

Appropriation in Postmodernism: Analyzing Andy Warhol and Sherrie Levine

Item Type	Thesis
Authors	Dramisino, Laura
Citation	Dramisino, Laura. "Appropriation in Postmodernism: Analyzing Andy Warhol and Sherrie Levine". BA Thesis, John Cabot University, Rome, Italy. 2018.
Rights	Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International
Download date	2025-03-17 15:18:56
Item License	http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/
Link to Item	https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14490/323



John Cabot University

Department of Arts

Bachelor of Arts in Art History
Minor in Entrepreneurship

Appropriation in Postmodernism:
Analyzing Andy Warhol and Sherrie Levine.

Laura Dramisino

First Reader
Ilaria Gianni

Second Reader
Carolyn Smyth

Fall 2018

Abstract

The 20th century is a historical period dominated by events that eventually drastically changed the path of history and the world itself. Considered as the “brief century”, it is characterized by its fast changes due to technological innovations and the evolution on political-economical assets¹. If cultural products have always been strongly influenced by the historical environment in which they develop, art, in the 20th century, was particularly influenced by the new political systems and social changes which ended up giving birth to a large amount of movements and styles. Generally, the century can be split into two major cultural tendencies, even if they each involved several different styles: modernism (indicating the first half of the 20th century), and postmodernism (beginning from the second half). The former was particularly enthusiast of the industrial development focusing on the research of new imagery, materials, and technique which could create artworks reflecting the new hope of modern society².

Postmodernism, instead, developed as reaction to Modernism. The artworks reflect a new skeptic vision of the world about the previously praised universal truths and objective reality³. This artistic approach was particularly relevant for the large amount of works based on the phenomenon of Appropriation. Even though the act of appropriating pre-existing styles, images, techniques has always occurred in art history, the past century stressed this tendency further so that the concept of originality and authenticity of the work of art has been strongly threatened.

In this thesis, I will explore the meaning and phenomenon of Appropriation. I will analyze how it acted out during 20th century art, focusing on its postmodernist tendency, and how it radically changed the concept of originality and authorship. Through the analysis of two artists,

¹ Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991*(Abacus, 2001).

² Tate. "Modernism – Art Term." Tate. Accessed December 04, 2018..

³ Tate. "Postmodernism – Art Term." Tate. Accessed December 05, 2018.

the thesis will clarify the two major fields in which Appropriation stands: how Appropriation art defines the act of translating into artworks images coming from the everyday life and culture, and how it uses the reproduction of an existing work of art which is be modified or not in order to confer a totally new contemporary meaning.

Andy Warhol and Sherrie Levine are among the symbols of the appropriative impulse. Studying their works will allow to identify how Appropriation is possible to understand, and why this problematic issue has actually gained great importance in art history.

I will also explore the theme of authenticity, questioning the idea of aura⁴. In other words: if these contemporary works are inspired by the mass media culture of the present, or quote masterpieces and styles of the past how has their “aura” and value changed?

Through a historical and visual study of these artists, the phenomenon of the issue of authenticity will finally be investigated. The main aim of the thesis is answering to three research questions:

- what Appropriation actually means, and how it applies to contemporary art;
- how Postmodernist artists exploited iconic images coming from their everyday, and their final aim;
- how Postmodernist artists interpreted past and contemporary works and their final aim;
- how scholars and critics interpreted this common tendency in contemporary art.

⁴ Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (Prism Key Press, 2010).

Dedication

Alla mia famiglia, per avermi permesso di arrivare qui educandomi su valori solidi e sul perseguimento dei miei sogni.

A Diego, per la sua musica, il suo supporto costante, per tutte le risate e i viaggi, e per ricordarmi cosa conta davvero nella vita.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Dedication.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
List of Figures.....	vii
1. Introduction.....	1
2. The Phenomenon of Appropriation in Art.....	7
Historical Background of 20 th Century Appropriation.....	7
Artistic Context: Modernism and Postmodernism.....	8
What is Appropriation?.....	14
Concept of Aura and Authorship.....	22
3. Andy Warhol: Appropriator of the Popular Culture.....	26
Pop Art.....	26
Andy Warhol.....	28
Main Techniques: Photography and Silkscreen.....	29
Major Subjects.....	31
Appropriation in Warhol.....	33
“Memento Mori”.....	35
Appropriation of the Past.....	39
4. Sherrie Levine: The Still-Life Artist.....	45
Appropriation as a “Castration” Act.....	45

Sherrie's Levine Artistic Practice	46
Photographic Appropriation: Walker Evans and Edward Weston	48
Sculptural Appropriation: Sherrie Levine and Marcel Duchamp	52
5. Conclusions.....	58
Bibliography	62
6. Appendix.....	66

List of Figures

Fig. 1 Duchamp, Marcel. <i>Fountain</i> , 1917.....	66
Fig. 2 Lòpez, Marcos. <i>Asado en Mediolaza (Roasted Meat in Mediolaza)</i> , 1958.....	67
Fig. 3 da Vinci, Leonardo. <i>Last Supper</i> , 1498.....	67
Fig. 4 Agesandro, Atenoro di Rodi, and Polidoro, <i>Laocon and His Sons</i> , between 1st century BC and 1st century AD.....	68
Fig. 5 da Vinci, Leonardo. <i>Mona Lisa</i> , 1503-1504.....	69
Fig. 6 Duchamp, Marcel. <i>L.H.O.O.Q.</i> , 1919.....	70
Fig. 7 Malevich, Kasimir. <i>Composition with the Mona Lisa</i> , 1914.....	71
Fig. 8 Warhol, Andy. <i>Campbell's Soup Cans</i> , 1962.....	71
Fig. 9 Warhol, Andy. <i>Electric Chairs Series</i> , 1971.....	72
Fig. 10 Warhol, Andy. <i>Jackie O</i> , 1964.....	73
Fig. 11 Warhol, Andy. <i>Marylin</i> , 1967.....	74
Fig. 12 Warhol, Andy. <i>Marylin Monroe's Lips</i> , 1962.....	74
Fig. 13 da Vinci, Leonardo. <i>Annunciation</i> , 1472-1475.....	75
Fig. 14 Warhol, Andy. <i>Annunciation from: Details of Renaissance Paintings</i> , 1984.....	75
Fig. 15 Warhol, Andy. <i>Be Somebody with a Body</i> , 1986.....	76
Fig. 16 Levine, Sherrie. <i>After Walker Evans</i> , 1981.....	76
Fig. 17 Evans, Walker. <i>Alabama Cotton Tenant Farmer's or Allie Mae Burroughs</i> , 1936.....	77
Fig. 18 Weston, Edward. <i>from Six Nudes of Neil</i> , 1925.....	78
Fig. 19 Levine, Sherrie. <i>After Edward Weston</i> , 1990.....	78
Fig. 20 Levine, Sherrie. <i>Bachelors</i> , 1989.....	79
Fig. 21 Levine, Sherrie. <i>Fountain (Buddha)</i> , 1996.....	79

Fig. 22 Duchamp, Marcel. *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass)*,
1915-1923. 80

1. Introduction

Art that goes from the first decade of the 20th century until nowadays has arisen different questions and issues for its peculiarity and especially its great ability to change in every decade and through every artist's practice. Contemporary art cannot be bound in a fixed definition since its nature is so vast and so diverse: it actually contains a multitude of movements and styles changing according to decade, geography, and political (or apolitical) view.

Throughout the 20th century, art, having to re-invent its own nature, experienced its highest revolutionary change. Artists wished to create works and styles meant to disorientate the audience in order to arise their own personal critique of the contemporary world, but even to criticize art itself fixed in aesthetic prejudices. The works, produced during this century, were focused on a deeper – sometimes even ironical – exploration of the world, and became the symbol of artists' independence from the classical restrictions based on beauty and aesthetic. As a consequence, the art world has assisted, from the 20th century, to a provocative production whose aim was that of questioning society in all its facets.

Two distinctive periods can be identified to better delineate the artistic tendencies of the century: Modernism and Postmodernism. Both, actually, are not proper artistic movements, but they incorporate all the cultural and social styles arisen during these years. The former developed between the 19th and the first half of the 20th century, especially in Europe and in the US. Its main concern was that of invalidating the older artistic canons imposed by tradition to create new and revolutionary works of art meant to provoke their audience.

Modernism was characterized by a strong positive vision of the world based on the faith in progress and science. This tendency avoided to focus on the rendering of subjects through an experimentation on form, artistic processes, and techniques⁵.

After the 1960s, however, the two traumatic experiences of the Great Wars developed a totally different tendency: Postmodernism. Even if it actually started from the 1960s with the first Pop expressions, the term was coined in 1970 to describe all the artistic movements developed after Pop Art, such as “conceptual art, neo-expressionism, feminism, and the Young British Artist of the 1990s”⁶. Unlike Modernism, Postmodernism was disappointed by the recent historical events and based its production on a true skepticism over reason. Furthermore, while the former tendency created simple and clear works, the latter settled on a provocative and complex artistic production, where different meanings overlapped⁷. Finally, Postmodernism is usually defined as an artistic tendency reacting to Modernism especially through a return to traditional tools and styles even if questioning the concept of authority and originality and concerning on the several social issues arisen in these decades.

The first artist who is recognized to be the origin of the later provocative tendencies was Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968). This perverse personality created works of art simply using objects from daily life. His most famous work, and also greatest provocation, was *Fountain* (fig 1, 1917). The work consists in a urinal moved from its original place to be displayed inside a gallery or a museum. The work obviously created disgust and disapproval from the artistic environment at first, especially from that academic taste less used to see “lower objects” considered as works of art. An industrial piece of furniture intended for

⁵ Tate. "Postmodernism – Art Term."

⁶ Tate. "Postmodernism – Art Term."

⁷ Tate. "Postmodernism – Art Term."

bathroom spaces was elevated to art piece. Duchamp totally subverted the art world through *Fountain*. However, his provocative gesture has allowed future generations of artists, to create works discordant from past productions. From this moment the artist became a revolutionary figure able to mirror reality underling its contradictions. The works produced became, by consequence, the true symbol of the artist's own vision of the world.

Duchamp developed the concept of "readymade" around 1915, when he lived in New York. His choice of the "subject" was not driven by an aesthetic purpose. On the contrary, he aimed to a total indifference, or "anaesthesia", where the ready-made does not confer any positive or negative feeling to the viewer⁸. Furthermore, Duchamp defines his ready-mades as the bearer of a message from another readymade. In other words, this new kind of art piece differed from the conventional definition for its "lack of uniqueness" avoiding any aspect of originality or authenticity⁹. His interest was questioning the idea of material authorship, of technical originality, giving more importance to the gesture, to the philosophical process of thinking, rather than to the object.

After Duchamp and his ready-mades, art suffered a profound crisis due to the fact that even a simple and "low" object could be displayed in galleries and could be considered Art. The idea of technical prodigy, of "beauty", as always conceived ceased to be the central prerogative to assert the value of a work of art. Artist began including sources coming from popular culture and everyday life, so that that high art was mixed with mass sources. More specifically, 20th century art of Postmodernism distinguishes itself for taking different styles and media to create new controversial pieces, usually taking inspirations, ironically or

⁸ David Evans, *Appropriation* (Documents of Contemporary Art, London: Whitechapel. 2009), 40.

⁹ David Evans, *Appropriation*, 40.

seriously, from past art forms¹⁰. This new tendency was defined as Appropriation, or, better, the “practice of artists using pre-existing objects in their art with little transformation of the original”¹¹. The phenomenon of Appropriation is part of the modernist inclination in questioning the concept of art itself, subsequently arising several issues concerning the concept of originality and authorship. Walter Benjamin firstly foresaw this inclination in 1936¹². His essay, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* delineates the reasons why art had been destined to change through the use of new technology, such as photography or video. He believed that these new tools would have questioned the nature of work of art, its “here and now”, its “aura”.

Duchamp was the first artist, using existing objects as material for his pieces, believing that everything existing could be considered art. The only prerequisite for something to be art was the presence and the act of the artists themselves. From Pop Art, however, this concept was extremized. The new consumeristic-based culture began relating with its coeval production of goods, advertisement and mass media broadcasting. Pop artist, therefore, exploited objects from everyday life, as well as from mass culture, such as famous icons and visual imagery, in order to reflect on the consumeristic culture of their time. In other words, the Appropriation of low objects raised to the high cultural world, which began thanks to Duchamp, became the rule of the 1960s Pop Art¹³.

After the 1970s, artists questioned the art system itself through the obvious Appropriation of other artist’s works. In New York, a group of artists focused their production on this kind

¹⁰ Tate. "Postmodernism – Art Term."

¹¹ Tate. "Appropriation – Art Term." Tate. Accessed December 04, 2018.

¹² Tate. "Appropriation – Art Term."

¹³ "MoMA Learning." MoMA. Accessed December 05, 2018.

of “taking from the art world” during those years. The so-called “Pictures Generation”, after the show curated by Douglas Crimp in 1977, was composed by Sherrie Levine, Richard Prince, and Cindy Sherman¹⁴. These artists reproduced existing pieces and visual imagery coming from the past or the present in order to create totally new meanings. Appropriation, therefore, strongly threatened the concepts of copyright and originality

This thesis has the aim to analyze the issue of Appropriation art analyzing its characteristics, and why this phenomenon is important critically and historically. Furthermore, the thesis will explore the problematic topic of authorship threatened especially by the artists of the “Picture Generation” of the 1980s. The first chapter is therefore focused on the definition of Appropriation and its artistic and scholarly history.

After having investigated the phenomenon, the thesis will introduce two major personalities active during the Postmodernism phase of the 20th century: Andy Warhol and Sherrie Levine. They represent two different aspect of Appropriation: Appropriation of consumeristic world, and Appropriation of the art world. These artists produced works famous for their controversial aspects and for the consequent theoretical-critical discussions they caused.

Andy Warhol, as the father of Pop Art, was focused on the reproduction of specific icons and symbols belonging to the popular culture arisen to be accepted in the world of art. His Appropriation consisted in the reproduction of mass media advertisement, consumeristic products, and icons symbol of the American culture. However, Warhol also produced a series of works inspired by past art masters such as Leonardo seen through his Pop Art mind.

¹⁴ Daniel Palmer, "Explainer: What Is Postmodernism?", Accessed December 04, 2018.

Sherrie Levine was famous for having totally overturned the concept of paternity and originality. In her works, there is apparently nothing of her own creativity. Her works seem to be merely presenting another artist's work through photography or through the loyal reproduction of physical sculptures. Thus, Levine's art pieces were characterized by the simple reproduction of other pictures or art pieces with no kind of alteration. Copying works in their totality without adding any artist's vision of the world or adaption to contemporaneity is the main issue concerning theorists and scholars who saw in her act a feminist statement in subverting the patriarchal power dominating Art.

Warhol and Levine worked basing their art on the reproduction of the world, proposing works provocative for their artistic technique, or, in many cases, for the absence of it. Appropriating from the present and the past, these artists were able to reflect their own contemporary culture totally overturning it. The former enlarged the audience to the masses through the involvement of consumeristic images in the artworld; while the latter provoked the established male chauvinism in art creating new layers of meanings under exiting works created by male artists. Their productions were so subversive for many reasons that, still nowadays, critics are divided in their opinions.

2. The Phenomenon of Appropriation in Art

Historical Background of 20th Century Appropriation

The 20th century is scenario of crucial historical events acting in political, technological, social and cultural spheres. Politically, the end of World War I left its defeated countries, Germany especially, unsatisfied by the Versailles Treaty. Italy and Japan, even if victorious in the previous war, wanted more than what was granted by the Treaty especially in the economical and territorial aspects. The strong resentment, born after World War I, brought to the emergence of the totalitarian powers which ended with the breakout of World War II in 1939¹⁵. Even though the war ended in 1945 with the victory of the US and its allies, America continued a long dispute based on the nuclear powers with the Soviet Union until 1989 with the fall of the URSS and the final destruction of the Berlin Wall¹⁶.

Here, I have just summarized the most salient moments of 20th century history, but these years lived an intense changing phenomenon due to all its crucial events. The two major Wars during the first half of the century, the rise of new political powers (such as Socialism and Communism) and the fall of the major Empires (such as the Ottoman Empire and the Austrian Empire), the emerging influence of the American consumeristic culture, and the Balkan's wars, ending with the dissolution of the URSS, are all historical events that strongly changed society as

¹⁵ Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*, 36-38.

¹⁶ Hobsbawm, 251.

well as the cultural, political, economic sphere. These events are characterized by a short life span which can be addressed as linked with the brevity of the major artistic movements arising with them. During these years, the styles and movements which developed were impressively numerous: Cubism, Futurism, Dadaism, Surrealism (until the first half of the century) Pop Art, Conceptual Art, Performance Art, Postmodernism (from the second half of the century), all movements characterized by a short life span. Each movement had a quite short and intense life, usually lasting a decade or even less. Therefore, the 20th century can be described both historically and artistically with the definition given by the Marxist theorist Eric Hobsbawm: the *Short Twentieth Century*¹⁷.

Artistic Context: Modernism and Postmodernism

Even if the visual art of the 20th century distinguished itself from the past centuries for its strong variety of movements and styles, it is possible to delineate two major artistic tendencies: Modernism and Postmodernism.

The former developed from the half of the 19th century, starting with Gustav Coubert, until abstract art of the 1950s. This period focused its artistic production on some basic beliefs: the rejection of history and its values, exploration of new techniques and processes, a utopian political view, and a total faith in human progress¹⁸. Furthermore, the faith in progress and innovation brought the artists to focus on new practices based also on the technological developments of the time. As a result, modernism rejected the art of the past to prefer a research in new artistic tendencies and experimentations.

¹⁷ Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*, 5.

¹⁸ Tate. "Modernism – Art Term."

The major theorist of these years was Clement Greenberg. In his essay *Modernist Painting*, he identified Modernism with Kant and his philosophy, since both share a self-critically impulse. While Kant questioned the means of criticism, Modernism made us of art to criticize art itself. Analyzing Modernist painting, Greenberg noticed how artists started to exploit and reconsider the medium conceived as a “limitation” in order to spur them in the creation of new artistic practices. The theorist defined Modernism, as a tendency using “art to call attention to art”¹⁹. The flatness of the canvas is particularly fundamental for Modernist practice since painting is the only medium owning this peculiarity. Artists understood this uniqueness and exploited it in order to obtain their own purposes. Therefore, most modernist art practices avoided three-dimensional illusion, as well as any form of representation. The aim was that of taking a distance from sculptural features in order to obtain an independency. As a result, Modernist painting became abstract, developing in the major artistic movements at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, such as Impressionism, Abstract Expressionism, Cubism, and Abstract Art, until the 1960s.

However, Greenberg neglected the theory of Modernist art as a break with the past tradition. He claims that Modernism distanced itself from the past artistic tendencies no more than any other previous movements. In other words, all the most revolutionary artistic tendencies started with an assumed break with previous periods. However, they have always ended going back to tradition, as Modernism eventually did through its later development in Postmodernism. Greenberg, indeed states:

“Nothing could be further from the authentic art of our time than the idea of a rapture of continuity. Art is – among other things – continuity and unthinkable without it. Lacking

¹⁹ Clement Greenberg, “Modernist Painting.” *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, 1-2.

the past of art, and the need and compulsion to maintain its standards of excellence, Modernist art would lack both substance and justification”²⁰.

Greenberg wrote this essay in the 1960s, but he had already understood that Modernism failed its attempt to finally reject tradition. Hal Foster also identifies the two tendencies as working *in parallax*, “as a continual process of anticipated futures and reconstructed pasts”²¹. As Greenberg, Foster also sees Modernism and Postmodernism not separately, but in a sort of communication.

Firstly, Postmodernism was considered through strong negative terms. Specifically, scholars interpreted it as the end of modernism but even of history itself²². However, defining this term has been quite complex for scholars especially since it involved not only visual arts but also literature, theater, cinema, and music. It has been interpreted as a reaction to the social and political tensions of the Western culture after World War II. Critics were firstly very cynical in the definition of this new artistic movement and influence so that even the term was meant to define it quite ironically.

In order to create a logic definition of the term "Postmodernism", Mike Featherstone made an analytical contraposition between the two words "Modernism" and "Postmodernism", since the latter is surely linked with the former. The presence of the prefix "post" implies the opposing nature of "Postmodernism" against its "matrix" delineating an art movement characterized not only for its chronological placement after modernism but especially for a strong contraposition with it. Postmodernism totally broke up with artistic values and principles

²⁰ Clement Greenberg, “Modernist Painting.”, 7.

²¹ Hal Foster, “The Return of the Real: The Avant-garde at the End of the Century”. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), 207

²² Lucilla Meloni, *Arte Guarda Arte : Pratiche Della Citazione Nell'arte Contemporanea* (Milano: Postmedia Books, 2013), 41.

applied during Modernism, neglecting the previous movement in its essence. It constituted a historical shift based on the creation of new social principles.

However, a proper and delineated definition of the term Postmodernism has not been theorized yet. Featherstone states that, even if a whole definition does not exist, it can be understood in three possible ways. First, Postmodernism involved "changes in modes of theorization, presentation, and dissemination of works which cannot be detached from changes in specific competitive struggles occurring in particular fields". Secondly, it even involves a shift in the cultural sphere itself, where products became the center of a new chain of production, consumption, and circulation linked to a change in the power between different social apparatus. Finally, even the experiences of people started to change, creating totally new and controversial identity structures. Therefore, the fast social and political changes are the basis for the arisen and the growing interest in Postmodernism²³.

Hal Foster largely investigated Postmodernism and its tendencies. In *Return to the Real*, the author describes the new tendency as an attempt to overcome the reactionary nature of Modernism to affirm a new kind of art based on the development of new cultural and political views where kitsch, lower classes, and multiculturalism were initiated to art. Foster, however, identifies in Postmodernism also a more positive interpretation where it promoted new cultural and political practices²⁴. Alike Modernism, Postmodernism aimed to innovate the concept of object in the art practices. However, unlike its predecessor, the new tendency "is not defined in relation to a given medium... but rather in relation to the logical operations on a set of cultural

²³ Mike Featherstone, "Consumer Culture and Postmodernism" (2nd ed. Theory, Culture & Society. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2007) Accessed Dicembre, 2018, 1-11.

²⁴ Hal Foster, "The Return of the Real", 207.

terms”²⁵. These are the years where artists coming from different social layers (feminists, homosexuals, and different races) arose to underline the contradictory hypocrisy of the patriarchal heterosexual white predominance in society. The main purpose was, therefore, that of “rewriting” the Modernist practice in order to “challenge its master narratives with the ‘discourse of others’”²⁶.

Foster also identifies two facets of Postmodernism: “reactionary Postmodernism” and “resistant Postmodernism”²⁷. The former strongly opposed Modernism and its practices, while promoting a return to tradition in order to create a new culture controlled by the new social insurgences²⁸. The latter, instead, was characterized for its refusal not only of Modernism, but also of reactionary Postmodernism. Their coming back to tradition was much more a “critical deconstruction” rather than a “pastiche”. Furthermore, its aim was to analyze the social and political issues rather than forcing to solve them through its own practices²⁹. Furthermore, the former used citations from art history masterpieces decontextualized to be arranged to the new contemporary society, while the second criticized the representations, exploited different languages or media. Lucilla Meloni defined the former as “antimodernism” since artists were concerned about creating a stronger relationship with the audience, and therefore the art market itself, through the exploitation of past art references. The continuous remembering of the past created the so-called “pastiche”, the assembling of different artistic references decontextualized and re-adapted to the present.

²⁵ Hal Foster, *The Anti-Aesthetic : Essays on Postmodern Culture*. (New York: New Press, 1998), x.

²⁶ Hal Foster, *The Anti-Aesthetic*, xi.

²⁷ Foster, xii.

²⁸ Foster, xii.

²⁹ Foster, xii.

One of the exponents of the “antimodernism” tendency was Marcos Lopez. In his work, *Asado en Mendiolaza* (fig 2, 1958) there is all the essence of the appropriative nature of the 70s’ artists. The work is highly provocative since it wants to refer to the *Last Supper* (fig. 3, 1498) by Leonardo da Vinci. Here, the artist is placed at the center, as Christ, while he is cutting some meat for his fellows. The latter are attending this sort of summer barbeque, and their physical appearances, as well as their gestures and behavior, strongly contrast to Leonardo's spirituality and pathos. Lopez totally shocks the viewer with this reference which actually aims to underline contemporary society based on consumerism and mass-production opposed to the sacred age of Renaissance artist.

Fredric Jameson, in *Postmodern and Consumer Society*³⁰, underlines a specific aspect of Postmodern art: the elimination of any difference between high art and the mass consumeristic culture. After the World War II, a consumeristic culture boomed in the US between the 1940s and 1950s spreading also in Europe during the 1950s. This new reality, as well as the recent technological developments, allowed the Postmodernist tendency to take place. Jameson distinguishes it in two major roots: “pastiche” and “schizophrenia”³¹. The former consists in the imitation, or parody, of other artistic practices. Jameson believes that postmodern art could have not created any artistic innovation. Therefore, the only possible alternative was the imitation of past styles. The implied message consisted in the “failure of the new, the imprisonment in the past”³². The concept of Postmodernism’s schizophrenia, instead, lies on a specific principle: the lack of identity. As the psychoanalytical phenomenon, the artistic schizophrenia is proper of an “isolated, disconnected, discontinuous material signifier”, meant here as an object or a text. The

³⁰ Hal Foster, *The Anti-Aesthetic*, 111.

³¹ Foster, 113.

³² Foster, 116.

schizophrenic is destined in living a “perpetual present” without any connection between the different events of his or her life³³. Schizophrenia can be understood against the Postmodernism’s discourse as the impossibility for contemporary art in recalling the past, but as condemned to live in its perpetual future³⁴.

Craig Owens, furthermore, defines Postmodernism as refusing the previous modern authority based on a research of new forms, while it focused on the discard of the “centered, unitary, and masculine” representation. Owens is particularly concerned with the strong feminism rise in Postmodernism. Women started to assume a masculine role in art through the threat of castration that will be discussed further³⁵.

What is Appropriation?

Postmodernism developed, as we saw, in new stronger tendencies based on the questioning of contemporary consumerism and the imitation or taking of past and present styles. This tendency has been theorized under the name of Appropriation. The phenomenon is quite common in art history. Every century and art movement have its own appropriative inspiration from past artistic styles and tendencies, but, what does appropriate another work or style actually mean in art? The term was coined by the combination of the Latin words *ad* (“rendering to”) and *proprius* (“own personal”)³⁶. In other words, Appropriation in the art world consists in the

³³ Hal Foster, *The Anti-Aesthetic*, 119.

³⁴ Foster, 111-126.

³⁵ Foster, 56-67.

³⁶ Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff, “Critical Terms for Art History” (Second ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003): “Appropriation”.

tendency of some artists or movements to make their own something actually belonging to others. Arnd Schneider cites Coombe to define the Appropriation as:

*“the reproduction, copy, or the incorporation (of an image, photograph, and so on...) of an artist from another one who uses it in a totally different context, totally altering the meaning and questioning the notions of originality and authenticity”*³⁷.

Therefore, the main concept of Appropriation can be summarized as the decontextualization of an existing work that could come from a distant artistic period as well as from the appropriator’s time. However, the phenomenon also delineates the Appropriation of images coming from the everyday life involving famous personalities, mass produced goods, advertisements, and mass media sources. It could be meant also as a sort of “recontextualization” of an image in a new artistic context allowing the appropriative artist to create new meanings associated with the original.

The Postmodern abuse of Appropriation, however, caused a real critical issue about originality and authenticity even though this concept is not new in Art History.

Since the Renaissance, the themes of authenticity and originality have been fundamental for the value of a masterwork. Before that, artists had not been considered as owners of a given creative power or awareness. Romans and Greeks considered the artists as imitators since their works were actually the product of an act of copying nature in their depiction of men, plants, and animals. In the *Republica*, Plato himself neglects the connotation of the artist as a creator stating: “Would we say that the painter makes anything? Never, he just imitates”³⁸. Ancient artists had

³⁷ Arnd Schneider, "Sull'appropriazione. Un Riesame Critico Del Concetto E Delle Sue Applicazioni Nelle Pratiche Artistiche Globali." (*Antropologia* 11, no. 13, 2013). Accessed Dicembre, 2018, 15.

³⁸ Tatarkiewicz, Władysław, Krystyna Jaworska, and Olimpia Burba. *Storia Di Sei Idee: L'arte, Il Bello, La Forma, La Creatività, L'imitazione, L'esperienza Estetica*. (7, 2011), 277.

no freedom in representation, but they had to follow a series of “guidelines”. Since Greeks esteemed nature as perfect and following specific rules, artists who wanted to imitate it were restricted by laws, too. Any free action in art was even considered dangerous for art itself; as Tatarkiewicz asserted: “Art should have not comprehended freedom, and it would have been harmful if it would have done”³⁹. Poetry constituted the only exception since the Greek word for poetry delineates the poet as one “who makes”. Restrictions on creativity lasted for centuries until the Renaissance. Although, there was no clear definition of originality, artists began to be seen as inventors of their own works. The concept of artists and their creative power were finally defined in the 19th century when the originality of works became the main factor to assert the value of a work⁴⁰.

During the 19th century, furthermore, the advent of Neoclassicism developed a new interest in the imitation of past artworks. Artists and patrons saw Greek and Roman art as the *exempla* to which the new artists had to take their artistic inspirations. Their influence was so strong that the art theorist Johann Joachim Winckelmann believed that the coming art should have be based only on the ancient classical works as models of “noble simplicity and quiet grandeur”⁴¹. In his work, *Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works in Paintings and the Art of Sculptures*, the scholar states that the only chance man has to be great is to “imitate the antiques” even if they are actually impossible to imitate⁴². He believed that art should be inspired by Greek visual art and poetry in order to better appreciate a masterpiece as the *Laocoonte* or *Laocoon and His Sons* (fig. 4; copy of a bronze original; between 1st century BC and 1st century AD by

³⁹ Tatarkiewicz, Władysław, Krystyna Jaworska, and Olimpia Burba. *Storia Di Sei*, 277.

⁴⁰ Tatarkiewicz, 277.

⁴¹ Diang Dawson, Winckelmann, and David Irwin. "Winckelmann. Writings on Art.", 12.

⁴² Winckelmann, Johann Joachim. *Writings on Art*, 32.

Agnesandros, Atenodoro di Rodi and Polidoro) which became the symbol of perfection as Winckelmann argued. Therefore, even during Neoclassicism, an appropriative tendency was already present, even if this concept would not reach full development until the second half of the 20th century, when it will acquire its full meaning and execution.

In order to define creativity and originality, Tatarkiewicz identifies a main factor: works need to be the expression of a particular mind able to translate in its product its own vision of the world, what he called the “intellectual energy”⁴³. Tatarkiewicz thought that creativity was the utter act of independence of humankind. In other words, when an artist creates something new and original, they impose their own vision of the world without paying attention to the opinion of a third party. In the previous centuries, on the contrary, patrons used to commission the work according to their own tastes and objectives while the artist was just an executor.

In spite of this, imitation has always been part of art itself. As we have seen, Romans and Greeks considered visual art an imitation of nature. Even in the later centuries, when the concept and features of artists became to be more defined, works kept their imitative value. The main focus and aim of art were that of representation of their time, both directly and metaphorically. From the Renaissance, artists began making references to past art periods in their productions. The Classical art of the Romans and Greeks was considered the first model to aspire to. Order and beauty of the ancient sculptures or mosaics has been forever evoked from the Renaissance to Neoclassicism.

During the 20th century, however, artists started to cite and imitate works not only from Classical art, but also from the recent past and the present. The main question at the time was

⁴³ Tatarkiewicz, Władysław, Krystyna Jaworska, and Olimpia Burba. *Storia Di Sei Idee*, 285.

what these kinds of imitations actually meant for the artists. Georges Didi-Huberman states in his work *Devant les temps*:

*“In front of an image - as old as it is - the present never ceases to reconfigure itself. Before an image - as recent, as contemporary as it can be - the past never ceases to reconfigure itself, since this image only becomes thinkable in a construction of memory, if not obsession. Finally, before an image, we humbly have to recognize the following: that it will probably survive us, that in front of it we are the fragile element, the element of passage, and that the image is for us the element of the future, the element of duration. The image often has more of memory and more of future than the being who looks at it.”*⁴⁴ (personal translation).

Appropriative methods acquire different meanings and approaches in contemporary art in opposition to previous art periods. Before the 20th century, citing a past artwork did not mean to neglect the present, but, on the contrary, the Classical revivals were supposed to be a reinforcement of a certain range of values adapted to the current historical situations. With the advent of the avant-gardes, nevertheless, citations and Appropriations were exploited as a sign totally deprived of its original meaning and context, and contemporary works and images were included in the group of works other artists could cite⁴⁵. Douglas Crimp identifies a shift in the appropriative method between Modernism and Postmodernism. He considers that every kind of Appropriation, pastiche and quotation is part of the multiple layers of contemporary culture, from fashion to entertainment, including the most conservative or progressive artworks. However, Postmodernism has been especially significant in the production of appropriative works since the production was filled of meanings beyond the superficial facets of a culture⁴⁶.

⁴⁴ Georges Didi-Huberman, *Devant Le Temps : Histoire De L'art Et Anachronisme Des Images*, (Critique. Paris: Les Editions De Minuit, 2014); cited in Meloni, *Arte Guarda Arte*, 46.

⁴⁵ Lucilla Meloni, *Arte Guarda Arte*, 46.

⁴⁶ David Evans, *Appropriation*. (Documents of Contemporary Art. London, Whitechapel 2009).

There are several reasons why artists used so obsessively the method of Appropriation. Lucilla Meloni, an Italian art historian, identifies at least five of them. She argues that this phenomenon is the result of different artistic aims:

- desacralizing, through irony, a work considered by scholars as an “auctoritas” in art history;
- playing with the identity of another artist;
- creating exclusive relationships;
- developing a “detournement”, which consists in manipulating an artwork’s intended meaning;
- adding a totally new meaning to destabilize the usual conception of the original work.

Leonardo’s Gioconda, or, *Mona Lisa* (fig. 5, 1503-1504) has been, and still is, one of the favorite victims of Contemporary artists. This masterpiece has been considered as the symbol of art itself, so it is not difficult to imagine why it was exploited by Modernists and Post-Modernists. The most famous reproduction of the masterpiece is Marcel Duchamp’s one. His version of *Mona Lisa* surely caused great scandal among scholars and the audience who was not used to see this grade of irony referring to a sacred artistic masterpiece⁴⁷. Duchamp employed a postcard reproduction of the *Mona Lisa* in its reliability as a model for a new artwork. However, the artist added a comical pair of mustaches to the woman’s face. His version, called *L.H.O.O.Q.* (fig. 6, 1919) was especially scandalous for the title itself which actually means “elle a chaud au cul” (“her ass is on fire”). This sexual attribution to a masterpiece as Leonardo’s one, and the focus on the woman’s androgyne physical features were the main aspects Duchamp was aiming to highlight. He was also interested in the total desecration of an authoritarian masterpiece in Art History, that here experiences the decontextualization from its original place to a new dimension where it actually is the victim of a sadistic and ironic mind. Duchamp

⁴⁷ Lucilla Meloni, *Arte Guarda Arte*.

wanted to go beyond history, invent a new language alternative to the artistic traditional one. The artist described his work as a true Dadaist iconoclastic ready-made, where the “original” ready-made is actually a small reproduction of the real *Mona Lisa* on which he wrote the letters composing that scandalous sentence referred to the iconic woman⁴⁸.

Through this description, and, especially, through the use of the word “iconoclastic”, Duchamp wanted to develop a specific idea. He did not want to discredit Leonardo’s masterpiece but to underline the vulgarity of its reproduction as a result of a mass-produced circulating object. Therefore, Duchamp criticized, through *L.H.O.O.Q.*, the exploitation of the original work by the consumeristic society⁴⁹. Furthermore, the work is also expression of a particular historical period, where World War I had left Europe in a deep period of economic and social crisis. The sarcastic smile of the Gioconda, disguised by the iconic mustache, represents the Duchampian irony over his own contemporaneity which had abandoned the older illusions of the “belle époque” and its positivism over progress⁵⁰.

Another artist who made use and desecrated Leonardo’s masterpiece was Kazimir Malevich who, in *Composition with Mona Lisa* (fig. 7, 1914), used a small cut from a newspaper to create his collage juxtaposed with different images as well. In this collage, Malevich used a small cut of the Leonardo’s painting accompanied by the words “partial eclipse” and two red crosses. The writing referred to the recent theft of the painting from the Louvre, while the two crosses better exemplify the avant-guard tendency of decontextualizing works of art to assert the concept of the importance of deleting the image as its physical existence, while, underlining, at the same time, the possibility to repeat it forever. This exploitation of the image wants to state

⁴⁸ Roberto Cresti, *La Trasparenza Dei Baffi: Marcel Duchamp E La Gioconda* (Filottrano, 2011), 34.

⁴⁹ Roberto Cresti, *La Trasparenza Dei Baffi*, 36.

⁵⁰ Cresti, 10-11.

the rejection of *Mona Lisa*'s aura itself. The painting has lost its authenticity since it is here revealed as a work that can be reproduced⁵¹.

If these are exemplifying works making use of icons of the past's artist superstars' masterpieces, at the same time, a new artistic appropriative practice developed, especially in the U.S., which contemplated another nuance of the term Appropriation: the "remake", idea that was actually founded on the concept of reproducing objects coming from the consumeristic and mass-media-based society. This insistence on the reproduction of a sample of very similar subjects hides a basic concept of American modern society's philosophy, or better: things exist only if reproducible.

Appropriation itself is the final result of a mutated concept of Aesthetic. During the 20th century, Art had entered a deep crisis caused by different factors. If on the one hand, history has always moved on, changing the way people see the world, on the other hand, people living in this century were particularly focused on the developments of the new and perceived themselves as the masterminds that could put these changes in practice. The classical concepts of aesthetics were totally overturned⁵².

Tatarkiewicz identifies the five tenets of art and how they changed in the last century. The concept of imitation (intended as imitation of nature) had always been the most important prerogative in art, while, with the advent of the 20th century, it actually became irrelevant for artistic production. Creativity, on the contrary, acquired great importance as well as the concept of form, even if it still has a quite controversial meaning. The idea of "beauty", for centuries considered as the key of artistic achievement, lost its major role while it is considered as something "antiquated" in relation to the discourse of contemporary art. Something similar has

⁵¹ Lucilla Meloni, *Arte Guarda Arte*.

⁵² Tatarkiewicz, *Storia Di Sei Idee*.

happened to the concept of Art itself since the new artistic tendencies demonstrated that contemporary art is totally different and contrasting, in its aims and presentations, to the past artistic movements. “Art” does not have a clear definition nowadays, and this concept has been overturned by contemporaneity⁵³ What art actually is, has become more a philosophical issue, and a question for active critical voice to debate upon.

Concept of Aura and Authorship

Throughout the thesis, we have run in the Benjaminian concept of “aura”, which, as we have seen, is strongly close to the phenomenon of Appropriation. But what is specifically meant with the term aura? The aura refers to that authenticity needed for work of art to be considered Art, conferring to it everything “transmissible from its beginning” and building its own historical relevance⁵⁴. Walter Benjamin described it as close to the aura of a natural landscape where elements, such as mountains, confer a specific and profound, unique, visual experience to the viewer⁵⁵. The advent of photography and film, or better, mechanical reproduction, threatened and then destroyed the concept of aura, allowing repetition of an image, and consequently taking away the idea of authenticity. The debate concerning the notion of aura was divided into two branches, which confronted an elitist commitment to a “high-modernist aesthetic that [...] stands as the inheritor of the transcendental impulse”⁵⁶, and the populist side committed with the “technical-mechanical reproduction” to experience social labor.

⁵³ Tatarkiewicz, 368.

⁵⁴ Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, 3.

⁵⁵ Benjamin, 4-5.

⁵⁶ Robert Kaufman, "Aura, Still." (*October* 1, no. 99, 2002), 46-47.

In his essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Walter Benjamin, deeply analyzes how the concept of the work of art has changed after the technological innovation of the 19th century, especially through mechanical reproduction. Benjamin states that a work of art, as a product of a man's creation is always reproducible. However, from the introduction of lithography, and especially the later invention of photography, this phenomenon strongly arose. The new technological developments allowed the artists to accelerate the reproduction process. Photography helped to reproduce already existing works to reach a wider audience, but it also gained a specific position in the range of artistic processes. Benjamin, however, believes that even if a work of art can be perfectly reproduced, there would always be one aspect that cannot be included in the reproductive technique: "its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be"⁵⁷. In other words, the context – and direct experience - in which the work was originally produced cannot be included in the reproduction, and is thus automatically lost.

The mechanical reproduction, however, is different from the manual one which is, on the contrary, conceived as an act of forgery. Mechanical reproduction is not meant to "touch" the original work, even if it loses the quality of its presence. The major threaten of the mechanical reproduction of an original work of art could consist in the loss of its aura, conceived as the artistic essence of the work linked to its authenticity. The author claims that the technological methods, photography as well as film, overturned how the audience approaches art itself. The "progressive reaction" coming out from mechanical reproduction is the result of both visual and emotional enjoyment and the orientation of the expert⁵⁸. The traditional medium, on the contrary, has entered a period of crisis, caused by the possibility to reproduce a painting for a larger

⁵⁷ Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, 3.

⁵⁸ Benjamin, 11.

audience through new technologies. Painting is not conceived to be experienced by a large audience simultaneously, but photography has allowed masterworks from all over the world to be reproduced and admired by a wider and different audience. The aura of painting is therefore threatened since it loses that aspect of exclusive experience owned by the work. Benjamin, therefore, states that “the mass is a matrix from which all traditional behavior toward works of art issues today in a new form”⁵⁹. In other words, he believes that the masses, and their new needs and desires, have changed that authenticity in works of art during the century, and they have changed the mode of participation in art.

Evan Crimp identifies in photography the crisis of art in his work *Appropriating Appropriation*. The centrality of photography as an art practice in the second half of the 20th century is considered by the author as the main difference between the two artistic tendencies of the period. The new technological tool is characterized to be part of the art practices but also afar from them, but, most of all, photography “threatens the insularity of art’s discourse”⁶⁰. Artists tried to ignore the crisis of art occurred in the previous years through the recuperation of the traditional forms: Appropriation is therefore intended here as the means to recuperate art from the crisis which began with the advent of mechanical reproduction.

One of the major tenets was the work of Roland Barthes *Death of the Author*⁶¹. Even if it was published in 1967, later scholars cited it to delineate the crisis of art underlined by the arising Appropriation art. The author defined a work of art (both visual or literary) as the allegory of the author who produced it, who translates in the piece his own “confidence”⁶². When the figure of

⁵⁹ Benjamin, 15.

⁶⁰ Evans, David. 2009. *Appropriation*. Documents of Contemporary Art. London: Whitechapel: 192

⁶¹ Barthes, Roland, Stephen Heath, and Mary Dove. *The Death of the Author*. 1977.

⁶² Barthes, 2.

the artist ceases to exist, the same purpose of interpreting the work disappears. However, Barthes distinguishes the figure of the author with the figure of the reader. The latter consists of the "place" where all the facets of the text are collected and united. All the citations of the text coming from different backgrounds are guided into the reader who is interpreted as a no-history and no-psychology figure to which all the paths of the text converge. Barthes, therefore, sustains that "to restore writing, we must reverse its myth: the birth of the reader must be ransomed by the death of the author"⁶³. In other words, the product is now finalized and drawn for the audience itself and does not represent the interpretation of the words by a specific personality, the author. This concept was later applied to the visual arts which started to increase the importance of the audience as the final depositary of the work while the artist lost its own creative power.

The 20th-century appropriative tendency is, therefore, the result of a culture where the artist has gained a great independence becoming the expression of his own vision of the world. This last element is particularly important in Contemporary Art. The recent historical events changed the major values of people and even overturned the Spectator itself. Artworks were not just admired by an elitist group of academics but became accessible to a wider mass involving subjects from daily life. Artists appropriated from mass media as well as from the art world in order to assert a new vision of art itself investigated through a critical lens.

In other words, the decontextualization of art (past or contemporary) and mass-produced icons became the assertion of a critique of the contemporaneity by a group of artists whose provocative works still question the greatest theorists and critics, as well as audience looking at them.

⁶³ Barthes, *The Death of the Author*, 6.

3. Andy Warhol: Appropriator of the Popular Culture

Pop Art

After World War II, the United States of America became a strong political power in the whole global background. The new prominent position of the US made art move its center from Europe to the New Continent. As a result of the enthusiasm generated by the economic boom, art turned its attention to new subjects and images coming from the prominent consumeristic society. This tendency developed a new artistic movement: Pop Art. The UK can be considered the “motherland” of Pop Art, which eventually spread in the US from the 1960s, assuming the features of a subtle critique towards a society centered on consumeristic production. Even though the term delineates the art of popular culture, Pop Art, is not an artistic translation of masses’ creativity, but, rather, a critical interpretation of the era’s culture dominated by advertisement and mass media, accusing society of reducing artistic imagination to create a uniformed and impersonal crowd⁶⁴.

Simon Wilson identifies three major characteristics of Pop Art. First of all, the works produced by the movement were both figurative and realist, where reality comes from everyday life. Roy Lichtenstein, one of the major artists of the Pop Art, stated, “Outside is the world; it’s there. Pop art looks out into the world”⁶⁵. Furthermore, since the movement developed in London and New York, it had a strong metropolitan nature. As a result, the source of artist’s

⁶⁴Giulio Carlo Argan and Achille Bonito Oliva. *L'arte Moderna: 1770-1970*, (5.th ed. Biblioteca Aperta / [sansoni]. Milano: Sansoni, 2009), 279.

⁶⁵ Simon Wilson, *Pop*, (A Dolphin Art Book. London: Thames and Hudson, 1974), 4.

inspiration came from that urban environment, images that had never entered the artistic sphere, such as comics, advertisement, Hollywood stars, pop music, food, attracted the artist's imagination. Finally, Pop art treated the subject under a totally new point of view. Focusing on images always ignored by art, artists involved the viewer not through specific artistic qualities, but through the subject itself⁶⁶.

Pop Art easily spread throughout the American artistic background, as a reaction to Abstract Expressionism. This artistic movement developed during the 1940s in New York aimed at creating an art produced by the artist's own inner spontaneity. The artists saw themselves as heroic personalities able to create works of art directly from their automatic feelings. Abstract Expressionism was split in two separated styles; the former, developed by Jackson Pollock, was characterized by its strongly gesturalism and dynamism. The second one, on the contrary, was strongly contrasting to the former due to its static feature expressed through simple colored fields, as its major exponent, Mark Rothko, testifies⁶⁷. The position towards Abstract Expressionism was particularly critical. Roy Lichtenstein described the situation of the time as, "extremely romantic and unrealistic, feeding on art, it is utopian, it has less and less to do with the world, it looks inward"⁶⁸. Pop Artists, such as Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, and Roy Lichtenstein, wanted to break the past rules and habit and, especially, open their artistic production to the world rather than focusing on the inward.

⁶⁶ Simon Wilson, *Pop*, 4-5.

⁶⁷ Wilson, 8.

⁶⁸ Wilson, 8.

Andy Warhol

Among the several artistic exponents of the time, Andy Warhol (1928-1987) is considered as the most transgressive and revolutionary personality from the 1960s to the 1980s developing an artistic style able to influence the culture of these years. His main features were the exploitation of the major innovation of the century: communication, and the reproducible aspect of an image as the main element of his own production. The artist seems to be inspired by Walter Benjamin's theory claimed in 1936. The philosopher, as already analyzed above, stated that the new technological improvements would have destroyed the aura of the masterpiece in favor of its knowledge and Appropriation by a wider audience, including popular mass, and not only the older elite. However, Walter Benjamin theorized his concept of the mechanical reproduction in art projecting it to his own Marxist ideologies based on the arising of the classist masses. Warhol, on the contrary, manipulated Benjamin's thought shaping it to the consumeristic and capitalistic society. Even though it cannot be possible to state with accuracy if Warhol was total acknowledging this statement, his innovation relies on the exploitation of the Marxist concept of mechanical reproduction to shape his own art which arose him to the Olympus of the most famous personalities of art history⁶⁹.

Andy Warhol's art was, therefore, based on the discredit of the consumeristic culture underling the "obsolescenza" (obsolescence) conceived as the assimilation process of all information passing through mass media. His works were the depiction of the images coming from the news and advertisement to testify how the masses' brain stored the imported

⁶⁹ Andy Warhol, Mirella Panepinto, Gianni Mercurio, and Museo Civico Di Castello Ursino (Catania, Italy). *Andy Warhol : La Fabbrica Dell'arte*. Milano: Electa, 2001, 9.

information⁷⁰. Therefore, Warhol's Appropriation act lies on the "taking" of popular culture's imaginary and exploiting these pictures in his own artistic production.

Main Techniques: Photography and Silkscreen

Andy Warhol's works are the result of a very particular technique born through the use of existing and appropriated photography to represent his subjects, and silkscreen, a repetitive means through which he altered them. His works were true "copies" of reality since the subjects came from the everyday world of the mass media and mass production. Photography, video, film, and television became the favorite appropriative tools of the artist who saw in them the new power of the 20th century. Warhol had immediately understood how the repetition of images through these channels was affecting society; the way people saw, elaborated, and interpreted images; and how this was developing a new vision as well as a new sense of ethics, society, and politics⁷¹.

Silkscreen was the main and favorite medium of the artist since it allowed him to work on different pieces at the same time, also thanks to his assistants. He learnt this process while he worked as an advertiser when he was younger⁷². Warhol invested in the technique from a philosophical point of view. He saw in it the essence of modernity and technological process stating that, "The reason why I paint like this is that I want to be a machine. I think that all of us should be a machine"⁷³. This statement surely can be related to Walter Benjamin theory of the

⁷⁰ Giulio Carlo Argan, *L'arte Moderna*, 283.

⁷¹ Andy Warhol, *La Fabbrica Dell'arte*, 32.

⁷² Andy Warhol, and Achille Bonito Oliva. *Andy Warhol : Un Mito Americano : Opere Grafiche*, (Milano: Mazzotta, 2004), 16.

⁷³ Andy Warhol, Kasper König, Karl Gunnar Pontus Hulten, Olle Granath, and Moderna Museet, *Andy Warhol*. (Malmö: Sydsvenska Dagbladets AB, 1968), 4.

mechanical reproduction in art reached by photography (and silkscreen as well) that neglects the aura of authenticity to mechanically produced and reproduceable art pieces.

The American Pop artist did not limit his art to photography or to the Appropriation of mass media, but he was interested in challenging the most significant characteristic of the medium: reproduction. Photography and silkscreen allowed the artist to reproduce the same image over and over again. Warhol exploited this characteristic in order to deprive the image of its original and authentic power for the creation of “serial” works of art. The repetition of the same picture, furthermore, confers to the original the impression of being part of a fiction, conferring to it an imaginary aura exasperated by Andy Warhol through the use of vivid and pop colors, as well as enlarged dots or other artistic alterations.

In order to create his works, Andy Warhol had to free them from his own physical intervention, through a sort of “amputation” of his hand, reached with his typical technological tools such as “opaque projectors, photostats, stencils, gum-eraser stamps, tracing, and eventually silk screens”⁷⁴. This practice granted Warhol to take a distance from the work itself in order not to contaminate it with personal perspectives or critiques. Warhol reported the everyday world in his works without any personal comment, but, rather, leaving the original meaning of the subject unchanged. Since his subjects actually came from the consumeristic society, they already owed an individual significance. As a result, the work was freed from any artistic connotations, leaving the simple image in its own essence and meaning; the choice of the subject became the only statement imposed by the artist.

⁷⁴ *Andy Warhol "Giant" Size*, (Phaidon, 2009), 126.

Becky Cowser distinguishes this distancing from the work, in Warhol's practice in the *Death and Disaster Series*, which also proves Warhol's engagement with social and political issues of the time. The author states:

*"The Death and Disaster series as well as the Celebrity silkscreens are perfect examples [...] of the way the silkscreening process allowed Warhol to take one more step away from his subject while capitalizing on the benefits and symbolic meanings in commodification."*⁷⁵

Major Subjects

The source of his investigation was mass media which became the time's major communication tool. All the events and protagonists of that period passed through television, radio, newspaper, and advertisement reaching every angle of the US, being absorbed by a large audience. Andy Warhol's production was based on the Appropriation of images and texts coming from newspaper and mass media sources⁷⁶. The years between the 1960s and the 1980s were, furthermore, the center of some of the major historical facts involving social and political fields: the Cold War, the Vietnam War, the social manifestations of 1968. These were also the years of important deaths such as the murders of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, and of Hollywood star Marilyn Monroe, as well as the years when Andy Warhol himself was shot by Valerie Solanas (1968). All these events, one of which even strongly personal, influenced Warhol's production strongly.

⁷⁵ Becky A. Cowser, "The Culture "America": Warhol, Celebrity, Death and The Simulacrum." (*The Sloping Halls Review*, 1998), 8.

⁷⁶ Andy Warhol, *La Fabbrica Dell'arte*, 33.

As we already stated, the main focus of the American artist concerned consumeristic goods, the mass media, advertisement, and the most famous and appealing stars of Hollywood. His approach was considered as “irreverent, commercial, essentially nihilistic, aggressively passive, advocating visual emptiness and even opportunistic”⁷⁷. His exhibitions were so transgressive that the main reactions provoked were “shocking and arousing indignation” at first⁷⁸. After all, Andy Warhol is an exponent of Pop Art whose main objective was that of “breaking down the threshold between fine arts and mass media”⁷⁹. In other words, Pop Art put the ordinary at the center of its artistic research, in order to avoid the traditional elite conception of the art world where the boundary between High Art and Low Art was well defined.

Andy Warhol proposed the symbols of popular culture to create a distorted version of reality. Icons such as Marilyn Monroe, Jacqueline Kennedy, Elvis Presley, Liz Taylor, Che Guevara, or simply images from mass media and advertisements, are all elements entering people’s houses every day. The new power gained by mass media was the result of that increased economic boom reached after World War II in the US. The economic and social changes strongly influenced artistic production, where personalities and the historical phenomenon were translated in Warhol’s own production.

Achille Bonito Oliva defines Warhol’s art as the *fantasia dello statistico* (“the fantasy of the statistical artist”) to describe his anthropological translation of the human being as the reflection of the dominant economy of those years⁸⁰. Andy Warhol did not reject his contemporaneity belief in new economic power. On the contrary, he depicts that condition

⁷⁷ Queensland Art Gallery, Andy Warhol Museum, and Gallery of Modern Art, *Andy Warhol*. (South Brisbane, Qld.: Queensland Art Gallery, 2007), 23.

⁷⁸ Queensland Art Gallery, *Andy Warhol*, 23.

⁷⁹ Queensland Art Gallery, 23.

⁸⁰ Andy Warhol and Achille Bonito Oliva, *Andy Warhol: Un Mito Americano*, 9.

through his works where the figure of the *uomo consumato* (“consumed man”) emerged as the symbol of the 20th century economical fever⁸¹. American consumeristic culture was based on a standardization of the human being and the repetition of products, that Warhol translated in his artworks. In Warhol, however, the concept of standardization does not acquire any negative meaning, yet the artist shows total indifference towards it. If consumerism rejected individualism, he rejected it too, making his subjects simple consumeristic products themselves⁸². In other words, although the artist manages to make his subject eternal icons, emblems of a lost individuality, he never totally rejected the consumeristic society in which he lived in.

Appropriation in Warhol

Warhol’s obsession in depicting images from the masses’ commonplace can be translated in a real tendency in appropriating the world around him. His first success was achieved with the production of his first *Campbell Soup Cans* series. The economic boom allowed a huge mass-production of goods, and as a result, people had access to a wide range of products which were actually all the same, an eternal repetition of the same object. Warhol depicted the cans in order to represent the new consumeristic aspect of America. Everyone, from the poorest people to the American President knew the Campbell’s soups, since they entered the commonplace of society. Introducing such a popular object in the world of art had a double meaning. Firstly, the artist wanted to open the artworld to a wider audience which could easily recognize the subject.

⁸¹ Andy Warhol and Achille Bonito Oliva, *Andy Warhol: Un Mito Americano*, 10.

⁸² Andy Warhol and Achille Bonito Oliva, 10.

Secondly, it represents a specific aspect of America itself: the standardization of goods so that both the richest and poorest person actually consume the same product⁸³. In 1962, Warhol created his most famous version of the *Campbell's Soups* (fig. 8, 1962) extremizing his idea through multiple reproductions of the same subject yet expressed in different paintings. The series consists in the repetition of 32 paintings of the famous can for each taste offered by the Campbell industry⁸⁴. The image was later strongly exploited creating several versions, such as “rushed and squashed cans, cans with their tops open, nude cans, cans with torn labels, and can openers en pointe”⁸⁵. Warhol’s Appropriation of a simple good coming from the daily life is an attempt to arise a low object to the world of Art. The use of altered colored resembling the cartoonish style of comic strips, furthermore, also communicated a new aspect of mass-produced goods: their artistic features along with their “heroic” aspect, as if they can be comparable with one of the heroes of comics. The heroic power attributed to a low object can be analyzed as an attempt by the artist to underline how the American consumerism assumed a strong position in society. The mass-produced objects became the key of American success, both internally and internationally. Therefore, they assumed a very relevant power in the American background. The depiction of the soup can, through a specific reproducible technique, underlines the importance of mass-production in the US. In other words, the can is described as a “hero” since it actually became the symbol of American success over the world.

⁸³ Andy Warhol, *Un Mito Americano*, 17-19.

⁸⁴ "MoMA Learning".

⁸⁵ "*Giant*" Size, 126.

“Memento Mori”

The insistence on the repetition of the same subject, even though reproduced in different versions, was theorized by David Bourdon as an example of “memento mori” This theme usually recurs in Warhol’s works as an expression of his own philosophy regarding the theme of death. Repetition of the same images, or the Appropriation of icon’s portraits, as well as The Disaster series encapsulate that momento mori message. In the repetition of the same picture, for instance, Warhol states the caducity of that same image since repeating it would finally bring to its disappearing. The Appropriation of disastrous images coming from mass media wanted to assert the consumeristic approach towards death. Warhol used these horrible pictures and extended them through repetition in order to state how mass media was accustoming the audience reducing their sensitive reception of disasters⁸⁶.

One of the most famous examples of Warhol’s Appropriation of death is expressed *Electric Chair* (fig. 9, 1971). He reproduced the electric chair used to condemn killers and criminals to death as the bearer of his message. The chair seems almost a self-portrait of death itself under the layer of institutions⁸⁷. The total absence of human figure is significant to emphasize the mechanical power of contemporary practices aimed to fight criminality through another violent tool. The electric chair represents the “seat of the American culture”⁸⁸ conceived as an icon by the artist as he already had done with the appealing personality from the world of cinema, politics, and music. The work, furthermore, expresses Warhol’s critique over humanity: “the image becomes death in order to demonstrate death”⁸⁹. Andy Warhol analyzed the theme of

⁸⁶ Paul Bergin, "Andy Warhol: The Artist as Machine" (*Art Journal* 26, no. 4, 1967), 360-361.

⁸⁷ Queensland Art Gallery, *Andy Warhol*, 73.

⁸⁸ Queensland Art Gallery, *Andy Warhol*, 73.

⁸⁹ Queensland Art Gallery, 73.

death as a member of the modernist culture in its turning to postmodernism. Therefore, the images born by his obsession on the theme were actually the result of a philosophical analysis about the eternal becoming whose final destination is death. Warhol had, indeed, a very negative conception of the world where “you are already dead, because he became death a long time ago”⁹⁰. In other words, Warhol appropriated a photograph coming from newspaper to develop his own philosophical consideration about death and life.

Philip Brophy argued that Warhol had a real talent in depicting subjects in their “process of dying”⁹¹. The *memento mori* theme was strongly present in his later portraits of celebrities and famous personalities. Women appearing in his works were particularly relevant in the communication of this concept which Warhol expressed placing specific emphasis on their smile. As a result, Warhol appropriated images of famous icons such as Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor, and Jackie Kennedy in order to embody within them the concept of *memento mori*, as Angus Trumble theorized⁹². His works represent a postmodern representation of the *memento mori* seen through different people and icons⁹³. The portraits of the famous personalities of that time became the bearer of an obscure message based on the inevitability of death and the caducity of human’s life. His production of portraits was huge: Warhol made thousands of depictions of Hollywoodian stars, politicians, artists, musicians, fashion designers, art dealers, whoever willing to pay around US\$25,000 could be portrayed by the iconic artist⁹⁴. The large production of portraits is significant both as the artist’s own training with photography and painting, but also a true reflection of the 1960-80s reality through the representation of their

⁹⁰ Queensland Art Gallery, 75.

⁹¹ Andy Warhol, Kasper König, Karl Gunnar Pontus Hulten, Olle Granath, and Moderna Museet, *Andy Warhol*. (Malmö: Sydsvenska Dagbladets AB, 1968) 19.

⁹² Andy Warhol, *Andy Warhol*, 19.

⁹³ Queensland Art Gallery, *Andy Warhol*, 72.

⁹⁴ Queensland Art Gallery, *Andy Warhol*, 25.

major influential personalities. The bond between the artist and the patron was, therefore, very strong and durable since it was based on a real collaboration of “give-and-take” between the creator, all the figures encircling the artwork, and the artwork itself⁹⁵.

Among the several portraits, there were some groups of paintings that strike for their powerful reference to death: *Liz Taylor*, *Marilyn*, *Mona Lisa*, and *Jackline Kennedy* are significantly charged with death’s motif through Warhol’s rendering of their enigmatic glance. *Jackie O* (fig. 10, 1964), for instance, can be interpreted as a critique over that American system where even the most intimate feelings were displayed in a terrible show. Here, Warhol placed in an unspecified succession, photographs of Jacqueline Kennedy before and after her husband’s assassination in Dallas. The blue photographs depicted a happy Jackie living the envied American dream, as a rich, fashion, and married woman. The white photographs, on the contrary, represent a mourning woman frozen by that terrible and horrible event. Warhol insists on the unpredictability of life, where everything can change in just few seconds, and also the most perfect life can be turned in a tormenting nightmare. The insistence on the ambivalence between the two moments of the woman’s life constitutes, therefore, the main key of the whole composition. However, the main message is still a critique over the merchandizing of human feelings to fill the consumeristic show the US sold to the world⁹⁶. Furthermore, Thomas Crow sustains that the work can also testify how the audience is more open to compassion when the subject of the tragedy is an “idol” rather than with it hits anonymous characters.

The second series concerning the theme of death regards the depiction of one of the most famous women in the 1960s, and still nowadays: Marilyn Monroe. When Warhol created the series of works depicting this iconic figure, however, Marilyn had already died. The first series,

⁹⁵ Queensland Art Gallery, 28.

⁹⁶ Andy Warhol and Achille Bonito Oliva, *Un Mito Americano*, 21.

he produced was dedicated to Marilyn Monroe based on an existing photograph Warhol appropriated by an anonymous artist⁹⁷, depicting the woman's face looking at the viewer. *Marilyn* (fig. 11, 1967), and other depictions of famous icons, hide a deeper meaning about the eternity gained by these personalities throughout Warhol's representation. They are deprived of their individuality, but became an eternal idol fixed in Warhol's representation⁹⁸. In this series, the woman is presented to the audience in a flirting attire. The sensuous physical features of the woman are strongly underlined by the use of bright colors. Her lips are strongly emphasized by Warhol as if they wanted to seduce the viewer. The great regard to Monroe's mouth is explored in another series: *Marilyn Monroe's Lips* (fig. 12, 1962) painting is the most significant to understand the great attention Warhol paid to her physical details. The artist reduced the woman to her most sensual characteristic fixing her smile forever⁹⁹. Warhol appropriated not only the photograph of an anonymous reporter, but the image of Marilyn herself. The Hollywoodian star, had just died when he realized the work, so the series depicting the woman appears to be a sort of funerary tribute to the star. She is extremized in her sensuous features for which she gained popularity and fame. Warhol used her image as the emblem of consumeristic society herself. The artist appropriated her own fame to express his own philosophy regarding death and the inevitable destiny of the human being. However, since the paintings themselves became icons, Marilyn reached a sort of immortality and eternity. In other words, Warhol communicates two opposing motifs through one single series: the eternity reached through Marilyn's fame and her status of mass media icon (also gained through Warhol's works), and on the other hand the caducity of beauty and human life expressed through the nihilation of the repeated image.

⁹⁷ Queensland Art Gallery, *Andy Warhol*, 33.

⁹⁸ Paul Mattick, "The Andy Warhol of Philosophy and the Philosophy of Andy Warhol." (*Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 4, 1998), 978.

⁹⁹ Queensland Art Gallery, *Andy Warhol*, 99.

According to Crow, the silkscreen technique can be relevant in the analysis of the *Marylin* series. The manipulation by the artist in the monochrome image is an attempt to avoid the subject, so Marilyn herself, of her own individuality and living presence. Crow states that the image “is a memorial in a sense of resembling memory: powerful selective, sometimes elusive, sometimes vividly present, always open to embellishment as well as loss.”¹⁰⁰ In other words, Warhol reduced the image of the iconic star to a commodity-like fetish, where the portrait is the emblem of the woman’s beauty, as well as a hymn to the consumeristic exploitation of idolization, and the mystic power of death.

Appropriation of the Past

Andy Warhol, however, was not only an appropriator of popular culture. Even if, he is known especially for his *Campbell Soups* or *Marylins*, the artist produced paintings based on the Appropriation of masterpieces coming from the Renaissance. Between 1982 until his death in 1987, Warhol produced a series of works focused on religious subjects. He started with some “details”, the *Details of Renaissance Paintings series* (1984), of ancient works which were appropriated to be revised in a total Pop style, typical of the American artist. Jane Daggett Dillenberger comments Warhol’s manipulation of the image as:

“other artists were appropriating and recreating the great art of the past, often with an ironic or sardonic twist. Warhol’s manipulation of the Renaissance paintings was through radical cropping, so that the subject matter of the original is all but readable. In

¹⁰⁰ Crow, “Saturday Disasters: Trace and Reference in Early Warhol,” 316.

addition, the subtle and darker palette of the Renaissance masters is replaced by a cacophony of Day-Glo colors that assault and delight the eyes”¹⁰¹.

One of the ancient paintings from which Warhol realized his altered “copies” is Leonardo da Vinci’s *Annunciation* (fig. 13, 1472). The artist remade the famous masterpiece (fig. 14, 1984) manipulating its original aspect in order to propose something totally new and offering to the audience a Pop Renaissance painting. The original “Leonardian” painting depicts the Virgin on the right sitting on a low covered throne while she is reading a precious book placed on bookrest on a marble-decorated table. The woman is interrupted by the sudden arrival of the archangel Gabriel who has just flown into the scene reporting the holy news to the woman. The masterpiece is dense of harmony and tenderness. The characters almost seem to be frozen in a holy and spiritual moment set on an idyllic landscape. Colors and tones reflect the sacredness of the whole event, painting the figures, their garments, and the natural elements with elegance and sensitivity.

Andy Warhol strongly manipulated the whole work in order to create a new version imprinted on his own Pop tastes and style. Firstly, he cropped the masterpiece to focus only on one specific detail: what remains are only the hands of the two characters, which seem to gently tend one to the other. The high mountain peak, at the center, and the landscape behind the hands are the natural elements joining the two characters¹⁰². However, Andy Warhol did not limit his Appropriation in cropping the image, he applied the most revolutionary manipulation on the use of lines and colors. The artist distorted the depicted elements so that their colors are actually applied quite out from their supposed contours. As a result, the whole painting gains vibrancy and dynamism as if some earthly vibrations move the inner scene itself. Furthermore, colors

¹⁰¹ Jane Dillenberger, *The Religious Art of Andy Warhol* (New York: Continuum, 2001), 48.

¹⁰² Jane Dillenberger, *The Religious Art of Andy Warhol*, 48.

themselves strongly contrast with Leonardo's *Annunciation*. While the Italian master, as we saw, used delicate and intimate tones, Warhol extremized and manipulated colors through unreal and vivid hues. The sky is depicted with a bright red, the mountain has a strange pink, the threes are blue with some green additions, the architectural element of the wall is rendered with an aquamarine hue. All the elements are, therefore, colored with improper tones, totally different from that naturalistic rendering conceived by Leonardo in 1472. Warhol, on the contrary, deliberately created this contrasting effect according to his Pop Art style where the cartoonish colors represent the distinctive feature. Only the character's hands preserve their skin-like nature, even though the artist extremized them, too¹⁰³.

Andy Warhol's manipulation of older Renaissance pieces, however, was particularly large and well-reasoned. The American artist was particularly fascinated by Leonardo's masterpieces so that the *Annunciation* is not the only piece appropriated by the Pop artist. During his last years, Warhol produced at least twenty different versions of the most famous work made by Leonardo da Vinci: *Last Supper* (fig. 3, 1498). The first work was commissioned by Alexandre Iolas in 1986. He was curating a show in Milan in front of Santa Maria delle Grazie where the original made by Leonardo is placed¹⁰⁴. However, Warhol was also strongly attached to the *Last Supper* since he was a child when he admired a reproduction hung on the wall of his childhood's kitchen. His mother, Julia Warhola, was very devoted to religion and owned a small reproduction of Leonardo's *Last Supper* in her own *Old Slavonic Prayer Book*¹⁰⁵.

When Warhol started his series, he was not provided of the original and neither of a proper reproduction. Therefore, he was forced to exploit a small reproduction coming from a

¹⁰³ Jane Dillenberger, *The Religious Art of Andy Warhol* (New York: Continuum, 2001), 48.

¹⁰⁴ Jane Dillenberger, *The Religious Art of Andy Warhol*, 80.

¹⁰⁵ Dillenberger, 80.

“Vasari type book”, where the masterpiece was drawn in its original outlines. Following the lines traced in his source, Warhol was able to recreate the physical features and gestures identically to the original. Warhol himself was very proud of his great attention to details and the efficiency in copying Leonardo’s work so that he defined his Appropriation act as an example of his “plagiarist style” which consists in his ability in rendering with great loyalty the details of the original source¹⁰⁶. However, he totally avoided any spatial context, cropped the image only on the table and on the characters, stressing on the monumentality of the features. This model was later used to create his further versions of the *Last Supper* series. One of the most emblematic variants is *Be Somebody with a Body (with Christ of Last Supper)* (fig. 15 ca. 1985-86). Here, Warhol flanked the gigantic cropped image of Christ from the *Last Supper* near to the image from the advertisement of a bodybuilding program. This work represents a double act of Appropriation: Warhol reproduced both a Renaissance masterwork and a popular advertisement symbolizing the ancient High art values and the present low values based on consumerism and advertisement. The two figures, even if strongly different in their context and meanings, seem to interact. Christ is tending his left hand toward the bodybuilder who can be associated with Christ for the halo-shaped element around his head. However, Christ and the bodybuilder strike for their differences. Jesus is depicted against a bright white background exactly as in the Leonardo’s *Last Supper*: his head and gaze down, with his left hand pointing towards the bread and wine underling the famous state “One of you will betray me, one who is eating with me” (Mark 14:17)¹⁰⁷. His appearance is elegant, placid, and tense, embodying all the drama of the event. The bodybuilder, on contrary, is painted against a deep black background, shaped in white with a huge writing imposing around his whole part of the canvas, as the title: “Be a Somebody

¹⁰⁶ Jane Dillenberger, *The Religious Art of Andy Warhol* (New York: Continuum, 2001), 48.

¹⁰⁷ Jane Dillenberger, *The Religious Art of Andy Warhol*, 84.

with a Body”’. The bodybuilder occupies the bottom right angle depicted from his chest with the arms crossed on the body, while he is looking upward left. His behavior is different from Christ’s: the bodybuilder is confident, almost arrogant, and depicted as a hero from comics strip. The image represents all the essence of Warhol’s art. The image of advertisement is exploited and elevated to the comic-heroic, contrasting the famous masterpiece depicting a religious image to underline the superficiality of his own present based on consumerism and advertisement¹⁰⁸.

The choice of Andy Warhol in appropriating past artworks could be related to the tendency of the time. The artist produced these works during the 1980s, when in the US and in Europe Postmodernism was spreading. As already analyzed, this artistic tendency was especially characterized by a return to tradition as main source and inspirational tool. Therefore, Warhol could have been interested in the older masters as a result of a larger artistic impulse. However, this Appropriation of the past still preserves Warhol’s typical style. The images are totally manipulated to be adapted to the Pop tastes of the artist. As in the cans’ series and the images of Jackie or Marylin, also the most famous works of art in art history become the victims of Warhol’s manipulations. The Renaissance sources reached the same treatment reserved for low subjects, with the manipulation of their main features and alteration of colors. Through the representation in series of the masterworks, he wanted to state their reproducible features rejecting their eternal aura but reducing them to a consumeristic product.

Andy Warhol was a complex and transgressive personality as well as a very eclectic artist. He was able to work with every medium especially exploiting the new technological tools such as photography, silkscreen, and cameras. The artist based his production looking at the world

¹⁰⁸ Jane Dillenberger, *The Religious Art of Andy Warhol* (New York: Continuum, 2001), 88.

around him taking inspirations from mass media and consumeristic culture of the US from the 1960s to the 1980s. Warhol can be considered an appropriator for his ability in “taking” and translating, through his own art, the reality of these years. Working on different kinds of subjects, the artist re-interpreted his world based on the mass production of goods, advertisement, mass media, celebration of icons as deities, and everything typical of that American culture focused on appearance and superficiality. Warhol appropriated, therefore, consumeristic goods to testify the great importance they gained in the collective consciousness through their placement in a field always dominated by high subjects and motifs. The Appropriation of icons and personalities, furthermore, consisted not in a simple portraying of people, but in their eternal depiction to underline their actual loss of individuality and the motif of death so loved by Warhol. Finally, his Appropriation act towards Renaissance masterpieces can be read as the attempt to reinterpret the past through his own Pop eyes in order to emphasize the difference between the sacred values of the past and the superficiality of the present where everything seems unreal and manipulated. These works evoke a number of social and political problems, which question the very essence of 20th consumer society. Still nowadays, Warhol represents one of the major revolutionary personalities of the 20th century able to translate the consumeristic society of his contemporaneity without actually directly criticizing it. His apparently loud art is actually a subtle voice whispering in the audience’s ears.

4. Sherrie Levine: The Still-Life Artist

Appropriation as a “Castration” Act

Postmodernism developed in different fields and artistic styles. As already analyzed in the first chapter, it can be divided into two major roots. The former was based on a rejection of Modernism through the representation of images coming from the world out the typical artistic inspirational sources. Andy Warhol can be placed in this first interpretation of Postmodernism. A second root, however, was concerned in a re-contextualization of past artworks and styles in order to create deeper critiques over contemporary society. These artists were particularly concerned in overturning the pre-existent patriarchal white male dominance in society. Craig Owens defined this particular tendency as an act of castration applied to Postmodernist women artists of the 1970s and 1980s.

The theme of castration actually comes from Freud who developed this theory linked to the trauma that young male children receive when they realized the missing penis in their mother’s body. The trauma is, therefore, the basis of the social difference between men and women, according to Freud, where the male counterpart always perceives a “lack” in the woman. The female artists of Postmodernism adopted the “castration” act in order to reject that social difference implied by trauma. Their castration happened through their Appropriation of works belonging to male artists as a rejection of their paternity¹⁰⁹.

¹⁰⁹ Hal Foster, *The Anti-Aesthetic*, 70-71.

Sherrie's Levine Artistic Practice

Sherrie Levine (born in 1947) has been one of the major representatives of this feminist artistic tendency. Her production was based on a total Appropriation of other artists' works. The mode of copying other artists' works was so shocking for the critique that the production still provokes contrasting opinions in academic and scholar fields. Levine's practice, especially during the 1970s and 1980s, produced a series of works based on the mere re-photographing of other artists' masterpieces coming from the near past, or from her same epoch. At the same time, she was also producing works based on existing art pieces with the only adoption of slight changes. According to the artist, reproducing existing works can be comparable to the same mass culture practice of depicting the images of Elvis or Liz Taylor already appropriated by Andy Warhol since the 1960s¹¹⁰.

Sherrie Levine considered herself as a "still-life artist with the book plate as (her) subject" creating artworks appropriated by other artists, characterized by a loyal reproduction in their wholeness or by slight differences where the basic principle was that of the "almost-same"¹¹¹. Therefore, even if the original work conserves its recognizability, it is changed in some peculiar details by the artist who plays with the many models as an "alchemist"¹¹².

The artist knew that, as a woman, she would have always had issues in imposing her art in the historical scenario. The art world is a field dominated by the patriarchal mind where the man is conceived as the creative power while the woman as the creative object. Her appropriating of male artists' work is the base of what is labeled as "transvestite

¹¹⁰ Sherrie Levine and Howard Halle, "Fountain (After Duchamp: 1-6) La Fortune (After Man Ray: 1-6)", (Grand Street, no. 42, 1992), 94.

¹¹¹ Martha Buskirk, "Sherrie Levine." *Artforum International*, vol. 50, no. 7, 2012.

¹¹² Johanna Burton, "Sherrie Levine." *Artforum International*, vol. 46, no. 4, 2007.

identification"¹¹³, the act of taking the clothes of a male artist and stealing his name to create her own. Carter Ratcliff states that Levine used to appropriate other works as the result of her own "resentment" toward the unfair faith of her art. She knew that the name "Sherrie Levine" would have not been so artistically relevant as the names of her "victims" (Walker Evans, for instance) since, as a woman, her works were destined to be seen in a different manner by the critique¹¹⁴. George Zavitzianos argued that her behavior is typical of women artists whose desires to be compared or considered equal to their male colleagues in their working field, brings to a sort of envy, theorized as "penis envy"¹¹⁵. So, Sherrie Levine's deed to tie her name to the works created by someone else is the result of a sexual discrimination in the artistic field which led female artists to identify themselves or desire for the position of their male counterparts. Zavitzianos defined this behavior as a kleptomaniac phenomenon: "the stealing of symbolic replacement parts not for the mother's penis but for the father's and the daughter's, is what would constitute 'the female fetishism'"¹¹⁶.

The concept of fetishism usually recurs in Levine's critique. Sigmund Freud theorized this phenomenon as:

*"the ability to balance knowledge and belief and hence to maintain a distance from the lure of the image -is also inaccessible to woman, who have no need of the fetish as a defense against a castration which has always already taken place. Female spectatorship, because it is conceived of temporally as immediacy [...] and spatially as proximity [...], can only be understood as a confounding of desire"*¹¹⁷.

¹¹³ Howard Singerman, "Seeing Sherrie Levine", (October, vol. 67, 1994), 99.

¹¹⁴ Singerman, 99.

¹¹⁵ Singerman, 99.

¹¹⁶ Singerman, 99.

¹¹⁷ Singerman, 98.

Photographic Appropriation: Walker Evans and Edward Weston

As already stated, Sherrie Levine is known especially for her appropriative reproduction of existing photographs. Walker Evans and Edward Weston have been the major sources of Levine's productions, also used to elaborate her own social statement against that patriarchal hegemony ruling the whole world and the artistic apparatus itself.

Her major and most famous cycle of pictures is based on the Appropriation of photographs by Walker Evans who was engaged in a documentary directed by James Agee called *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941) whose main aim was reporting the poor rural life of Americans involved in a strong and difficult economic and social crisis during the 1930s. The series of photographs depicted the lives of three tenant families: the Burroughs, the Fields, and the Tengles. These pictures were not actually meant to become an artistic "corpus", since, as James Agee asserted in the introduction of *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, the report did not have any artistic purpose. However, both Evans' photographs and Agee's literature were strongly appreciated by the critique for their strength in describing such a hard reality. Evans' pictures were particularly striking for their "naked realism" which actually is the result of the artistry manipulation of the photographer. Therefore, his photographs are the reflection of that misconception according to which "what is depicted in a photograph corresponds to the truth since it is the mechanical reproduction of reality"¹¹⁸. Evans was able to add another element with his glance.

¹¹⁸ James C. Curtis and Sheila Grannen. "Let Us Now Appraise Famous Photographs: Walker Evans and Documentary Photography." *Winterthur Portfolio* 15, no. 1 (1980), 1.

Levine took some of these pictures as the sample for her own artistic production. The artist simply re-photographed Evans' reportage appropriating it through the labeling of her own name. In other words, Sherrie Levine made photographs of Evans' works signing them with her name and entitling the pictures' cycle as *After Walker Evans* (fig.16, 1981). In the cycle, the image remains the main object of the viewer's attention, but through the presence of Sherrie Levine's original, even though paradoxical in its nature, the viewer can discern the process of mediation meant by the artist¹¹⁹.

One of these appropriated pieces consisted of the photograph of a woman involved in James Agee's project. *Alabama Cotton Tenant Farmer's* or *Allie Mae Burroughs, Hale County, Alabama*, 1936 (fig. 17, 1936) depicts a woman against a wooden surface, probably an outdoor wall. Evans photographed her, from her breast, focusing on her face. Here, indeed, the viewer can perceive the tension central to the documentary. The signs of labor, poverty, anger, and the sun are all visible on her face marked by small wrinkles; her hair arranged in a tied hairstyle; her gaze fixed on the viewer expressing the hard lifestyle condition; and the tightened mouth revealing a sort of discomfort for being photographed by the artist. It's a vicious and real portrait of a true woman, that is suggesting her life to the viewer.

As Howard Singerman asserts in his essay *Sherrie Levine's Art History*, her act of Appropriation was able to discard that art historical fundament based on the link between the image and its description. Levine has always believed that the description of an image actually comes "before" the image itself. She even cited Barthes asserting that: "the birth of the viewer must be at the cost of the painter"¹²⁰. Therefore, Sherrie Levine's production is strongly connected with Roland Barthes's concept of the death of the author. Levine created the reversal

¹¹⁹ Martha Buskirk, "Sherrie Levine".

¹²⁰ Howard Singerman, "Sherrie Levine's Art History." *October*, vol. 101, 2002, 98

of the "before and after" of an original piece. The authentic work can be labeled as "before" only when Levine made its "after" through copy or imitation¹²¹. However, the artist did not agree in displaying her own work next to the original one, since this comparing exercise would probably highlight the "sameness" rather than question the differences¹²².

The difference between the two images (the original and her copy) consists, according to Singerman, in what has already been theorized by Marcel Duchamp: the "infra-thin"¹²³. This term identifies a spatial and temporal gap between the original and its reproduction. The artist states that all reproductions imply a sort of temporal gap with their original pieces which is not historical but rather "a sort of continuous and ongoing stopping of the historical in sheer repetition, in the 'one thing after another'"¹²⁴. The difference between a copy and its original was identified by Duchamp as an opposition between its spatial and in a certain sense its sexual features: "separation has the two senses male and female"¹²⁵.

Sherrie Levine usually insisted on the concept of opposition between femininity and masculinity. Her Appropriation act was indeed also a feminist statement to subvert the male authority and power in the artistic field where the woman was just considered as the inspirational object of art but not as creative power. Sherrie Levine's Appropriation act is actually linked to that Postmodernist practice spread in the US and Europe during the 1970s and 1980s. As a response to the social revolutions of these years, artists started to create works striking not for

¹²¹ Howard Singerman, "Sherrie Levine's Art History." *October*, vol. 101, 2002, 98.

¹²² Singerman, 100.

¹²³ "When asked for a conceptual definition of the term 'infrathin,' Marcel Duchamp replied that the notion is impossible to define, 'one can only give examples of it:' --the warmth of a seat (which has just/been left) is infrathin1 --when the tobacco smoke smells also of the/mouth which exhales it, the two odors/marry by infrathin --2 forms cast in/the same mold (?) differ from each other by an infrathin separative amount. All "identicals" as identical as they may be (and the more identical they are) move toward this infrathin separative amount".

Jay D. Russel, "Marcel Duchamp's Readymades: Walking on the Infrathin Ice".

¹²⁴ Howard Singerman, "Sherrie Levine's Art History." *October*, vol. 101, 2002, 102.

¹²⁵ Singerman, 102.

their artistic qualities, but for their artistic content. Levine was particularly concerned in underling the white bourgeois male chauvinism ruling in the artistic layers where woman is considered only an artistic object, rather than an artistic subject able to create her own art. In her Appropriation act, there is an attempt for a female artist to gain that power always neglected to women, also in art history.

Her major act of Appropriation as a feminist statement is linked to Edward Weston's picture of his young son naked Neil around the 1920s (fig. 18, 1925). *Six Nudes of Neil* depicts his young son portrayed naked, focusing on his torso, genitals, and legs until the lower part of the knees. The pictures are strongly static, placid, and delicate even if it appears also quite sensual, maybe too much for a portrait of his young son. The image, furthermore, has been considered actually a direct citation itself of the ancient statues, as Douglas Crimp exemplified, making a specific reference between Weston's picture and the Praxiteles sculptures and the classical style¹²⁶.

Sherrie Levine proposed the same picture in the work *After Edward Weston* (fig. 19, 1990), but her appropriated version hides a deeper gender discussion which was deeply analyzed by Craig Owens¹²⁷. Levine's taking of such an intimate work made by another artist, has been considered as a "castration" act¹²⁸. Since Levine re-photographed Weston's picture depicting Neil, her act deprives the father of his sexual power and, as Owens sustains, claims a strong "disrespect for paternal authority"¹²⁹. More than an appropriative act, Owens describes it as an

¹²⁶ Howard Singerman, "Seeing Sherrie Levine", 83.

¹²⁷ Hal Foster, *The Anti-Aesthetic*, 57-77.

¹²⁸ Foster, 67.

¹²⁹ Foster, 73.

"expropriation" activity, since while refusing Weston as the creative mind of the art piece, she is also refusing his paternal role for the subject depicted¹³⁰.

The artist, however, did not choose her appropriated pieces randomly. As we saw with what happened with Weston's image, Levine always re-photographed images depicting specific subjects. Craig Owens defined them in a specific category: the Other. The latter identifies that category of people and subjects quite at the margin of society: women, children, the poor, and the insane, but nature as well¹³¹. However, Levine was successful in depicting them not as a general identity but as the absolute of their own representations (Women, Children, Poor, Insane, and Nature). Her depiction of previous artists' pieces depicting these specific categories has been considered as a sort of "liberation act". As already argued for Weston's photographs, Levine used to assert her castration act over already existing artworks. She has been criticized to exploit Appropriation as a symbol of her "envy" for other's artistic achievement, while Singerman sustains that it is actually linked to her castration procedure against the patriarchal society¹³². Therefore, as Owens had already argued, Levine did not appropriate but rather "expropriate", or, in other words, she puts "something out of one's control, to take it out of the owner's hands"¹³³.

Sculptural Appropriation: Sherrie Levine and Marcel Duchamp

Even if Levine's most famous production is linked with her photographic Appropriation, she actually worked with material objects. Alike photography, the artist did not create nothing new, but she continued in her appropriating tendency reproducing existing works.

¹³⁰ Foster, 73.

¹³¹ Hal Foster, *The Anti-Aesthetic*, 73.

¹³² Howard Singerman, "Seeing Sherrie Levine".

¹³³ Singerman, 96.

Marcel Duchamp, the controversial artist of the first half of XX century, became the inspirational source for Levine's art during the 80s and 90s through the realization of two works: *Bachelors* (fig. 20, 1989) and *Buddha* (fig. 21, 1996). In these cases, Levine did not apply the same concept used for the photographs of Evans and Weston, she did not limit herself to the mere reproduction of Duchamp's works as they were, in their total sameness. On the contrary, she adopted some differences which changed the visual appearance of the originals to confer something different to the viewers.

Bachelors is the reproduction of one of the most known and controversial works created by Duchamp, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*, best known as the *Large Glass* (fig. 22, 1915). The original work was already in itself reference to gender and sexual desire stressing the bachelors' tension of masturbation provoked by the distant, but still present, bride in the upper register. Sherrie Levine appropriated and extended the *Large Glass* reproducing the nine bachelors, or "malic molds", in three-dimensional and sculptural objects meant to be displayed in nine different showcases. As the artist herself stated, she was interested in "the tension between the original and [her] work. When it is close, but non the same, as the original [...] there's a different kind of tension"¹³⁴. She also modeled the different versions of bachelors in a milky glass to underline the sexual reference already stressed in the original. Here, however, she wanted to create a work self-conscious of its being fetish where this term has a double meaning both in its psychoanalysis sense of sexual excitement provoked by an object, and in the more ancient sense of "a representative or habitation of a deity", which, in this work is replaced by the figure of Duchamp¹³⁵. The artist, therefore, intensified and completed Duchampian

¹³⁴ Mary Magada-Ward, "On Wanting to Write This as Rose Selavy: Reflections on Sherrie Levine and Peircian Semiotic." *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2009, 33.

¹³⁵ Mary Magada-Ward, "On Wanting to Write This as Rose Selavy", 34.

representation of the molds through the sculptural representation of the two-dimensional objects as if Duchamp created the model while Levine achieved the sculpture.

Her second Duchampian reenactment involved *Buddha* which is, on the contrary, composed of three small urinals made of polished brass. Levine obviously was inspired by the famous Duchampian creation *Fountain* (fig. 1). The original was intended to subvert the concept of artwork and artistic creation introducing in the art world something belonging to the lower field of daily life. The main concept underlined by the artist was the impossibility in ascribing any appreciable aesthetic features to the art piece, the urinal, meant as the power of an artwork to confer an estate of ecstasy to the viewer through mere observation¹³⁶. Displacing of such a provocative work, Duchamp subverted the idea of art changing forever its tenet based on the concept of beauty.

Through *Buddha*, Sherrie Levine herself subverted the main message of its original piece. While Duchamp neglected the aesthetic experience, she attributed to the urinals that aesthetic feature through the adoption of an artistic material as polished bronze. The final result is a fashionable object reminding, in fact, the image of a sitting Buddha in the act of meditation. The plasticity of the material chosen by Levine allows the creating of an art piece totally different from its original. If in Duchamp's urinal, we can see the object as it is (a simple urinal), in Levine's reproduction, the piece is charged with more aesthetic features allowing to confer the idea of a precious and fashionable piece.

From a certain point of view, Levine's production based on Appropriation can be understood as an ironical interpretation of the world, and art itself. The reproduction of works of art represents a rejection of the past, but through the Appropriation of the past itself. Paul de Man

¹³⁶ Mary Magada-Ward, "On Wanting to Write This as Rose Selavy", 34.

describe Levine's photographs arguing that "taken the structural possibility of history, the structural form of temporality, but the relation of before and after is not yet the relation of past and present"¹³⁷

Therefore, Levine extremized what Duchamp had already proposed in his original: the capacity of the artist to create an art piece even from objects coming from the lowest moments of humans' every day. However, while Duchamp communicated this message through the mere displacement of the urinal in itself, Levine intensified it attributing to the low object also aesthetic values through the fancy material and the bright golden color¹³⁸. Furthermore, the title *Buddha* could be argued as an attempt to create a link with a deity conferring a strong contrast between the essence of the object as a urinal and the exploitation of a spiritual and religious figure as the major subject of the artwork.

Levine's production is based, therefore, on a deep connection with the original works from which it takes inspiration. However, this connection consists of the relationship between the model and the "imprint". The artist belief that medium such as photography and sculpture convey a basic implied copy in their original version. Levine's Appropriation act towards the photographs made by the artists Walker Evans and Edward Weston lies on the principle described by Walter Benjamin according to which photography is characterized by the chance to be boundlessly duplicated from its initial negative. Therefore, Sherrie Levine just exploited this potentiality of photography as the basic principle of her appropriative re-photographs¹³⁹.

Bachelors and *Buddha* are the product of a similar assumption. She re-casted the idea already formulated by Duchamp about the introduction of lower objects in the artistic field, but Levine

¹³⁷ Singerman, Howard. "Sherrie Levine's Art History." *October*, vol. 101, 2002, pp. 120.

¹³⁸ Mary Magada-Ward, "On Wanting to Write This as Rose Selavy", 34.

¹³⁹ Howard Singerman, "Sherrie Levine: On Painting." *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 46, 2004, 205.

was able to extremize that concept completing the former's thought. In *Bachelors*, for instance, she turned the two-dimensional molds in the lower register of the *Large Glass* in the three-dimensional sculpture as if Levine completed Duchamp's idea of transforming the nine molds in nine independent pieces. *Buddha*, on the contrary, exploits the *Fountain* through the same rule assumed for photography: the original is the model from which Sherrie Levine created her own urinals as well as the negative that constituted the models from which reproducing pictures since "her reproductive process is already implicit in the original as the possibility and the automatism of its medium"¹⁴⁰.

To sum up, Sherrie Levine worked far away from the modernist conventions dictated by the principle that art should have been based on originality and authenticity. On the contrary, she totally subverted this concept creating her artistic production on appropriative acts meant in the communication of specific messages. The main aim was that of underlining the artistic world's patriarchal hierarchy where woman represented just the subject of creation but not the creator. As a response to this male chauvinism prejudice, Levine achieved in the "castration" of the male artist imposing herself as a woman artist and the cause of the appropriative act reducing the power of the male artist behind the original. In spite of her feminist intentions, however, Sherrie Levine's exploitation of works was also meant in developing a tension between the original and her own copy based on the principle of the "almost-same". These works were based on the idea that photography and sculpture are actually intentional models that can be always reproduced by negatives or molds. The artist applied just small stylistic changes as if her own duty was that of completing the original's commitment.

¹⁴⁰ Howard Singerman, "Sherrie Levine: On Painting", 206.

5. Conclusions

The analysis of Contemporary Art of the 20th century is still strongly debated especially concerning the Postmodernist tendency of the second half of the century. These years are characterized by crucial historical events which have influenced also the contemporary artistic production. After all, society and history have always been the main sources for artists in their representations as their true translation. Postmodernism, however, strikes for its multitude of styles and movements which actually has a very brief life. In spite of this, all of them aimed to reflect the world around through a strong critical lens. Furthermore, this period did not rely on a true faith in artistic experimentation and imagination.

Postmodernism, on the contrary, drew on sources also atypical for art history, or on existing artworks and styles. During these years, indeed, the Appropriation phenomenon was deeply extremized. Even if art history has always taken its inspirations from the outward world or from past artworks and styles, this practice became the rule during the 20th century. Marcel Duchamp was the precursor of the new tendency through the Appropriation of low objects, the readymades, as the main subject of his artistic production. His main aim was breaking the bound between high art and low objects through the introduction of everyday pieces into the artistic background. His revolutionary act totally changed the art historical path of the following decades while he became the “master” of Postmodernism Appropriation.

As Duchamp, also Andy Warhol exploited low objects for his production. However, he also used images from mass media, mass production, advertisements, and popular culture.

Warhol was concerned in delineating the major features of his consumerism-based society where everything could have considered fashionable or “fetish”. The artist exploited that economic enthusiasm in the US after the World War II which aimed to create a mass deprived of individuality, but everyone was actually a product of society itself, as for mass-produced goods. However, Warhol’s critique was not expressed through a negative vision of contemporaneity, yet his works were extremely fashionable and fascinating so that they actually seemed to create a more positive vision of that American dream. Only through a deeper analysis, it is possible to understand how the subjects were actually void, simple repetitive pictures which had lost any true meaning.

The 20th century is also scenario of the major social discussions and revolutions focused on the creation of a more equal population. Racial, gender, and homosexual topics became the center of the social discussions of the years. Postmodernist artists were the promoters and critics of these discussions. From the 1970s, Western world assisted also to the rise of the strong feminist movement aimed in subverting the dominant male chauvinism where the woman was reduced in a mere pleasure object. Female artists attended this revolutionary movement through different styles and approaches. Sherrie Levine joined feminist art, too. Her method was based in a full Appropriation of past artworks made by male artists. Her purpose was that of imposing herself as a woman to photographs or sculptures made by men in an act of cutting their male presence and imposing her femininity. The act of Appropriation in Levine is total, she did not produce any sort of change, but she left the work as it was conceived by the original author. Only in few cases, as in Duchamp’s, she attempted some slight artistic alterations even though the work still remained bound to its original version.

Appropriation, whatever of popular images or past artworks, still creates several debates among scholars. Especially regarding the Postmodernism's tendency, Appropriation became the tools for artists of the 20th century to mirror the reality around them. This phenomenon is specifically relevant nowadays to understand how Postmodernism worked, and why artists were so obsessed in looking for the "other" rather than in an exploration of new techniques and styles. A solution could lie in the contemporary society itself. In a consumeristic and mass-produced world, being a powerful individual mind was almost impossible. Artists understood how the new power was changing the world forever. In their works, indeed, they expressed their critique working on two different roots. On one hand, they started to introduce, in the artistic fields, images that had never been considered aesthetically proper. On the other hand, their cold Appropriation of past artworks was a statement to criticize a lack of originality due to the "collectivism" imposed by society neglecting individualism. Postmodernism especially exploited the "repetition" approach where the image itself ended to lose its authentic aura but became just another mass product.

To summarize, Appropriation is the reflection of a society which had lost its faith on the world, and also in art. Artists were not aimed in the creation of authentic works considering originality an obsolete quality for a work of art, but they just "reproduced" images coming from common acknowledgement. They were interested in underling the consumerism lack of independency where the individual lost its essence to be just another reproducible product of society. This major theme was also applied to other considerations about race, gender, and homosexuality, the main concerns of contemporary debates. Andy Warhol and Sherrie Levine represent two different appropriative approach. On one hand, Warhol used the Appropriation of popular images (with just few references to past artworks), while Levine exploited existing

works reproducing them in their essence as the originals. In spite of the different approaches, both aimed in a deep critique over the contemporary world concerned in superficial questions ignoring the most serious issues of the time. This critique was also explored through an artistic production based on the principle of reproduction of the image which ended to undermine the traditional concept of artwork, bound in the sacredness of authenticity, the aura. As a result, Postmodernist Appropriation generated several works, characterized by the most diverse approaches and styles, but with the same purpose: overturning the tenants of society and art history.

Bibliography

1. "MoMA Learning." Lee Bontecou. Untitled. 1959 | MoMA. Accessed December 05, 2018. https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/themes/pop-art/appropriation/.
2. "MoMA Learning." Lee Bontecou. Untitled. 1959 | MoMA. Accessed December 05, 2018. https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/andy-warhol-campbells-soup-cans-1962/.
3. "Signifying Art: Essays on Art After 1960." *Choice Reviews Online* 37, no. 08 (2000): 37-4276. doi:10.5860/CHOICE.37-4276
4. *Andy Warhol "Giant" Size*. Phaidon, 2009.
5. Argan, Giulio Carlo, and Achille Bonito Oliva. *L'arte Moderna: 1770-1970*. 5.th ed. Biblioteca Aperta / [sanson]. Milano: Sansoni, 2009.
6. Barthes, Roland, Stephen Heath, and Mary Dove. *The Death of the Author*. 1977.
7. Benjamin, Walter. *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. Prism Key Press, 2010.
8. Bergin, Paul. "Andy Warhol: The Artist as Machine." *Art Journal* 26, no. 4 (1967): 359-63. doi:10.2307/775065.
9. Burton, Johanna. "Sherrie Levine." *Artforum International*, vol. 44, no. 10, 2006.
10. Burton, Johanna. "Sherrie Levine." *Artforum International*, vol. 46, no. 4, 2007.
11. Buskirk, Martha. "Sherrie Levine." *Artforum International*, vol. 50, no. 7, 2012.
12. Collins, Tricia, Richard Milazzo, Gian Carlo Pagliasso, and Collins & Milazzo. *Hyperframes : Un Discorso Sulla Post-Appropriazione in Arte*. Zeta Rifili, 195. Pasion Di Prato: Campanotto, 2005
13. Cresti, Roberto. *La Trasparenza Dei Baffi: Marcel Duchamp E La Gioconda*. Filottrano (An): Le Ossa, 2011
14. Curtis, James C, and Sheila Grannen. "Let Us Now Appraise Famous Photographs: Walker Evans and Documentary Photography." *Winterthur Portfolio* 15, no. 1 (1980): 1-23.

15. Diang, Dawson, Winckelmann, and David Irwin. "Winckelmann. Writings on Art." *The Classical World* 67, no. 4 (1974): 230. doi:10.2307/4348010.
16. Dillenberger, Jane. *The Religious Art of Andy Warhol*. New York: Continuum, 2001.
17. Evans, David. 2009. *Appropriation*. Documents of Contemporary Art. London: Whitechapel.
18. Featherstone, Mike. *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*. 2nd ed. Theory, Culture & Society. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2007. 2007. Accessed Dicembre, 2018.
19. Foster, Hal. *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*. New York: New Press, 1998.
20. Foster, Hal. *The Return of the Real: The Avant-garde at the End of the Century*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997.
21. Gazda, Elaine K. *The Ancient Art of Emulation: Studies in Artistic Originality and Tradition from the Present to Classical Antiquity*. Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome. Supplementary Volume, 1. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 2002.
22. Greenberg, Clement. "Modernist Painting." *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology*: 5-10.
23. Hobsbawm, E. J. *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991*. Abacus, 2001
24. Kaufman, Robert. "Aura, Still*." *October* 1, no. 99 (2002): 45-80.
25. Levine, Sherrie, and Howard Halle. "Fountain (After Duchamp: 1-6) La Fortune (After Man Ray: 1-6)." *Grand Street*, no. 42, 1992, pp. 81–95. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/25007559.
26. Lyotard, Jean-François. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Translated by Geoffrey Bennington and Brian Massumi. Theory and History of Literature, V. 10. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984
27. Magada-Ward, Mary. "On Wanting to Write This as Rose Selavy: Reflections on Sherrie Levine and Peircian Semiotic." *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2009, pp. 28–39. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/20721541.

28. Mattick, Paul. "The Andy Warhol of Philosophy and the Philosophy of Andy Warhol." *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 4 (1998): 965-87.
<http://www.jstor.org.jcu.idm.oclc.org/stable/1344114>
29. Meloni, Lucilla. *Arte Guarda Arte: Pratiche Della Citazione Nell'arte Contemporanea*. Milano: Postmedia Books, 2013.
30. Nelson, Robert S, and Richard Shiff, eds. *Critical Terms for Art History*. Second ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.
31. Palmer, Daniel. "Explainer: What Is Postmodernism?" *The Conversation*. December 04, 2018. Accessed December 04, 2018. <https://theconversation.com/explainer-what-is-postmodernism-20791>.
32. Queensland Art Gallery, Andy Warhol Museum, and Gallery of Modern Art (Brisbane, Qld.). *Andy Warhol*. South Brisbane, Qld.: Queensland Art Gallery, 2007.
33. Rosenberg, Harold. *The Tradition of the New*. 1st Da Capo Press ed. New York: Da Capo Press, 1994.
34. Russel, Jay D., "Marcel Duchamp Readymades: Walking on the Infrathin Ice".
http://www.dada-companion.com/duchamp/archive/duchamp_walking_on_infrathin_ice.pdf
35. Schneider, Arnd. "Sull'appropriazione. Un Riesame Critico Del Concetto E Delle Sue Applicazioni Nelle Pratiche Artistiche Globali." *Antropologia* 11, no. 13 (2013). 2013. Accessed Dicembre, 2018
36. Settis, Salvatore. *The Future of the 'classical'*. Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2006.
37. Singerman, Howard. "Seeing Sherrie Levine." *October*, vol. 67, 1994, pp. 79–107. *JSTOR*, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/778968.
38. Singerman, Howard. "Sherrie Levine: On Painting." *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 46, 2004, pp. 202–220. *JSTOR*, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/20167647.
39. Singerman, Howard. "Sherrie Levine's Art History." *October*, vol. 101, 2002, pp. 97–121. *JSTOR*, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/779195.
40. Tatarkiewicz, Władysław, Krystyna Jaworska, and Olimpia Burba. *Storia Di Sei Idee : L'arte, Il Bello, La Forma, La Creatività, L'imitazione, L'esperienza Estetica*. 7. Ed. Riveduta ed. Aesthetica, 39. Palermo: Aesthetica, 2011.

41. Tate. "Appropriation – Art Term." Tate. Accessed December 04, 2018.
<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/a/appropriation>.
42. Tate. "Modernism – Art Term." Tate. Accessed December 04, 2018.
<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/m/modernism>.
43. Tate. "Postmodernism – Art Term." Tate. Accessed December 05, 2018.
<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/p/postmodernism>.
44. Warhol, Andy, and Achille Bonito Oliva. *Andy Warhol: Un Mito Americano: Opere Grafiche*. Milano: Mazzotta, 2004.
45. Warhol, Andy, et al. *Andy Warhol Prints: A Catalogue Raisonné : 1962-1987*. 4th ed., rev. and expanded by Frayda Feldman and Claudia Defendi ed., D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishers in Association with Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, 2003.
46. Warhol, Andy, Gianni Mercurio, Daniela Morera, and Triennale Di Milano Triennale Di Milano (2004-2005: Milan, Italy). *The Andy Warhol Show*. Milano: Skira, 2004.
47. Warhol, Andy, Kasper König, Karl Gunnar Pontus Hulten, Olle Granath, and Moderna Museet. *Andy Warhol*. Malmö: Sydsvenska Dagbladets AB, 1968
48. Warhol, Andy, Mirella Panepinto, Gianni Mercurio, and Museo Civico Di Castello Ursino (Catania, Italy). *Andy Warhol: La Fabbrica Dell'arte*. Milano: Electa, 2001.
49. Warhol, Andy, Mirella Panepinto, Naples (Italy), and Italy. Soprintendenza Ai Beni Artistici E Storici Di Napoli. *Warhol: Viaggio in Italia*. Milano: Mazzotta, 1996.
50. Warhol, Andy. *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol: From a to B and Back Again*. London: Cassell, 1975.
51. Welchman, John C. *Art After Appropriation: Essays on Art in the 1990s*. Amsterdam: G B Arts International, 2001
52. Wilson, Simon. *Pop*. A Dolphin Art Book. London: Thames and Hudson, 1974.
53. Winckelmann, Johann Joachim. *Pensieri Sull'imitazione*. Edited by Michele Cometa. *Aesthetica*, 37. Palermo: Aesthetica Edizioni, 2001.
54. Winckelmann, Johann Joachim. *Writings on Art*. Edited by David G Irwin, Phaidon, 1972.

6. Appendix



Fig. 1 Duchamp, Marcel. *Fountain*, 1917. Porcelain. Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fountain_\(Duchamp\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fountain_(Duchamp))



Fig. 2 Lòpez, Marcos. *Asado en Mediolaza (Roasted Meat in Mediolaza)*, 1958. Lambda print and hand-colored on paper mounted on aluminium. Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid. Source: <https://www.museoreinasofia.es/en/collection/artwork/asado-mendiolaza-roasted-meat-mendiolaza>



Fig. 3 da Vinci, Leonardo. *Last Supper*, 1498. Tempera and oil on plaster, Santa Maria della Grazie, Milan. Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Last_Supper#/media/File:Última_Cena_-_Da_Vinci_5.jpg



Fig. 4 Agesandro, Atenoro di Rodi, and Polidoro, *Laocoön and His Sons*, between 1st century BC and 1st century AD. Marble. Musei Vaticani, Rome. Source: https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laocoonte#/media/File:Laocoon_and_His_Sons.jpg



Fig. 5 da Vinci, Leonardo. *Mona Lisa*, 1503-1504. Oil on poplar panel. Musée du Louvre, Paris. Source: https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gioconda#/media/File:Mona_Lisa,_by_Leonardo_da_Vinci,_from_C2RMF_retouched.jpg



Fig. 6 Duchamp, Marcel. *L.H.O.O.Q.*, 1919. Ready-made. Georges Pompidou Center, Paris. Source: https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/L.H.O.O.Q./#media/File:Marcel-duchamp-lhooq-1919-1371340666_b.jpg



Fig. 7 Malevich, Kasimir. *Composition with the Mona Lisa*, 1914. Collage and grafite on canvas. Russian State Museum, St. Petersburg. Source:

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/4/4b/Kazimir_Malevich%2C_1914%2C_Composition_with_the_Mona_Lisa%2C_oil%2C_collage_and_graphite_on_canvas%2C_62.5_x_49.3_cm%2C_Russian_Museum.jpg



Fig. 8 Warhol, Andy. *Campbell's Soup Cans*, 1962. Screenprint. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Source: <https://www.inexhibit.com/it/marker/ny-andy-warhol-campbells-soup-cans-e-altre-opere-al-moma/>



Fig. 9 Warhol, Andy. *Electric Chairs Series*, 1971. Screenprint on Paper. Source: <https://www.masterworksfineart.com/educational-resources/andy-warhol/andy-warhols-electric-chairs-1971-series/>



Fig. 10 Warhol, Andy. *Jackie O*, 1964. Screenprint. Source: <https://www.wmagazine.com/story/andy-warhol-jackie-kennedy-onassis>



Fig. 11 Warhol, Andy. Marilyn, 1967. Screenprint. MoMA, New York. Source: <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/61240>



Fig. 12 Warhol, Andy. Marilyn Monroe's Lips, 1962. Screenprint. Source: <https://theartstack.com/artist/andy-warhol/marilyn-monroe-s-lips>



Fig. 13 da Vinci, Leonardo. *Annunciation*, 1472-1475. Oil and tempera on panel. Uffizi, Florence. Source: <https://www.leonardodavinci.net/the-annunciation.jsp>



Fig. 14 Warhol, Andy. *Annunciation from: Details of Renaissance Paintings*, 1984. Silkscreen. Source: <https://hamiltonselway.com/portfolio-item/andy-warhol-details-renaissance-paintings-annunciation-unique/>

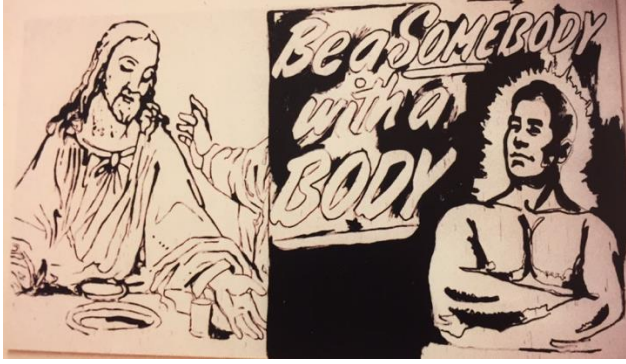


Fig. 15 Warhol, Andy, *Be Somebody with a Body*, 1986. Silkscreen. Source: Dilleberger, Jane. *The Religious Art of Andy Warhol*. (New York: Continuum, 2001)

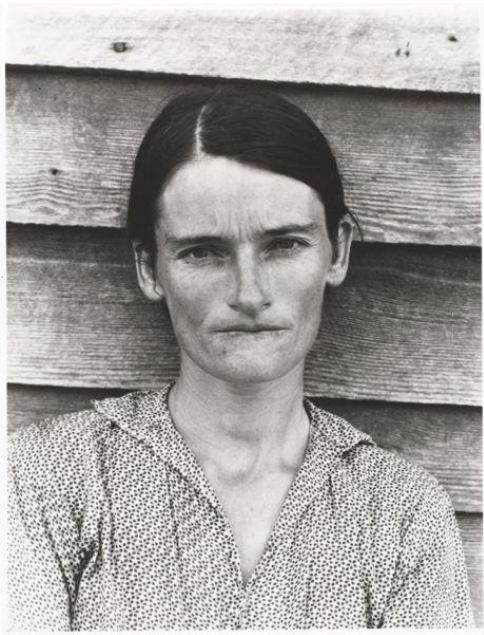


Fig. 16 Levine, Sherrie. *After Walker Evans*, 1981. Gelatin silver print. The Metropolitan Museum, New York. Source: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/267214>

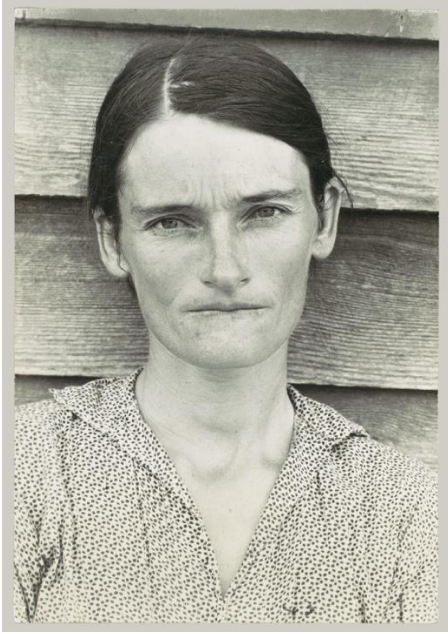


Fig. 17 Evans, Walker. *Alabama Cotton Tenant Farmer's* or *Allie Mae Burroughs*, 1936. Photography. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Source: <https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/2001.415/>



Fig. 18 Weston, Edward. *from Six Nudes of Neil*, 1925. Photograph. Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton. Source: <https://www.artnet.com/auctions/artists/edward-weston/six-nudes-of-neil-portfolio-of-6-2>



Fig. 19 Levine, Sherrie. *After Edward Weston*, 1990. Color photograph. Source: <https://theartstack.com/artist/sherrie-levine/untitled-after-edward-we>

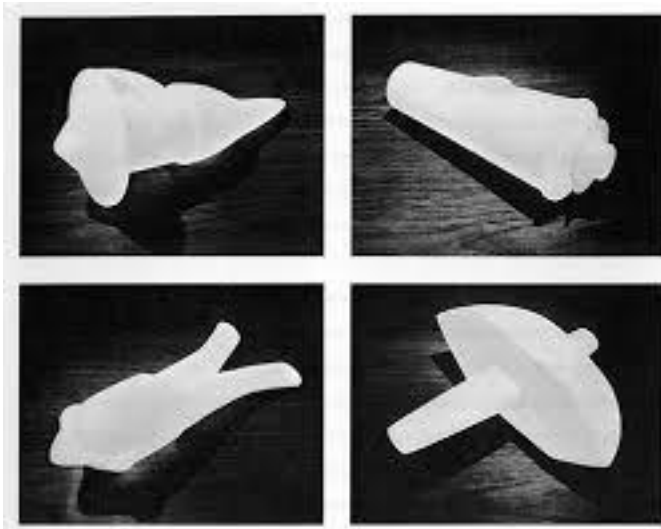


Fig. 20 Levine, Sherrie. *Bachelors*, 1989. Frosted glass and vitrine. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. Source: <https://www.theartblog.org/2007/01/portrait-of-the-artist-as-a-young-assistant-part-2/>



Fig. 21 Levine, Sherrie. *Fountain (Buddha)*, 1996. Cast bronze. Source: <https://www.thebroad.org/art/sherrie-levine/fountain-buddha>

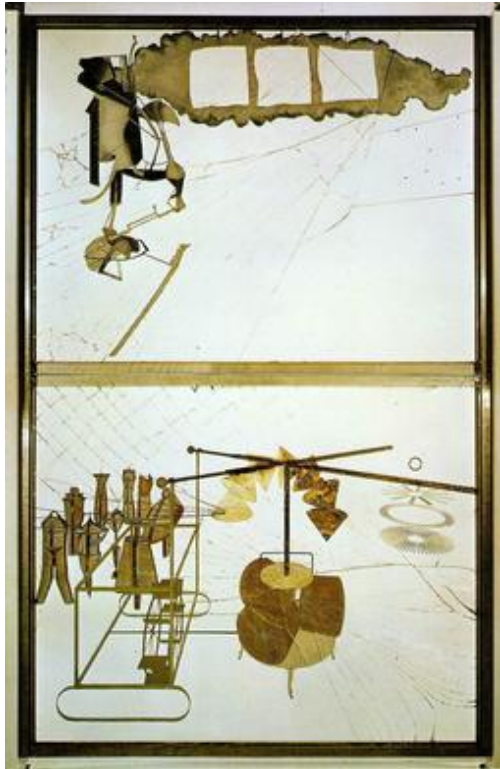


Fig. 22 Duchamp, Marcel. *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass)*, 1915-1923. Oil, varnish, lead foil, lead wire, and dust on two glass panels. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia. Source: http://www.artnet.com/magazineus/features/kachur/marcel-duchamp8-26-09_detail.asp?picnum=1