

Warhol in translation, Stockholm 1968: 'many works and few motifs'

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In the cold Stockholm winter of 1968, Moderna Museet presented the first major one-person exhibition of Andy Warhol (1928–1987) outside the USA. Showcasing Warhol's screen-printed Flower and Electric Chair paintings, and Marilyn prints, film screenings of *Chelsea Girls* (1966) and a mountain of 500 Brillo boxes, the exhibition received intense attention. The exterior of the museum building, ornamented with repetitive patterns of the artist's Cow Wallpaper, evoked the show's fundamental rhetoric and translation of Warhol's work. A selection of statements by Warhol, in both English and translated into Swedish, was printed in the first fourteen pages of the exhibition catalogue, as the publication's only text. The catalogue, brilliantly designed, featuring a graphic version of Warhol Flower paintings on the cover repeated in four rows of three, contained black-and-white photos of Warhol and his associates, and was (and still is) considered by many to be an art object in itself. The exhibition still echoes in the art world as much as it has been a part of the narrative of Pop art's soft power invasion of Europe, with its blunt presentation of Pop art imagery and underground culture. It has been argued that the Warhol show flopped in Sweden due to a politicised climate which created a lack of space for a 'more complex view on Warhol's relation to consumption'.¹ John-Peter Nilsson has discussed the Warhol show in relation to the politically loaded atmosphere of Spring 1968, rightly suggesting that it was understood within this context.² This essay, drawing upon the conceptualization of translation connected to ideas of cultural transfer, continues along this line and suggests further that

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¹ Quoted from Willem De Rooij, 'Willem de Rooij on Andy Warhol', <https://www.modernamuseet.se/stockholm/en/exhibitions/andy-warhol-other-voices-other-rooms/willem-de-rooij-on-the-andy-wa/>, republished from *Andy Warhol: A Guide to 706 items in 2 Hours 56 Minutes, Other Voices, Other Rooms*, ed. Eva Meyer-Hermann, Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2007, 02:31:00.

² 'Essay by John Peter Nilsson, Curator', <https://www.modernamuseet.se/malmo/en/exhibitions/warhol-1968/essa-av-curator-john-peter-nilsson/>. Nilsson was the curator of the exhibition *Warhol 1968* held at Moderna Museet in 2018–2019, itself a kind of translation of the 1968 show.

'repetition' was the feature that was translated and coded, and deeply resonated within the Swedish art scene of the time.

French historian Michel Espagne, with his research group, developed the concept of cultural transfer, with the fundamental view that the original context is lost when a cultural object is transferred. Espagne sees cultural transfer as translation in that it relates to a 'passage from a code to new code'.³ Clearly, an exhibition is a cultural object that can be viewed as translated, coded, and in need to be studied from the point of its destination; it is not simply as just transferred from the departure point to any other cultural position in an untouched, original guise. In order to grasp the often-complex relations that are at play, it is necessary to combine an understanding of global structures of art in transfer with attention to local circumstances, to follow Polish art historian Piotr Piotrowski.⁴ In the case of the presentation of Warhol at Moderna Museet in 1968, verbal as well as visual 'texts' were translated. Viewing the exhibition and its translations with a departure point in Espagne's concept of translation as coded allows us to see beyond its more obvious content of American popular and underground culture, allegedly rejected by the Stockholm art scene.

Pop art is maybe the most obvious subject for discussions of cultural transfer from the US to Europe during the post-war era, as Pop art often was seen as exporting American culture and imagery per se—for good or for bad, depending on the context. Espagne's call for the need to acknowledge several spaces of meaning simultaneously leads to looking at the actual choices of foci, in this case, of the North European pole of this transmission. This approach will help distinguish the curatorial programme from the reception, the historiography from the actors' statements, and thereby open up a reading of this exhibition as a situation where some aspects of Warhol's art and ideas were translated and coded in ways that resonated profoundly.

Late 1960s Stockholm was a particular space of meaning. When investigating the Warhol exhibition in Stockholm, a consideration of how it was translated to and coded in the local context provides a fresh understanding of its reception. *Multikonst*, of 1967, one of the largest art and media projects in Sweden and maybe in Europe of the time, created a favourable space for the appreciation of some fundamental aspects of Andy Warhol's work. Coming just after *Multikonst*, the Warhol show in fact resonated in an already well-funded and ongoing cultural practice about media, repetition, democracy and art reproduction.

Moderna Museet opened in 1958. Even though the museum presented a well-balanced mix of European high modernism and Swedish early avant-garde and contemporary art, the American-related exhibitions shown during the first ten years, such as *Movement in Art* (1961), *American Pop Art: 106 Forms of Love and*

³ 'Un transfer culturel est une sorte de traduction puisqu'il correspond au passage d'un code à nouveau code'; Michel Espagne, *Les transferts culturels franco-allemands*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1999, 8.

⁴ Piotr Piotrowski, 'On the Spatial Turn, or Horizontal Art History', *Umění*, 56: 5, 2008, 378-83. For further discussion and cases of how this dual approach can be productive, see Annika Öhrner, ed., *Art in Transfer in the Era of Pop*, Stockholm: Södertörn Academic Studies, 2017.

Despair (1964), and *Claes Oldenburg: Sculptures and Drawings* (1966), marked its reputation.⁵ *American Pop Art* was a cultural event in Stockholm, reported in international journals such as *Art International* while also exposing the Swedish audience to the new American movement. It was an exhibition that partly showcased aspects already visible in art produced by Swedish artists, such as the imagery of comics.⁶ The work of Andy Warhol was included in the show, as was that of Roy Lichtenstein, Claes Oldenburg, James Rosenquist, George Segal and Tom Wesselmann.⁷

Before the museum was established, some of the group shows of American art sent to Europe to impose a 'soft power' had been presented in Sweden.⁸ Moderna Museet did not, however, work with the Museum of Modern Art in New York and other official US bodies. Instead, two factors, in addition to the museum's orientation and ambitions for a position within the European art scene, coincided with and served to realise these projects.⁹ First of all, key figures in the art market had a strategy to develop among European collectors an interest in Pop art, and in supporting shows in museums such as Moderna Museet, helped to legitimise the art for collectors. Pontus Hultén worked closely with the Sonnabend, Castelli and Green galleries as well as with collectors who already were acquiring Pop art.¹⁰

Secondly, as so often, networking, support and loyalty between artists played a role in realising complex transatlantic art projects such as these shows. Two Swedish artists, Öyvind Fahlström and P.O. Ultvedt, participated in the pivotal *New Realists* exhibition at the Sidney Janis Gallery in 1962. Fahlström and the painter Barbro Östlihn, his wife, were among the few European artists who, as early as 1961, had settled in Manhattan. Ultvedt, on the other hand, was a more temporary visitor. Having made friends with Robert Rauschenberg during his visit to Stockholm for the *Movement in Art* exhibition in 1961, Fahlström and Östlihn moved in Rauschenberg's circle and were offered use of his Front Street studio. Claes and Pat Oldenburg as well as James Rosenquist were also their friends. Oldenburg was a native Swede and Rosenquist was of Swedish descent. Another Swede, Billy Klüver, an engineer and researcher at Bell Laboratories, played an important role in the

⁵ On Moderna Museet's exhibition history, see Anna Tellgren, ed., *The History Book: On Moderna Museet 1958-2008*, Stockholm: Moderna Museet and Göttingen: Steidl, 2008, and Anna Tellgren, ed., *Pontus Hultén and Moderna Museet. The Formative Years*, Stockholm: Moderna Museet; London: Koenig Books, 2017.

⁶ On early Swedish 'pre-American' Pop art, see Annika Öhrner, 'Hillersberg i tiden', in Lars Hillersberg, *Entreprenör och provokatör*, ed. Andreas Berg, Stockholm: Ordfront, 2013, 104-24. Examples of Öyvind Fahlström (1928-1976), Lars Hillersberg (1937-2004), Berndt Pettersson (1930-2002) and others using comics in their work are found from at least the late 1950s.

⁷ Annika Öhrner, 'On the Construction of Pop Art. When American Pop Arrived in Stockholm in 1964', in Öhrner, *Art in Transfer*, 127-61.

⁸ Examples are *12 Contemporary Painters and Sculptors* (1953), and *American Primitive Painting* (1955), both shown at Liljevalchs konsthall, Stockholm. For a full account of American exhibitions in Sweden in the 1950s and 1960s, see Öhrner, 'On the Construction of Pop Art', 162-63.

⁹ Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983.

¹⁰ Öhrner, 'On the Construction of Pop Art', 127-61.

connections between Moderna Museet and the Manhattan scene. As the museum's point person in Manhattan, he, among other things, recruited the Americans to participate in the *Movement in Art* exhibition. He also worked closely with Andy Warhol, Robert Rauschenberg, Jean Tinguely and other artists to find technical solutions to their art. On top of that, he was a co-founder in 1967 of Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.). Catherine Dossin, in her quantitative study of the presence of American art in Europe, has claimed that it was not just the result of single actions or a few gallerists' strategies but of 'the strategic imperatives of the general apparatus of Europe's "urgent need" for recognition'.¹¹

'Many works and few motifs'

How was the object of translation—the 1968 Warhol show with its exhibits, catalogue and graphic design—curatorially coded at the space of its destination? The young art historian Olle Granath, who acted as the local curator, working together with its team members—in addition to Warhol himself, Pontus Hultén, Billy Klüver, and Kasper König—later described its fundamental curatorial guideline: 'One of the basic themes was repetition; there were to be many works and few motifs'.¹² Thus, repetition was the concept within which the coding of the translation was performed, as we shall see. Moderna Museet, situated on the island of Skeppsholmen in the middle of Stockholm, faces the Royal Palace on the other side of the inner bay of the Baltic known as Strömmen. When approaching the museum, the visitor was greeted by Warhol's Cow Wallpaper, a repeating motif of a bright pink cow on a yellow ground covering the west-facing façade of the building, a former navy drill hall. Before following the visitor into the exhibition room itself, we turn to the catalogue.

What struck any reader of the Warhol catalogue of 1968 is the highlighting of translation, through Warhol's twenty-seven quotations, each one followed by its Swedish version, many of which have since become emblematic of Warhol. Filling the catalogue's first fourteen pages, the quotations formed the first section and the only verbal content. These pages were followed by three chapters of illustrations, the first one featuring Warhol's work, meant to serve as what Granath would describe as the exhibition's 'retrospective content'. Thus, the retrospective content of

¹¹ Catherine Dossin, *The Rise and Fall of American Art, 1940s-1980s: A Geopolitics of Western Art Worlds*, New York: Ashgate, 2015, 10.

¹² Olle Granath was later to become the museum's director, from 1980–1989. My description of the 1968 Warhol show at Moderna Museet relies on the following publications: Olle Granath, 'With Andy Warhol 1968', in *Andy Warhol: A Guide to 706 Items in 2 Hours 56 Minutes*, 00:10:00-00:13:00, available online at <https://www.modernamuseet.se/stockholm/en/exhibitions/andy-warhol-other-voices-other-rooms/with-andy-warhol-1968-text-ol/>; 'Essay by John Peter Nilsson, Curator'; and Natalie Musteata, 'Odd Walls, Even Pages: Andy Warhol as Curator and Editor', in *Andy Warhol Exhibits a Glittering Alternative*, ed. Marianne Dobner, exh. cat., Vienna: mumok, Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, 2020, 109-40, as well as documentary photographs from the Moderna Museet archive and reviews in the daily press. Olle Granath was later to become the museum's director.

the exhibition was photographic rather than presented by the works on view. Here the presentation of the works emphasised repetition, a feature of both the artworks themselves and of the manner in which they were reproduced, with some works repeated on several pages. This section was followed by photos by Billy Name and Stephen Shore of life at the Factory. Name's were more informal snapshots, whereas Shore's were more formally arranged. These photos depicted a space of gay desire, young men and a few iconic blonde females. The concept behind the repetitive flow of imagery in the catalogue, as with the exhibition, was to create a sense of 'many works and few motifs'.¹³

Seven of the Warhol sentences in the catalogue were picked for exhibition posters, printed just in English in black on white paper.¹⁴ They were followed by the name of the museum and its location, 'Stockholm, Sweden', with the exhibition title and dates, all given the same space and font. The art director John Melin (1921–1992), who had designed a number of the museum's exhibition posters and catalogues, had, along with Gösta Svensson, produced the typography and graphic design. The publication was printed at the printing offices of the southern Swedish daily newspaper *Sydsvenska Dagbladet*, using the same thin paper.¹⁵ By repeating the same graphic expression in the poster, the museum itself was highlighted and equated with Warhol's now-famous sentences, written in bold lettering: it became associated with something new, fresh and important – with a media-event. In this respect, it had similarities with the poster made by Melin for the *American Pop Art* show of 1964, for which he had chosen a provocative and exhorting visual statement, namely Roy Lichtenstein's *Pistol* (appropriated from a US Army recruitment poster), in which the barrel of a gun faces directly out at the viewer in a confrontational and attention-getting gesture. This design packaged and translated Pop art as a big event that the Swedish audience needed to take as an important, new and vital fact, as I have explored in detail elsewhere.¹⁶ Altogether, the catalogue and the posters for the Warhol show of 1968 served as the ingenious expression of a bold artist and of a museum with confidence and ambitions. The museum, the agent, did not aim at providing curatorial exegeses. On the contrary, it aimed at appearing *as an artist*, at showing and not telling, something which the whole graphical framework of the show underpinned. A similar tendency can be traced in the titles of the museum's other exhibitions throughout the 1960s, which repeatedly

¹³ Granath, 'With Andy Warhol 1968', 00:11:00. It has also been mentioned that an early idea, suggested by Billy Klüver already in early 1966, was to create a show in which Warhol's paintings and films were shown together. That premise does not reappear in texts framing the exhibition opening itself. Georg Frei and Neil Printz, eds, *The Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 2: *Paintings and Sculpture 1964-1969*, London: Phaidon Press, 2004, 345.

¹⁴ Around ten posters were made, according to Granath, in 'With Andy Warhol 1968', 00:11:00. John Peter Nilsson confirmed that the number existing in the archive of Moderna Museet is seven; e-mail to the author, 12 October 2021.

¹⁵ *Andy Warhol*, Stockholm: Moderna Museet, 1968, colophon page. On the design of the catalogues at Moderna Museet by Melin and others, see Martin Sundberg, 'Between Experiment and Everyday Life: The Exhibition Catalogues of Moderna Museet', in *The History Book*, 297-328.

¹⁶ Öhrner, 'On the Construction of Pop Art'.

referred to artistic qualities such as dynamics, movement and human feelings.¹⁷ Four of the posters are still reproduced and sold at the Moderna Museet, thereby continuing to add value to the museum's trademark, while referring to its historical past.

The selection of which phrases to be translated in the catalogue was done in an open process. The museum director, Pontus Hultén, had handed over a box to Granath of texts on Warhol that was kept in the museum's office, and asked him to suggest passages from these texts for the exhibition's publication.¹⁸ The sentences that Granath chose to translate in the Stockholm catalogue can be loosely grouped around two related themes: they were expressing aspects of Warhol's detached persona, or they circled around the idea of the artist as a machine. The two last phrases, placed as setting the tone before the images section started, are examples of the detached persona theme. The first of these passages reads:

[26] I'd prefer to remain a mystery; I never like to give my background and, anyway, I make it all different all the time I'm asked. It's not just that it's part of my image not to tell everything, it's just that I forget what I said the day before and I have to make it all up over again. I don't think I have an image, anyway, favourable or unfavourable.¹⁹

It was translated as:

Jag föredrar att förbli ett mysterium, jag tycker aldrig om att redogöra för min bakgrund och, i vilket fall som helst, gör jag det på olika sätt varje gång jag tillfrågas. Det är inte bara att det hör till min image att inte berätta allting, utan jag glömmmer vad jag sagt föregående dag och så måste jag göra alltihop från början igen. Jag tror i varje fall inte att jag har någon image, varken fördelaktig eller ofördelaktig.

The second, and final, phrase, reads:

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

¹⁷ Examples are *Sebastian Matta – 15 former av förtviolan* (Sebastian Matta – 15 Forms of Despair) *Rörelse i konsten* (Movements in Art), *Wilfredo Lam. Hjärtats snår, vapen och frukter*, (Wilfredo Lam. The Vegetations, Weapons and Fruits of the Heart) and, the most striking, *Amerikansk popkonst. 106 former av kärlek och förtviolan* (American Pop Art. 106 Forms of Love and Despair). This tendency is discussed by Gertrud Sandqvist in the essay 'Museum of the wishes. The art museum and the modernism', in *Utopia and Reality: Modernity in Sweden 1900–1960*, ed. Cecilia Widenheim, New Haven: Yale University Press, in association with the Bard Graduate Centre for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture, 2002, 128–35. (The Swedish edition was published in 2000.)

¹⁸ Granath, 'With Andy Warhol 1968', 00:13:00.

¹⁹ The statements are here numbered in the order they appear in the catalogue, which is unpaginated.

It was translated into Swedish as:

Om ni vill veta allt om Andy Warhol, se bara på ytan av mina målningar och filmer och mig. Det finns inget bakom detta.

These two phrases were both quotations from Gretchen Berg's interview with the artist published in the *Los Angeles Free Press* the previous year.²⁰ The translations are generally as straightforward as the original lines, while the word 'image'—in the sense of the appearance of a person—had been imported directly from English to Swedish, in a way that was fresh and gave the text a modern impression.

The second category of phrases concerned the notion of the artist as a machine, and as producing art while staying detached from the process. Already on the second page [quotation 5], the reader learns that the artist doesn't 'like to touch things, that is why my work is so distant from myself', and then, on the third [7], 'Machines have less problems. I'd like to be a machine, wouldn't you?' (fig. 1).

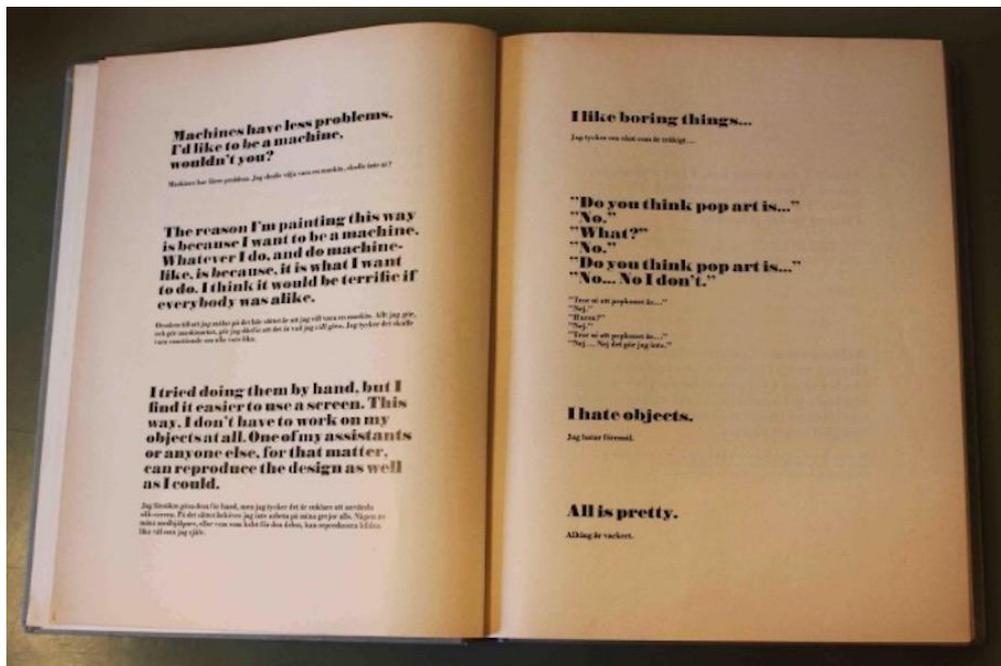


Figure 1 *Andy Warhol*, Stockholm: Moderna Museet, 1968. National Library of Sweden.

From Gene Swenson's interview in *ARTnews* in 1963, Granath had picked up the following lines:

²⁰ Gretchen Berg, 'Andy, My True Story', *Los Angeles Free Press*, 17 March 1967, 3. (On other versions of this interview, see, in the following articles in the present issue of the *Journal of Art Historiography*: Francesco Guzzetti, 'La Filosofia di Andy Warhol and the Turmoil of Art in Italy, 1983', n24; Jean-Claude Lebensztejn, 'Warhol in French', n2; and Nina Schleif, 'Schnecken, Schlitzmonger, and Poltergeist: Andy Warhol in German—Translations and Cultural Context', 7, 9.—Guest editor.)

[8] The reason I'm painting this way is because I want to be a machine. Whatever I do, and do machine-like, is because, it is what I want to do. I think it would be terrific if everybody was alike.²¹

The Swedish reads:

Orsaken till att jag målar på det här sättet är att jag vill vara en maskin. Allt jag gör, och gör maskinartat, gör jag därför att det är vad jag *vill* göra. Jag tycker de skulle vara enastående om alla vore lika.

These sentences give an apology to any artist looking for new production forms and modes to make art—an apology, however, that does take as its departure point the subjective perspective of the artist. These phrases, which in different ways put the artistic production in relation to the notion of the machine, as chosen by Granath, were relevant among a large group of artists in Sweden, as we shall see.

Thus, it was not so much how these phrases were translated, but rather, the selection that was chosen for the audience—the target and destination for the whole exhibition project—that was important. Warhol's ideas were not new to the Swedish reader. In 1964, not only had his art been presented in the *American Pop Art* show at Moderna Museet, but a translation of Gene Swenson's 1963 interview with Warhol was published in *Bonniers Litterära Magasin (BLM)*, a distinguished literary journal covering art theory as well, and put out by Sweden's largest publishing house, Bonniers bokförlag.²² The phrase [8] in the catalogue, 'The reason I'm painting this way ...', is translated somewhat differently in the *BLM* version of the Swenson interview, binding the two sentences together in one, apparently to produce a more fluid reading: 'Orsaken till att jag målar på det sättet är att jag vill vara en maskin, och jag känner det som att allt jag gör och gör som en maskin, är det som jag vill göra.'

This variation in the translation proves that Granath's source was not the *BLM* translation as such, although one can be certain that he, as any member of the young intellectual circles in Stockholm at the time, had read it. One can assume that the selection of texts in the box Granath was working with were from recently published international art journals. The museum had, as already mentioned, established its own, direct connections within the art networks of Manhattan, and the staff was well oriented in what was published in New York.

Finally, the famous line [12] 'In the future everybody will be world famous for fifteen minutes', translated as 'I framtiden kommer var och en vara världsberömd i femton minuter', a promise to anyone who felt a temptation for Warhol's lifestyle, apparently was printed in the Stockholm catalogue for the first time. Hultén, according to Granath, although happy with his selection of Warhol's phrases, concluded:

²¹Andy Warhol interviewed by Gene Swenson in 'What Is Pop Art? Interviews with Eight Painters (Part 1)', *ARTnews*, 62: 7, November 1963, 26, 60-61.

²²Gene Swenson, 'Andy Warhol', *Bonniers Litterära Magasin*, 33: 3, 1964, 171-73.

'... but there is a quotation missing.' 'Which one?' I said. 'In the future, everyone will be world-famous for 15 minutes,' Pontus replied. 'If it is in the material, I would have spotted it,' I told him. The line went quiet for a moment, and then I heard Pontus say, 'If he didn't say it, he could very well have said it. Let's put it in'. So we did, and thus Warhol's perhaps most famous quotation became a fact.²³

Whether this version of how the famous quotation came about, as more or less directly from Pontus Hultén, who knew Warhol personally, is factual or not is not our topic here, but the story exemplifies the open curatorial approach to artistic authorship that seems to have been typical of the project.²⁴ From there on, effectively transmitted and mediated, it became one of the pronouncements most often associated with Warhol, and, contributing to its circulation, it was chosen for one of the museum posters advertising the exhibition, and, not surprisingly, is one of those still printed today.

As we now turn from verbal statements to aspects of translation within the visual presentation of the show, we can see how certain features within the chosen phrases, those that regarded art production and the idea of the artist as a machine, following the curatorial imperative of 'many works and few motifs', were repeated.



Figure 2 Installation view of the exhibition *Andy Warhol*, Moderna Museet, 1968.
Photo: Nils-Göran Hökby, Moderna Museet.

²³ Granath, 'With Andy Warhol 1968', 00:13:00.

²⁴ According to the photographer Nat Finkelstein, the source of the 'world famous for fifteen minutes' quip is a photo-session with Warhol for a proposed book. When a crowd gathered and tried to get into the picture, Warhol is supposed to have remarked that everybody wants to be famous. Finkelstein was to have replied, 'Yeah, for about fifteen minutes, Andy'; see in Jeff Guinn and Douglas Perry, *The Sixteenth Minute: Life in the Aftermath of Fame*, New York, Jeremy F. Tarcher/Penguin, 2005, 364-65.

After passing the exterior wall of Cow Wallpaper, entering the south section of the first gallery, the visitor met ten large Flower paintings hung on the walls, and in the north section, Warhol's Electric Chair paintings.²⁵ Visitors could only approach them by circumventing large plastic sacks filled with air. On a small, moveable screen hung a number of Marilyn prints, which visually echoed the repetitive structure of the cows on the façade of the building. Films were shown in looped projections in the same space, although not actual films by Warhol as the plan had been. The most interesting and creative solution to problems of budget and short production time, however, was to display authentic Brillo boxes ordered directly from the New York Brillo company. These boxes differed from those Warhol had created in 1964, which were made of synthetic polymer paint and silkscreen ink on wood. A large pile of some five hundred actual Brillo boxes formed an impressive mountain in the space (fig. 2). While several of the shows' elements are in fact traceable to previous exhibitions by Warhol, this was the first time that the Brillo boxes had been presented in such an impressive quantity. As Natalie Musteata has remarked, the fact that real objects replaced the artist's critical and/or Duchampian representations of the same consumer objects can be understood as short-circuiting the meaning.²⁶ While it remains unclear whether the audience actually knew much about or reflected greatly on the museum's curatorial efforts and creative production modes, the open approach to the binary original/copy as well as the idea of repetition for this exhibition, so brilliantly expressed through the pile of Brillo boxes, certainly got across to them. Contrary to the bold, in-your-face texts on the posters distributed throughout Stockholm, which put forward imperatives of an artistic position such as Warhol's as well as the ambition of the museum, it was not the motifs, nor the content, that resonated the most. Instead, it was the structure of repetition, together with the collapse of the distinction between original and copy, bringing to mind Espagne's terminology, translated and 'coded' in a manner that would resonate within the cultural situation in Stockholm, as we shall see.

Hultén's life companion at the time, Anna-Lena Wibom, who worked at the Swedish Film Institute, helped to arrange a substitute to the Warhol films that had not arrived from the Factory, which were replaced by loops with archival material containing an elephant that had just stepped on a drum. Having studied in the US during two years from autumn 1953, Wibom was the first in the future circle around Moderna Museet to learn about American independent film firsthand, through visits to Cinema 16 during the school year 1954–55, and she early on met Jonas and Adolfas Mekas and others.²⁷ The Swedish Film Institute was also presenting screenings of New American Cinema films made by, for instance, Shirley Clarke, Gregory Markopoulos, Jonas Mekas, Andy Warhol, Stan Brakhage, Jack Smith, and

²⁵ Warhol made two new bodies of work directly for this show, based on the earlier subjects of *Electric Chairs* and *Flowers*, that were enlarged. See *Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 2, 345–65, cat. nos. 2030–2055.

²⁶ Musteata, 'Odd Walls, Even Pages', 110.

²⁷ Annika Öhrner, *Barbro Östlihn och New York. Konstens rum och möjligheter*, PhD diss., Uppsala: Uppsala University, 2010; Gothenburg and Stockholm: Makadam, 2010, 168.

Robert Breer, during the exhibition period.²⁸ And already in 1965, the audience had been prepared for Warhol's films with screenings in Gothenburg and Stockholm of films such as *Eat* (1963), distributed by the New American Cinema Group.²⁹

Turning to how the Warhol show of 1968 resonated within the Swedish art scene, as noted above, it was far from a critical failure. Reviews were generally engaged, well-informed and passionate. Öyvind Fahlström, who had personally followed Warhol in New York, wrote an interesting introduction to his work, titled 'Andy Warhol: Pop Artist with no inhibitions—“Everybody should be Machines”', published in the largest Swedish daily, *Dagens Nyheter*, on the opening day.³⁰ As the title reveals, the Swedish audience again was presented with Warhol's words through phrases from Gene Swenson's interview.³¹ The review also gave a rather thorough introduction to the conceptual background to Warhol, emphasising

that the most impersonal method of reproduction, the photographic silk screen ...*per se* was a challenge to the fundamental rule of visual art: the unique, permanent original. Warhol's next move is to produce a large number of wooden copies of product boxes, bulk packs of soap, and tomato cans.³²

Interestingly, Fahlström, who knew Warhol's art and also drew upon Swenson's interview, though thinking firsthand, described how the films contained narratives featuring, among other things, a transvestite trying out alternative gender roles. Recent research has discovered that the interview Swenson published with Warhol in 1963 was in fact a heavily edited version of the recorded one, where particularly references to queer sexuality were omitted.³³ This is another aspect of translation as

²⁸ Advertisement in *Svenska Dagbladet*, 28 February 1968.

²⁹ A collection of American films from New American Cinema Group, including Warhol's *Eat*, had been screened in Göteborgs konsthall (Kunsthalle of Gothenburg municipality) in February 1965 (Ulla Swedberg, 'Rätt, opolerad och levande paroll för nya USA-filmare', *Göteborgs-Tidningen*, 14 February 1965). Warhol's *Kiss* was screened in the theatre of Nationalmuseum, by the Moderna Museet film studio in cooperation with the American film group, 30 January 1965 (Carl Henrik Svenstedt, 'Filmkrönika: Hjärtvätt på Nationalmuseum', *Svenska Dagbladet*, 1 February 1965). Svenska Filminstitutets filmklubb [the film club of the Swedish film institute] presented a collection of American films on 30 January 1968, including work by Shirley Clarke, Gregory Markopoulos, Andy Warhol, Stan Brakhage, Jack Smith, Robert Breer, and others (advertisement in *Dagens Nyheter*, 28 January 1968).

³⁰ Öyvind Fahlström, 'Andy Warhol: Popkonstnär utan hämningar', *Dagens Nyheter*, 10 February 1968; quoted from the English translation in *Hot Art, Cold War—Western and Northern European Writing on American Art 1945–1990*, ed. Claudia Hopkins and Iain Boyd Whyte, New York and London: Routledge, 2021, 461-65.

³¹ Fahlström, 'Andy Warhol: Popkonstnär utan hämningar', 461.

³² Fahlström, 'Andy Warhol: Popkonstnär utan hämningar', 462-63.

³³ Jennifer Sichel, 'What is Pop Art? A Revised Manuscript of Gene Swenson's 1963 Interview with Andy Warhol', *Oxford Art Journal*, 41: 1, March 2018, 85-100. For an alternate interpretation of the edited version of Swenson's interview, see Reva Wolf, 'The Artist

coded; themes such as homosexuality or transvestism that at the time were so loaded as to be subject to censorship within the American context—that is, at the point of departure—could easily be brought to attention in connection with the exhibition in an article that was published in the most mainstream daily newspaper in Sweden at the time, and be a subject of intellectual reflection.

The photography critic Kurt Bergengren, from his side, declared in the evening paper *Aftonbladet* that Warhol's film *Chelsea Girls*, together with the exhibition catalogue, represented something completely new in photography: an authenticity in images where the actors are filmed and photographed in a lived situation, but with a consciousness of the mediation taking place.³⁴ Finally, Ulf Linde, a leading art critic closely allied with the museum, wrote a brilliant analysis of Warhol's work. He took as his starting point the Marxist concept of alienation and went on to declare that he found Warhol disgusting, before closing the long article with the statement that one should maybe not take the artist that seriously: 'Marilyn Monroe is painted in an original way—and the suggestion is that Warhol is much more interesting than that, after all'.³⁵ Thus, the overall impression of the reviews is of highly informed critical discussions on, among other things, Warhol's relation to society's consumer culture. The Stockholm audience was not that provoked by the themes of the exhibition—the already familiar motifs and Pop art vocabulary—nor, it seems, so much by Warhol's persona or queer lifestyle. Finally, it was the underlying structure of repetition, which was curatorially emphasized in the visual and verbal translation of Warhol's art, that most resonated with the Swedish audience.

Distributive democracy

In his 1989 essay on Andy Warhol, Benjamin Buchloh refers to Theodor Adorno's approach to modernist art as paradoxically having a history 'while under the spell of the eternal repetition of mass production'.³⁶ To Buchloh, Warhol embodied this dialectic as he had emerged from the collective disposition towards material objects that had formed two distinct consumer styles by the end of the nineteenth century, one elitist and one democratic. Warhol transformed himself from a 'commercial artist' into a 'fine artist' around 1960. Buchloh points out that Warhol had early on fraudulently claimed fine art successes and to have been exhibited at museums in 1955, long before this had actually happened. Naturally, the prospect of actually exhibiting in a European museum when first invited to Moderna Museet in 1964

Interview: 'An Elusive History', *Journal of Art Historiography*, 23, December 2020, 22-23; <https://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2020/11/wolf.pdf>.

³⁴ Kurt Bergengren, 'Bilden', *Aftonbladet*, 18 February 1968.

³⁵ Ulf Linde, 'U.P.A.', *Dagens Nyheter*, 10 February 1968. For an overview of press reactions to the 1968 show, see 'Essay by John Peter Nilsson, Curator', where he states that even the Marxist art critic Beng Olvång of *Aftonbladet* accepts Warhol as a disillusioned searcher of truth.

³⁶ Benjamin Buchloh, 'Andy Warhol's One-Dimensional Art: 1956–1966', in *Andy Warhol: A Retrospective*, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1989; reprinted in *Andy Warhol, October Files 2*, ed. Annette Michelson, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001, 39.

must have appeared attractive to him. Buchloh also highlights Warhol's early motivations for egalitarian and democratic credos, which continued past this turning point, as exemplified by this 1966 statement:

Factory is as good a name as any. A factory is where you build things. This is where I make or *build* my work. In my art work, hand painting would take much too long and anyway that's not the age we live in. Mechanical means are today, and using them I can get more art to more people. *Art should be for everyone* [my italics].³⁷

While Warhol in this statement directly connects mechanically produced artworks to art distribution, Buchloh also points to him saying, in 1967, 'Pop art is for everyone. I don't think art should be only for the select few, I think it should be for the mass of American people and they usually accept art anyway'.³⁸ Buchloh also refers to a 1971 interview in which Warhol stated that in the past he had felt that 'if everyone couldn't afford a painting, the printed poster would be available'.³⁹

More or less one year before the Warhol exhibition's vernissage at Moderna Museet, *Multikonst* ('Multi-Art'), large in scale and with considerable media attention, was launched at venues all over Sweden in no less than one hundred exhibitions presenting identical sets of editions of sixty-five artworks created by sixty-eight Swedish artists.⁴⁰ *Multikonst* provides a specific context for the translation of Warhol in Sweden. The original Swedish title *Multikonst* will be used throughout this discussion. Interestingly, the word was invented by the organisers and very quickly transformed into the common Swedish term for art in editions.⁴¹ The artists were well-known names and representatives of both the established, modernist generation, such as Sven X:et Erixson and Siri Derkert, and a younger, emerging one, for example Einar Höste, Lennart Rodhe, Sivert Lindblom, Albert Johansson, and Berndt Pettersson. Of interest to our context is the fact that John Melin, one of the two graphic designers who worked on the Warhol catalogue, participated in the show. He created with Anders Österlin, another artist and graphic designer, a work

³⁷ Andy Warhol, 'Underground Films: Art or Naughty Movies', interview by Douglas Arango, *Movie TV Secrets*, June 1966, as cited in Buchloh, 'Andy Warhol's One-Dimensional Art', 5.

³⁸ Andy Warhol, 'Nothing to Lose', interview by Gretchen Berg, *Cahiers du Cinema in English*, 10, May 1967, 39-43, as cited in Buchloh, 'Andy Warhol's One-Dimensional Art: 1956-1966', 5.

³⁹ Andy Warhol, 'A Conversation with Andy Warhol', interview with Gerhard Malanga, *Print Collector's Newsletter* 1:6, January-February 1971, 125-27, cited in Buchloh, 'Andy Warhol's One-Dimensional Art: 1956-1966', 8, note 14.

⁴⁰ My description of the *Multikonst* project owes to David Rynell Åhlén, *Samtida konst på bästa sändningstid: Konst i svensk television 1956-1969 (Contemporary Art on Prime Time: Arts Programming on Swedish Television 1956-1969)*, PhD diss., Stockholm University, Lund: Mediehistoriskt arkiv, 2016.

⁴¹ See Kristian Romare, 'Multikonst—ett ord, en företeelse', in *Multikonst: En bok om 66 konstverk, 100 utställningar, 350 000 besökare*, ed. Ragnar Edenman et al., Stockholm: Sveriges radios förlag, Statens försöksverksamhet med riksutställningar, 1967, 16.

entitled *Tallriken* ('*The Plate*'), of 1966, which represented a white broken dinner plate in high plastic relief.

The artworks were listed as printed art (lithographs, woodcuts) or sculpture. The latter included both traditional materials and more modern ones, such as plexiglass and plastic. The two groups of works are related to two different legacies, sculpture and object-art. Limited editions of coloured lithographs, signed by the artist, had already previously been used as a vehicle for the democratisation of art in Sweden, especially after the 1939–45 war. One such example is the exhibition *God konst i hem och samlingslokaler* ('*High-Quality Art in Homes and Public Spaces*'), which opened at Nationalmuseum in 1945 and then toured the country. The idea was to expand the audience for art, to reach a public that 'is largely to be found in the parts of the country that are culturally starved'.⁴² An important part of *Multikonst* was the editions of lithographs produced by well-established artists, as a continuation of this tradition. These were part of the show and sold to the audience at affordable prices. The other group of works, the sculptures and objects, were a direct consequence of the organisers inviting artists to take part and encouraging them to experiment and use new materials and techniques. This initiative resulted in some interesting new works. While Melin and Österlin's piece was pop-related, others were geometric sculptures, such as Einar Höste's *Varierad kub* ('*Varied Cube*').

Organised by bodies including the initiating Folkrorelsernas Konstfrämjandet ('People's Movements for Art Promotion'; in short, Konstfrämjandet), as well as the temporary, then later permanent, government agency, Riksställningar ('Swedish Travelling Exhibitions'), and Swedish Radio, *Multikonst* emerged from the young social welfare state.⁴³ That the state and the Social Democratic government supported the project was no secret, with the inaugural speech by the Minister of Education and Cultural Affairs, Ragnar Edenman, broadcast on Swedish Television on 11 February 1967 at the same time as the actual openings were being staged in 100 Swedish towns. In the minister's inaugural speech, artists were presented as producers, their artworks as goods or products and the viewers as consumers.⁴⁴ The television set was at some sites seen to be presented on exhibition walls side by side with the artworks themselves. Thus, *Multikonst* was received not just as a modern art project as such, as showing new art, but also as using modern media to communicate widely. *Multikonst* was driven by the idea not only to let art be visible in smaller venues in the nation's periphery, but also to let art be affordable, a kind of distributive democracy. Therefore, each edition of the artwork was supposed to be regarded as original despite not being unique.⁴⁵

However, the project was not understood to be associated with Warhol or American Pop art per se, either by the curators or the participating authorities. On the other hand, the organisers made references to having been inspired by Daniel Spoerri's Edition MAT, where beginning in 1959 artists such as Alexander Calder,

⁴² This statement is from the compendium that was distributed to the local organizers of *Multikonst*, as quoted in Rynell Åhlén, *Samtida konst på bästa sändningstid*, 182.

⁴³ Rynell Åhlén, *Samtida konst på bästa sändningstid*, 178-220.

⁴⁴ Rynell Åhlén, *Samtida konst på bästa sändningstid*, 183.

⁴⁵ Rynell Åhlén, *Samtida konst på bästa sändningstid*, 178-220.

Josef Albers, Jean Tinguely and Man Ray produced objects in series.⁴⁶ Here and there in the reception of *Mutlikonst* a comparison to Pop art occurs, but as a point of contrast. In an article published in the journal *Konstfrämjandets tidskrift*, Åke Meyerson even contrasts *Multikonst* with the work of American Pop artists in that the former conceals a distributive strategy—not an aesthetic one—and another of the organisers of *Multikonst* called it, in contrast to the American version, 'real pop art', presumably associating 'pop' with 'popular' and therefore, with the general audience—democratic art.⁴⁷

A direct association with the American Pop art discourse can still be found in the poster and cover of the book *Multikonst: En bok om 66 konstverk, 100 utställningar, 350 000 besökare*, which came out after the exhibition and were designed by Albert Johansson, one of the participating artists (fig. 3). In this design, Johansson made reference to an image from the front cover of the catalogue and the poster of the American Pop art exhibition of 1964, namely Lichtenstein's pointing gun, in the form of a pointing finger, and, importantly, *in repetition*. It was set alongside an illustration of Johansson's own work for the show, which was composed of repetitive face masks.



Figure 3 Cover (design by Albert Johansson), Ragnar Edenman et al., eds, *Multikonst: En bok om 66 konstverk, 100 utställningar, 350 000 besökare* [*Multikonst: A Book about 66 Artworks, 100 Exhibitions, 350,000 Visitors*], Stockholm: Sveriges radios förlag, Statens försöksverksamhet med riksutställningar, 1967.

Thus, when the Warhol exhibition opened in 1968, issues of repetition, of art and democracy, of media, and of original and copy were already cherished themes in the Swedish cultural debate and among artists, as illustrated by *Multikonst*, an exhibition which had an immense impact through the televised circulation of its openings, art and ideas. *Multikonst* and the Warhol show were representations of two poles within the Western art world at the time: the core of Manhattan art life

⁴⁶ Romare, 'Multikonst—ett ord, en företeelse', 16.

⁴⁷ Matts Rying, 'Konst över landet', *Röster i Radio-TV*, 5, 1967, 18-19, as quoted in Rynell Åhlén, *Samtida konst på bästa sändningstid*, 186.

and the political initiatives of the Swedish welfare state. However, when looking more closely, concrete entanglements between these two poles are to be found. Already in September 1967, Konstfrämjandet had advertised that American – and Polish – posters were for sale in the organisation's Stockholm gallery and mentioned Warhol as one of the authors.⁴⁸ And maybe surprisingly to some readers, Swedish Travelling Exhibitions included works by Warhol in its 1967 exhibition titled *Kvinnan* ('Woman'), which presented the topic with works by, for example, Honoré Daumier, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec and Tom Wesselmann. The catalogue lists a silkscreen, Jacqueline Kennedy, by Warhol.⁴⁹ The Swedish cultural institutions saw the potential in Warhol's work to help them achieve their distributive ambitions.

On arriving late for the opening of his own show at Moderna Museet, Warhol went straight to a press conference. There he was interviewed by a journalist from a Swedish west coast paper, presenting yet another idea of the affordable multiple art works, by proposing the following: 'It does not matter if a work is original or not. If you desire anything here in the exhibition, just make a photo of it and bring it home....'⁵⁰ This advice was in line with the representation of Andy Warhol's art in the Moderna Museet's exhibition catalogue.

The Friends of Moderna Museet newsletter, edited by two students at Stockholm University's Department of Art History, featured the Warhol show. And here is the only place where Warhol is directly connected to the concept of 'multikonst'. The exhibition was taken as the starting point for a survey of some artists on more general aspects of reproduction and repetition, with the first of eight questions being: 'Do you believe a unique (two- or three-dimensional) artwork has any important qualities missing in a reproduced one?'⁵¹ Most of the nineteen artists surveyed were favourable to artwork in multiples provided that the material was suitable for such a procedure. The questions were posed in general terms; however, the article was illustrated with works by Warhol. Not all the artists commented on the democratic distributive aspect. One who did was Sten Dunér, who stated that it would be terrific to spread one's work and thereby cheat the market. Karl-Olov Björk, a young conceptual artist, felt it would be really nice to create artworks in multiples, in editions; however, he concluded: 'unfortunately, for my sculptures, this possibility does not exist. But a reproduction factory handling this would be splendid'.⁵² The reference to Warhol's art production was clear.

⁴⁸ Advertisement by Konstfrämjandet, *Dagens Nyheter*, 20 September 1967, 5.

⁴⁹ *Svenska Dagbladet*, 15 January 1968, advertised an opening of the art exhibition in Kalmar, Sweden; *Kvinnan*, exh. cat., Stockholm: Riksställningar, 1967.

⁵⁰ 'Det spelar ingen roll om en sak är originell eller inte. Vill ni ha någonting här på utställningen så fotografera det och ta med er hem, sade den amerikanske popkonstnären Andy Warhol då han på fredagen besökte Moderna Museet där man just nu har en Warhol-utställning. Warhol är numera formskapare och gör långrandiga filmer. Han vill vara en maskin utan kontakt med människan. Det skapar bara problem, menar han', *Arbetet, västsvenska editionen*, 10 February 1968.

⁵¹ 'Konstnärer om multikonst', *Meddelande från Moderna Museet till Moderna Museets vänner*, 1968, 27-28.

⁵² 'För mina skulpturer finns tyvärr inte den möjligheten. Men en reproduktionsfabrik som tog hand om den saken vore smaskens', 'Konstnärer om multikonst'.

Warhol's statements and art, as translated into the presentation that became the exhibition at Moderna Museet in Spring 1968, were curatorially coded, to follow Espagne, in a way that underlined the quality and democratic benefit of repetition and reproduction. That quality appeared in his images, but even more so in the way they were arranged in the exhibition space, and in the content that his sentences in the catalogue carried. While the notion of repetition in Warhol's work had been under discussion in the US, in Sweden repetition had its own focus within artistic and cultural practice, which made his show resonate well there. In the context of Stockholm and the Swedish welfare state, the notion was understood and used in connection to ideas of democratisation of art that were in fact not that far from points Warhol occasionally had made. Before anything else, what appeared deeply relevant as it was translated and coded into the Swedish scene was the curatorial concept 'many works and few motifs' – of repetition.

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