 113.

⁷⁵ In Warhol, *La Filosofia di Andy Warhol*, 96, the word is intended as a generic reference to people of show-business attending night-clubs, instead of the professionals entertaining onstage the attendees of night-clubs to whom Warhol referred in the original version; *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, 114.

⁷⁶ Warhol, *La Filosofia di Andy Warhol*, 141; see *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, 177.

⁷⁷ 'La cosa importante è pensare a "niente", B. Guarda, "niente" è eccitante, "niente" è sexy, "niente" non è imbarazzante' (Warhol, *La Filosofia di Andy Warhol*, 15); 'The thing is to think of nothing, B. Look, nothing is exciting, nothing is sexy, nothing is not embarrassing' (*The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, 9).

⁷⁸ Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, 146.

⁷⁹ Warhol, *La Filosofia di Andy Warhol*, 116.

⁸⁰ Warhol, *La Filosofia di Andy Warhol*, 124-25; see *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, 154.

beginning of the book.⁸¹ However, a few references to this ‘wife’ were omitted by the translators, who thus failed to recognize the importance of the tape recorder in Warhol’s art, life, and self-fashioning.⁸² The employment of the tape recorder was definitely unclear to the translators, even though the artist recounted in detail the story of the use of it to create his novel, *a*, within the sixth chapter of *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*.⁸³ For instance, the sentence, ‘I was organizing some transcripts’, which surfaces in a passage of the book describing an ordinary moment of life and work, is rendered as ‘stavo progettando delle riproduzioni’ in the Italian edition, meaning ‘I was planning some reproductions’.⁸⁴

Such a misleading interpretation might be attributed to the inexperience of the translators rather than a general lack of familiarity in Italy with Warhol’s process of making books. In fact, his books were reviewed in Italy almost concurrently as in the United States. The critic Tommaso Trini wrote an extensive review of *a: A Novel* for the art and architecture magazine *Domus* in 1969, the year after the book was published. He praised it as the ultimate version of a nonfiction novel and as a quintessential example of underground experimentation. Acknowledging that Warhol didn’t simply use the tape recorder, but turned it into the protagonist of the narration, Trini concluded as follows:

Today, as is well-known, a novel can’t help but be the story of its own making. And Warhol provides us with a novel which makes itself. If a product of nonfiction-novel ever existed, this is it. One more truth is added, though: reality can be stimulated, after all, and life fabricated at the very moment.⁸⁵

Trini aligned film, art, and literature as three means of expression equally defining Warhol’s practice. In this respect, the sense of indifference emanating from his look was interpreted as the result of the objectivity through which the artist reasserted the centrality of media and mediation in his vision of the world and ‘identified art, the product of art, with the techniques of mediation and the methods of instrumentalisation’.⁸⁶ Trini disputed that the book could be included in the genre of autobiography, the patent sense of real life of recording and transcribing being a self-reflective act of mediation, by virtue of which the character of Ondine ‘becomes the Leopold Bloom “tape recorder-sized” in this *Ulysses* of American paranoia’.⁸⁷

⁸¹ Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, 26-27.

⁸² See, for instance, the end of the episode in Rome in the eleventh chapter, where it’s written that ‘My wife was running low and I was tired’; Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, 172. The translators identified the wife with B; Warhol, *La Filosofia di Andy Warhol*, 140.

⁸³ Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, 94-95.

⁸⁴ Warhol, *La Filosofia di Andy Warhol*, 141; *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, 177.

⁸⁵ ‘Oggi, si sa, un romanzo non può essere che la storia del suo farsi. E Warhol ci dà un romanzo che si fa. Se mai si è avuto un prodotto della letteratura-verità, questo è uno. Ma con una verità in più: che la realtà può essere stimolata, dopo tutto, e la vita fabbricata sul momento’; Tommaso Trini, ‘Deus ex recording’, *Domus*, 476, July 1969, 49.

⁸⁶ ‘... identificare l’arte, il prodotto d’arte, con le tecniche di mediazione e i metodi di strumentalizzazione’; Trini, ‘Deus ex recording’, 50.

⁸⁷ ‘... diventa il Leopold Bloom formato magnetofono di questo *Ulysses* della paranoia

This interpretation was likewise applied to *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, which also was reviewed in Italy soon after the American edition was published. The art critic Gregory Battcock reviewed it as the New York correspondent for *Domus*.⁸⁸ He presented it as the most accomplished product of the art of Warhol, in which he articulated his interest in trivia to the fullest extent, thus subverting conventions, as he had already done in painting and film. The fragmentary associations on which the book is based 'is deliberate, calculated anti-literary tampering with the principles of formal narration, stream-of-consciousness abstraction and conventional data distribution'.⁸⁹ In this respect, Battcock dismissed the association made by Trini, regarding *a: A Novel*, with the literature of stream-of-consciousness. According to Battcock, one would expect a thorough and serious investigation of trivia from a book which includes the word 'philosophy' in the title, as opposed to the term 'novel' appearing in the title of *a*: 'If Warhol were more serious, more careful, more deliberate, his efforts to enhance the trivial would be more effective. Within a context of seriousness, even fake seriousness or pomposity or self-righteousness or self-deprecation, the search for trivia would result in more amusing, lively, less obvious and predictable, results.'⁹⁰

The final doubt expressed by Battcock, concerning a lack of the seriousness which one might expect from a book of philosophy, and the resulting sense of disorientation and discomfort in reading it, could probably be listed among the reasons why the Italian translation of *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol* apparently received almost no reviews. The reception of the original edition of the book also disappointed Warhol for being less substantial than he had expected, according to the artist's diaries.⁹¹ With regards to the reception in Italy, one might argue that the artist was already so famous by 1983, that the book would not have made an impact on his popularity there in any case.

Nonetheless, the context of the publication of the *Philosophy* book in Italian might have impacted its reception, too. As the review in *Domus* attests, the original book circulated at the time of its release, thanks to several tours undertaken by the artist in the following months, which also led him to Italy for the *Ladies and Gentleman* exhibition in Ferrara. In fact, the book was already quoted in reviews of this exhibition.⁹² Perhaps since the original version already was familiar to critics and readers, the release of the Italian edition would have seemed unnoteworthy. In addition, the book was published by a relatively new publishing house and was included within a miscellaneous series. Despite Germano Celant's likely intent to introduce alternative methods of cultural inquiry in Italy, his book series probably did not facilitate the circulation of the book, which was written up briefly in the above-mentioned column of book and music reviews in *Domus*, and apparently

american'; Trini, 'Deus ex recording', 50.

⁸⁸ Gregory Battcock, 'Warhol: un libro. À la recherche du temps trivial, the philosophy of Andy Warhol', *Domus*, 553, December 1975, 52.

⁸⁹ Battcock, 'Warhol: un libro', 52.

⁹⁰ Battcock, 'Warhol: un libro', 52.

⁹¹ Hackett, *The Andy Warhol Diaries*, 223.

⁹² Flavio Caroli, 'Il cinico Andy Warhol da Marilyn ai travestiti. Dollari come arte', *Corriere della sera*, 26 October 1975, 16.

nothing more.⁹³ However, even if it was not widely acclaimed at the moment of its release, the book reinvigorated the reception of the artist in Italy. It was regularly mentioned as a fixture, as attested by the news story on the presence of Warhol in Milan in conjunction with an exhibition of his portraits of Italian fashion designers at Galleria Rizzardi in October 1983, which was published in *Vogue Italia*.⁹⁴

The figure and art of Warhol has always generated diverging and controversial reactions in Italy – as elsewhere – and this was also the case with the *Philosophy* book, whose long-term reception was not entirely positive.⁹⁵ In 1990, three years after Warhol's death, a major travelling retrospective organized by Kynaston McShine landed at Palazzo Grassi in Venice. A majority of the reviews were positive, yet for different and often problematic reasons, and a few were negative.⁹⁶ Among the latter, the negative assessment by the artist Enrico Baj, which included a pronouncement on *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, stood out for its harsh tone.

Baj's review appeared in the political and cultural magazine *MicroMega*, which was founded in 1986 to give voice to debates among leftist intellectuals. Baj was four years older than Warhol and had been a protagonist in Italian art since the post-war years. A commitment to social issues and politically engaged themes often characterized his practice and informed his view of Warhol. Baj's review was nothing less than an attack on the entire body of Warhol's work and the system of economic and cultural promotion surrounding him. In the title, Warhol was defined as 'bidone', meaning a scam, a fraud.⁹⁷ The review shows how a part of the leftist side of Italian culture found the sense of disengagement that the artist deliberately embodied throughout all his life to be unacceptable. Baj couldn't help but read *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol* as the manifesto of this attitude and dismiss it as 'a compendium and a compilation of cretinism'.⁹⁸

Baj's article should be considered as the expression of a cultural and intellectual niche rather than a veritable representation of the general debates on Warhol and his problematic legacy in the 1980s, a subject which is tied to the translation of his words into Italian and could extend further beyond the scope of the present article. In any case, despite the lack of reviews of the *La Filosofia di Andy Warhol*, the book definitely penetrated into the multifaceted reception of the artist and was well known by a broad range of commentators, from the most prominent

⁹³ Nives Ciardi, review in 'Libri e dischi', *Domus*, 641, July 1983, 81.

⁹⁴ Silvana Bernasconi, 'Andy Warhol il grande replicante', *Vogue Italia*, 406, January 1984, 338.

⁹⁵ On divergent opinions of Warhol in Germany, as rooted in the ideas of the so-called Frankfurt School, see the article by Nina Schleif in the present issue of the *Journal of Art Historiography*.

⁹⁶ Among the positive reviews, see Fabrizio d'Amico, 'Non è Warhol senza Warhol', *La Repubblica*, 24 February 1990, 32; Dario Micacchi, 'Al Circo Warhol', *L'Unità*, 67: 46, 24 February 1990, 17; Claudio Savonuzzi, 'Andy Warhol a Venezia il grande travestito in 280 opere', *La Stampa Tuttolibri*, 15: 692, 24 February 1990, 9; Lea Vergine, 'Andy Warhol, angelo della morte', *Corriere della Sera*, 24 February 1990, 3. The positive note in the report on the Biennale by the dealer Lucio Amelio in *Domus* is noteworthy, too; Lucio Amelio, 'La Biennale di Venezia 1990', *Domus*, 718, July 1990, 66.

⁹⁷ Enrico Baj, 'Un bidone chiamato Warhol', *MicroMega. Le ragioni della sinistra*, 2, 1990, 65-76.

⁹⁸ 'Un compendio e un concentrato di cretineria'; Baj, 'Un bidone chiamato Warhol', 67.

critics of the new avant-garde to the journalists reporting on social life. It confirmed the perceived contradictions surrounding Warhol's art and life, as the diverse references to the book within the discussions of the artist's work throughout the years attested. The errors in translating what was meant to be a very basic English language, and the rather obscure interpretation of the twofold status of Pop art and Warhol's role provided by Celant in relation to the book, somehow confirm the sense of disorientation that has often imbued the reception of the book. The ambiguous status of the book, midway between the merely autobiographical record of moments in the artist's life and the literary construction of a new genre of memoir, in which identities and roles mingle and overlap, resonated with and corroborated the general perception of the ambiguity and elusiveness of Warhol, the artist hiding behind a 'wax mask'.

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