

Translating Warhol for television: *Andy Warhol's America*

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This paper addresses the challenges inherent in translating Andy Warhol's art for a contemporary television audience, and what lies beyond the storytelling, the selected key artworks, the interviews, the archival footage and the choice of evocative music. Whose story is it, how is it edited and adapted, and what are the influences and decisions that affect the narrative? It will be argued that the medium specificity of television inevitably alters how some of the historical intricacies, political imperatives and art historical debates are received when translated into moving-image sequences and the translation itself is subject to numerous medium-specific constraints. Questions that arise in relation to the dynamics of translating historical narratives and facts about Warhol and his artworks for a television audience will be explored, and the potential to distort, fragment, or expand the experience of artworks through the editing and cinematic devices which are fundamental to television filmmaking will be discussed.

To develop the argument, the paper will examine the translation of two bodies of Warhol's work for a television audience in the recent British TV documentary *Andy Warhol's America* (2022), a three-episode programme of BBC Two. The three episodes each has a subtitle that suggests its content: *Living the Dream* (aired on 6 January), *The American Nightmare* (aired on 13 January), and *Life after Death* (aired on 20 January). The works featured in the programme that are the focus of this study are *Pink Race Riot* [*Red Race Riot*] (1963) and *Mustard Race Riot* (1963), presented in a seven-and-a-half-minute segment of the second episode, and *The American Indian (Russell Means)* (1976-77), explored in a segment eight-and-a-half minutes long in the third. As series consultant (art historical advisor) to this documentary, the author had a unique insight into the translation process from inception to broadcast,¹ her first-hand observations enhanced by interviews conducted with the director and series producer Francis Whately and producer Phil Cairney after the programme was completed.² It is important to note, however, that

¹ The role of series consultant included consultation on and fact-checking of some of the scripts, archival research and attendance at weekly team meetings throughout the production process. She also watched the rushes and gained insight into offline edits.

² Jean Wainwright, interview with Francis Whately, 20 December 2021, and with producer Phil Cairney, 30 December 2021 and 10 January 2022. Whately is a freelance director and producer who started his career in 1998. Other programmes he has produced include *David Bowie: Finding Fame* (2019), *David Bowie: The Last Five Years* (2017), *Rock 'n' Roll Guns for Hire: The Story of the Sidemen* (2017), *Judi Dench: All the World's Her Stage* (2016), *Kim Philby – His Most Intimate Betrayal* (2014) and *David Bowie: Five Years* (2013). Cairney has worked on numerous projects as producer and director, including previous documentaries on subjects

although she advised and made suggestions about content, she had no influence over which material was included, or its treatment, and had no editorial control.

Before discussing the process of translating the *Race Riot* and *The American Indian (Russell Means)* paintings to the medium of television, it is necessary to examine the specific prism through which Warhol is viewed in the programme. As Francis Whately explained, 'What television hasn't done before, is to put Warhol in a cultural, political, historical framework, and so therefore we could see a different way of approaching the subject, and that was to look at American history through the eyes of Warhol.'³ This was the version of Warhol's story that was to be translated.

It is also important to consider the context and practical constraints on the making of *Andy Warhol's America*, since these inevitably overtly or subconsciously impacted editorial decisions and hence the translation of Warhol's art. First, the programme was funded and made by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), which is a national (non-commercial) broadcasting service funded principally by the British public through annual television licence fees.⁴ Accountability to the British public tends to lead to budgetary constraints for programme makers, and careful thought has to be given to the balance between judicious spending and fulfilling the programme's objectives.

The programme was also made during 2020 and 2021 against a backdrop of the global COVID-19 pandemic, with consequent restrictions in face-to-face contact, travel, and access to certain archives and materials. One area where this limitation had a potential major impact was on the contemporary interview material—which played a key narrative role in the documentary—not least because most of the interviewees were US-based. A solution was found which involved UK-based Whately and Cairney conducting the majority of the interviews via internet video conferencing (Zoom), with a US film crew simultaneously filming the interviewees at each location as they responded. Furthermore, some people were unavailable for interview because they were engaged with other productions, and some were unable to appear in the programme because they wanted to have their COVID vaccination before being filmed, with time constraints playing a role.

Also prominently in the background when production started on *Andy Warhol's America* were the recent protests and civil unrest against police brutality and racism sparked by the death of American citizen George Floyd in May 2020, support and outrage reverberating around the world under the #BlackLivesMatter banner. This situation likely inspired and added poignancy and immediacy to the inclusion of Warhol's *Race Riot* and *The American Indian (Russell Means)* in the programme, undoubtedly impacting viewers' perceptions of these works, and hence on the translation process.

Given the documentary's underlying premise, editorial decision-making involved highlighting certain bodies of Warhol's work while discarding others

as varied as Ludwig Van Beethoven, David Bomberg, Walter Sickert, Edward Burra, Giorgio Vasari and twentieth-century Spanish art.

³ Frances Whately, interview with Jean Wainwright, 20 December 2021.

⁴ TV licence fees (currently £159 per year) are required by law to be paid in the UK by anyone owning a TV or who downloads or watches BBC programmes on BBC iPlayer.

which did not fit the profile of Warhol as bellwether for the 'America story'. The series format of three hour-long episodes also placed limitations on how the narrative was shaped, and on which artworks and aspects of Warhol's work to focus. *Andy Warhol's America* was also filmed at a time when the entire media sector is undergoing shifts, as audiences embrace new and multiplying digital viewing platforms, inevitably raising questions about choice and competition in terms of what the viewing public chooses to watch.⁵ Whately suggested that this issue was an important factor when scripting the Warhol series:

There is reworking and rewriting the drafts for each programme. The difference between making a film contemporaneously and a film series about an artist from the past is that there is now greater desire not just to record what happened, and when it happened, but to also have more in terms of drama. And you have to make the audience want to watch the next episode.⁶

In other words, even though this was a factual documentary, 'good TV' in contemporary terms meant that the script had to contain 'drama' to entice the viewer to choose this programme over others—and to keep watching.

Furthermore, while providing contemporary currency, the retelling of the Warhol story for a twenty-first century audience required sensitivity to current socio-political sensibilities. For example, language and behaviours relating to race and gender which might have been considered socially 'acceptable' in Warhol's time would now be considered shockingly unacceptable, and such social transformations had to be carefully negotiated while remaining true to the historical narrative. Given these challenges and constraints (or even without them), the question is raised of whether an authentic translation of the story of Warhol's life and art for a contemporary TV audience is possible.

The framing device selected by Whately is a chronological timeline, each episode moving through different stages of Warhol's life and art and its reflection in American cultural history. The grouping into three over-arching themes suggested by the episodes' subtitles, *Living the Dream*, *The American Nightmare* and *Life after Death*, hints at the storyline even before the viewer starts watching. Title sequences repeated at the start of each episode, following the cold open, embed the concept of Warhol distilling American culture in his art and films through his own particular lens through carefully edited statements about Warhol spoken directly to camera by

⁵ As a publicly funded institution, the BBC is under intense scrutiny. See, for example, Emily Bell, 'The BBC Faces Major Challenges from the Government to its Independence', *The Guardian*, 20 July 2021; <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/jul/20/the-bbc-faces-major-challenges-from-the-government-to-its-independence>.

⁶ Whately, interview with Jean Wainwright, 20 December 2021. For further discussion of the contemporary need for 'drama' in the making of factual TV programmes, see Richard W. Kilborn, *Staging the Real: Factual TV Programming in the Age of Big Brother*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003, or Hannah Andrews, *Biographical Television Drama*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022, especially 185–210.

interviewees.⁷ These statements are juxtaposed with a collaged visual synopsis of art and scenes from the programmes, and all to a soundtrack of the song 'Planet Claire' by the B52s (1979).⁸ The scene is set, and the viewer is subtly led into the narrative underpinning the translation of Warhol as someone slightly on the outside, able to step back and see the reality of America, unafraid in his art to highlight its darker side while simultaneously celebrating the 'wow' of it. For example, James Warhola, son of Warhol's oldest brother, Paul, is shown explaining, 'My uncle was the first generation of immigrant parents. He looked at America with those fresh eyes, seeing some things that were different and unique, that maybe most people took for granted.'⁹ Bob Colacello, an associate of Warhol in the 1970s, then suggests that 'Andy was both glorifying and critiquing the whole American system.'¹⁰ The model Jerry Hall, who became friends with the artist during the same decade, hyperbolically states, 'Someone once said if a bomb went off and everything was destroyed except Andy's work, you would still have a very good idea of America. Yes, I think that is true, I think you would get a good idea.'¹¹ As Whately commented, one of the challenges of documentary-making is that 'you try as hard as you can not to lead, and allow the stories to lead themselves ... inevitably, you

⁷ A cold open (also called a teaser sequence) is a narrative technique used in television and films. This is the practice of jumping directly into a story at the beginning of the show before the title sequence or opening credits are shown. Whately made the editorial decision to film all the interviews against a screen to reference Warhol's film portraits, *Screen Tests* (1964-66), though in colour, with coloured backgrounds. The aim was to produce a Warholian 'levelling effect', with everyone portrayed in the same aesthetic. It was also to remove visual distraction from any background contextual interference, such as people's houses or hired studios, to allow the viewer to focus on what is being said.

⁸ The decision to use this song is not explored in this paper, but a survey of Warhol documentaries, including *Andy Warhol: The Complete Picture*, directed by Sarah Mortimer and Chris Rodney for Channel 4, UK, 2001, and the two-part *Andy Warhol: A Documentary Film*, directed by Ric Burns, Steeplechase Films, WNET New York, 2006, would reveal how the different musical choices in each documentary aurally inform the viewer. The musical choices in *Andy Warhol's America* were a matter of debate between the two producers, highlighted in the author's conversations with Phil Cairney, 30 December 2021 and 10 January 2022, and with Francis Whately, 20 December 2021. On the role of music in documentaries, see Holly Rogers, *Music and Sound in Documentary Film*, New York: Routledge, 2014.

⁹ James Warhola was interviewed in the family home in South Oakland, Pittsburgh, which he now owns, and where Warhol grew up (Warhol moved there when he was six).

¹⁰ In 1970 Bob Colacello wrote a review of Andy Warhol's film *Trash* which caught the attention of Warhol and Paul Morrissey. Colacello was approached to write for Warhol's *Interview Magazine* and became editor after six months, remaining in the post for twelve years, during which he was directly involved with Warhol's business and social life. Colacello wrote the book *Holy Terror: Andy Warhol Close up*, New York: Harper Collins, 1990, about his years with Warhol.

¹¹ Jerry Hall met Warhol in Paris in 1973. She sat for her portrait and Warhol took numerous Polaroids of her. They remained close friends until his death. She would go with him to the New York club, Studio 54, which she talks about in programme three of *Andy Warhol's America*. See also the interview for *The Times Arts* section, 6 January 2022, 4-5.

will [though] because you need someone to agree with someone else to make a story'. There is no such thing as an 'impartial history'.¹²

From the documentary's inception, Whately, as director and producer, needed to make decisions about how Warhol was to be translated for television while accommodating all the constraints and limitations. He described how the making of the programme was an extremely nuanced process and how the direction of the series formed a subtle and challenging series of interlocking tasks, months of intense preparation and scrutiny of material, finding the interviewees and linking the stories to name but a few. What emerged was a programme which interspersed archival footage with new interviews to provide new and convincing arguments to support the premise that Warhol's art was more than just the art, that it encapsulated the events and values of modern-day America, using dramatic filming techniques and evocative background music to add an extra dimension to the narrative.

As the programme developed, scenes and scenarios changed organically with different emphases. Inevitably there was a filtering of Warhol's work and life story as decisions were made to throw some aspects into sharper focus while leaving out others altogether, either because they were superfluous to the narrative or they did not fit the framework.¹³ In one of his introductory emails to the production team, Whately listed some of the key ideas for the programme:

Each story must be telling a different story. So artworks that are all saying the same thing about celebrity or brands or death or whatever, can be put together even if they are not historically all together. Each story must have one genuine wow moment. For example, we interview someone who was at the riots in Alabama and we find out the very real and personal consequence of that day/moment for them. Each story feeds into the overall theme of the film it is included in and increases our understanding of that theme. For example, the *Electric Chair* [painting] is in the Death and Religion programme and tells us about Warhol's and America's view of that theme.¹⁴

We can see from this early email that storylines developed or changed focus: For example, the title of the second episode was subsequently changed from *Death and Religion* to *The American Nightmare*, indicating a change of storyline to that of 'bursting the bubble' of the 'American Dream' referred to by the title of episode one (*Living the Dream*).¹⁵

¹² Whately, interview with Jean Wainwright, 20 December 2021.

¹³ Sometimes sections were shot that did not make the cut. Cairney, for example, would have liked to have included Warhol's *Shadow* paintings and 'fought for them' but it was decided that they did not contribute to the overarching narrative. Cairney, interview with Jean Wainwright, 30 December 2021.

¹⁴ Whately, email to *Andy Warhol's America* production team, 1 October 2020.

¹⁵ The focus on Warhol's shooting was also a reference back to the John F. Kennedy assassination on 22 November 1963, which is also shown in programme 2, *The American Nightmare*, which 'burst the bubble' and which for Warhol was both experienced by the American population and also was personally responded to by him.

Perhaps mindful of the need to draw viewers into the programme, the opening and closing sequences of the series highlight Warhol's relevance for a contemporary audience and his perceived influence on contemporary culture. As mentioned above, this is an important parallel agenda to the art historical one, which must be prominent in the translation to TV in a way that it might not be in a pure art historical context. The need for a contemporary audience to feel that a programme is relevant enough to invest time watching it has to be acknowledged and embraced, because otherwise the viewer might switch channels to a programme that perhaps provides more instant gratification. The cold open to episode one shows TV footage from the Super Bowl LIII game of 2019, with its advertisement for Burger King and the #Eat like Andy Warhol campaign, which used forty-five seconds of Jørgen Leth's 1982 film *66 Scenes from America* of Warhol sitting eating a burger.¹⁶ The decision to start *Andy Warhol's America* with this segment aimed to make this programme about Warhol appear instantly relevant, since the match had occurred only three years previously, watched by a worldwide TV audience of 98.2 million viewers.¹⁷ The sequence had perhaps even more impact when interwoven with a clip of a well-known American football commentator on British TV, Jason Bell (perhaps even more well known as a recent contestant in the popular *Strictly Come Dancing* show), conveying the message that although the programme is documenting history, Warhol and his art are relevant to contemporary life.

This introduction dovetails with the conclusion of the series, which highlights already commonly held views on not only how relevant, but also how prescient and ahead of his time Warhol was in terms of popular culture, through an ending sequence scrolling through key moments and soundbites from the programme coupled with a kaleidoscope of collaged events considered 'Warholian,' underpinned by a soundbite from Blake Gopnik, author of a recent extensive biography of Warhol,¹⁸ that Warhol 'didn't die' but was resurrected in our popular culture. These images include footage of reality TV star Jade Goody in the *Big Brother* house,¹⁹ celebrities such as Paris Hilton, Kim Kardashian, and Kanye West, President Trump, artists such as Jeff Koons and Damien Hirst, record auction prices for Warhol, and the Twitter symbol, all played out to the soundtrack of *The Rockafeller Skank* by Fatboy Slim (2003).

¹⁶ Marcelo Pascoa, the then head of Global Brand Marketing at Burger King, had seen Leth's film, prompting the advertising idea. The cold open sequence at the beginning of the first episode includes interviews.

¹⁷ 'Super Bowl LIII Draws 98.2 Million TV Viewers, 32.3 Million Social Media Interactions', *Nielsen*, 4 February 2019 (viewed 21 March 2022), <https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/article/2019/super-bowl-liii-draws-98-2-million-tv-viewers-32-3-million-social-media-interactions/#:~:text=Super%20Bowl%20LIII%20Draws%2098.2,Million%20Social%20Media%20Interactions%20%E2%80%93%20Nielsen>

¹⁸ Blake Gopnik, *Warhol*, London: Penguin/Random House, 2020.

¹⁹ *Big Brother*, one of the first reality TV shows on British TV, premiered on Channel 4 on 18 July 2000 and was a ratings hit. Jade Goody, who died in 2009 aged 27, has been described as the 'ultimate *Big Brother* contestant' (*Big Brother 19*, 14 September–5 November 2018) and 'the reality star who changed Britain' (*Jade: The Reality Star Who Changed Britain*, three episodes 7, 14, 21 August 2019).

The scripting of a programme is the heart of its translation, as are decisions made in the early weeks of production that shape a series. For example, Whately decided that, because the most traumatic moment in Warhol's life was his attempted assassination, he would use that event as a framework device to create a dramatic moment for both the second and third episodes. Cairney points to the 'non-submersible units'²⁰ that 'drifted between episodes' but were 'robust and coherent' on their own,²¹ such as a film segment on Warhol's *Electric Chair* paintings of 1963-65 and the narrative behind them, which was moved around during the editing process until the best place for it was found in terms of the overall narrative (in the second episode).

A decision which shaped the whole translation was to have the documentary storyline told to camera by the interviewees instead of an unseen narrator, both linking and creating key dramatic moments. Whately explained that he wanted to resist the 'dictatorial voice telling you what to think'.²² Cairney described how they always questioned who was relating the commentary: 'Who is telling me this? Is this the filmmaker, is it a book ... where is this voice coming from?'²³ Whately noted that for the last five years the BBC has been trying to get away from the 'man in a field telling us how things were', that 'BBC voice of God'.²⁴ The 'job of television people', as Whately explained, is to rely on the experts for the factual content and then 'to make a story out of the experts' opinions of those people who were there. So our job is really as a storyteller'.²⁵ The interviewees then become the heart of the translation as they comment on and interpret history. Scripts would be annotated with comments such as 'Who could say this?' and at times two people might make the same point, but one might say it in a more dynamic way, which then became the segment the editors decided would 'make the cut'.

For the contemporary interview extracts which were to drive the narrative, the decision was made that, with the exception of Blake Gopnik, everyone interviewed should have a personal connection to Warhol. They were his friends and relatives. They had been participants in the activities of his studio, the Factory. They had been involved in his business. They had sat for portraits. They had been a witness to events that he featured in his art (or were a close relative of a witness). Interviewees provided the programme's narration from the perspective of someone

²⁰A non-submersible unit, a term coined by Stanley Kubrick, is understood as a story sequence where all the non-essential elements have been stripped away. These units are generally so robustly compelling that they would, by themselves, be able to keep the viewer interested, containing only what is absolutely necessary for the storyline. For an analysis of 'non-submersible units', see Robert P. Kolker and Nathan Abrams, 'Non Submersible Units: An Analysis of Key Scenes in Stanley Kubrick and the Making of his Final Film', Chapter 7, *Eyes Wide Shut: Stanley Kubrick and the Making of his Final Film*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.

²¹ Cairney, interview with Jean Wainwright, 30 December 2021.

²² Whately, interview with Jean Wainwright, 20 December 2021.

²³ Cairney, interview with Jean Wainwright, 30 December 2021.

²⁴ Whately, interview with Jean Wainwright, 20 December 2021.

²⁵ Whately, interview with Jean Wainwright, 20 December 2021. The BBC also has an inclusion and diversity plan 2021-23 which is available online and can be downloaded as a PDF: <https://www.bbc.com/diversity/documents/bbc-diversity-and-inclusion-plan20-23.pdf>.

who had first-hand knowledge either of him or of the events he portrayed in his works. This gave the documentary a sense of oral history, bringing Warhol's art alive in an entirely different way than, for example, a programme narrated exclusively by art historians might have done, which would have been a different translation. Initially the programme's executive producer, Janet Lee, was against including any historians or biographers, but this vision was later revised to include Gopnik.²⁶ Amy Taubin, a critic, and Donna De Salvo, a curator, were included in a dual role, as people who knew Warhol personally (for example, Taubin had sat for one of his *Screen Tests*). What guided the selection of interview extracts was how well-expressed and relevant they were in terms of the underlying narrative, a process that, as series consultant, the author had insight into as she witnessed not only the way the scripts were altered as the programmes progressed, but also how selective editing can create, suggest, and imply, while maintaining the integrity of what the interviewees expressed.

An academic text is a filtering and editing process by the author and editor or editors. Television filmmaking is similar but typically more collaborative; there is a production team, and many different audio-visual contributions are brought together. The producer and director (often the same thing in television) bring to the programme their own interests and background in the subject, which then informs the translation of the subject matter as it is filtered through their own lens as well as those of the selected interviewees. Whately and Cairney had both been aware of Warhol since they were children. Whately recalled visiting the *Andy Warhol* exhibition at the Tate Gallery, London in 1971, aged six: Although 'I do not remember how much I took in ... [Warhol] has been a part of my consciousness, if not my reading, for a long time'.²⁷ He emphasises that it is not necessary to be an expert in a topic to make a programme about it: 'That is what the people you interview bring to the programme; often people making the programmes are not'.²⁸ In contrast, Cairney recollected that Warhol was:

...always in the air that I breathe. There was never a time that I wasn't aware of him. But it was the *Love Boat* Andy rather than the

²⁶ Cairney reported that both he and Whately had read Blake Gopnik's biography of Warhol before they began production and Cairney had wanted to include him from the beginning of scripting; Cairney, interview with Jean Wainwright, 30 December 2021.

²⁷ Whately, interview with Jean Wainwright, 20 December 2021. Whately would have seen many of the works that he later felt drawn to in the programme. The selection of artworks in the exhibition was very specific and the catalogue included an explanation by the director, Norman Reid: 'At the request of the artist the exhibition omits all works earlier than 1962 and several developments of the last eight years, and is restricted to the soup cans, disasters, portraits, flowers and Brillo Boxes.' Norman Reid, Foreword, *Andy Warhol*, London: Tate Publishing, 1971, 5. More recently, Whately visited the 2019 Whitney Museum of American Art Warhol exhibition, organized by Donna De Salvo, while it was on view in San Francisco and before he took on the BBC project. The book produced to accompany this exhibition, *Andy Warhol: From A to B and Back Again*, New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2018, was one of the publications used by Whately to obtain background information for the programme.

²⁸ Whately, interview with Jean Wainwright, 20 December 2021.

Pop Andy; the sell-out, the omnipresent artist-cum-capitalist. Even when I was small, I was aware of Warhol being everywhere in the culture; that he was, kind of, America.²⁹

Later, becoming interested in the more theoretical, philosophical side of Warhol's work, Cairney found himself drawn to Walter Benjamin's essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' and began questioning what repetition does 'to the image ... to the referent, to the original subject', a questioning he brought to the programme (a point returned to later, in the context of translating the *Race Riot* images to television).³⁰ Yet he countered that:

In some ways knowing so much from books and philosophical interests is perhaps a hinderance, as I had to unlearn what I loved and unwrite and undo a lot of my thinking ... and come at [Warhol] from a very different angle ... There was a kind of parallax involved in making [the programme]. It was perhaps because I came in from this very overly intellectualised angle.³¹

This is in contrast to the writing of an academic study, where depth of knowledge is a prerequisite. At the heart of translating for the television is a different set of parameters governing what is included to make compelling viewing.

Two storylines within *Andy Warhol's America* will serve as cases in point for this translation and are discussed in terms of what underpins the final footage shown on the screen—not only what is omitted or sacrificed for the sake of expediency or the narrative, but what might be gained. The two storylines, as noted in the introduction to this paper, revolve around Warhol's paintings *Pink Race Riot* [*Red Race Riot*] and *Mustard Race Riot* from the *Race Riot* series, and *The American Indian (Russell Means)*. Each image has a complex backstory with both cultural and political implications. Although there were other controversial bodies of work included in *Andy Warhol's America*, most notably the *Thirteen Most Wanted Men* (1964) in the first episode, the earliest of the *Electric Chair* paintings (1963-65) in the second, the *Race Riot* and *The American Indian (Russell Means)* works have not featured in other documentaries on Warhol and seem particularly relevant in the current socio-political climate.³²

One of the challenges of translating Warhol and his art to a mainstream television documentary for a wide-ranging audience is that Warhol, as the art historian Thomas Crow asserts, was not one, but a minimum of three persons, and that, 'The second was the complex of interests, sentiments, skills, ambitions, and

²⁹ Cairney, interview with Jean Wainwright, 30 December 2021.

³⁰ Cairney, interview with Jean Wainwright, 30 December 2021.

³¹ Cairney, interview with Jean Wainwright, 30 December 2021.

³² *Andy Warhol: The Complete Picture*, which aired in 2001 on Channel 4 did not feature either series; neither did *Andy Warhol*, in the *Modern Masters* series for the BBC, of 2010, or Ric Burns' *Andy Warhol: A Documentary Film* for PBS *American Masters*, of 2006.

passions that are actually figured in paint on canvas.³³ How could these complexities be communicated by the television programme? Before discussing this question, a detailed description of what the audience sees on the screen is first needed. In episode two of *Andy Warhol's America*, *The American Nightmare*, the title sequence fleetingly shows both Warhol's *Little Race Riots* (1964) and the *Mustard Race Riot* (1963), while Jefferson Drew, an interviewee who was an eyewitness to the Birmingham, Alabama protest, comments that 'He [Warhol] shows the violence and utter disdain for human life in America'. Directly preceding the seven-and-a-half-minute sequence on the Birmingham civil unrest is a storyline on Warhol's *Electric Chair* paintings. We are given a teaser by Bianca Jagger, a close friend of Warhol, asserting that 'Andy was not trying to shock the world, he was trying to show the world as he saw it.' The performance artist, writer, and poet, Penny Arcade, who, at age nineteen featured in Paul Morrissey's film *Women in Revolt* (1971),³⁴ then introduces a powerfully montaged sequence with her passionate, direct address to the viewer: 'The sixties were a nightmare, it was a time of complete violence.'³⁵ The subsequent footage includes archival film clips from the 1960s of the Ku Klux Klan, women's liberation and civil rights marches (demanding the end of police brutality), and climaxing on an image of a nuclear mushroom cloud (a subject of one of Warhol's mid 1960s paintings),³⁶ all choreographed to the soundtrack of *Pissing in the River* by Patti Smith. For Whately, this combination of images and sounds was a bridging device to show that the popular image of the 1960s 'needed to be pricked, this time of freedom and love, and sexuality. ... whereas all those things, as we know, were probably a slightly minority sport for most of America, who were still very much based in 1950s values. And a lot of those thoughts didn't really come

³³ Thomas Crow, 'Saturday Disasters: Trace and Reference in Early Warhol', *Art in America*, 75: 5, May 1987, as reprinted in *On & By Andy Warhol*, ed. Gilda Williams, London: Whitechapel, with MIT Press, 2016, 135. Several other writers also have suggested how complex Warhol was in his work and life.

³⁴ There have been various arguments as to who produced *Women in Revolt*. Gary Comenas on his extensive website Warholstars.org (<https://warholstars.org/women-in-revolt.html>) states that 'Warhol is not credited as the producer in the on-screen credits of the version released by First Independent, but IMDB currently lists him as producer along with Jed Johnson as associate producer and Paul Morrissey as executive producer.' Maurice Yacowar, in *The Films of Paul Morrissey*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, 136-7, lists Warhol as producer with Paul Morrissey as director and executive editor and Warhol and Jed Johnson as the camera operators.

³⁵ Penny Arcade was interviewed by Cairney for *Andy Warhol's America*. In the programme she states that, 'The sixties were not a time of freedom. I mean homosexuality was illegal, women's rights not even talked about really ... people tell me "oh, you grew up in the sixties, you're so lucky, it was so optimistic" And I'm like, "are you kidding me?" The sixties were a nightmare, it was a time of complete violence.' Her interview with Cairney was preceded by five hours of conversation where they established a strong rapport in preparation for her filmed interview.

³⁶ Warhol made *Red Explosion (Atomic Bomb)* in early to mid 1963, after the *Car Crash* and *Electric Chair* paintings, according to Neil Printz in *The Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 1: *Paintings and Sculptures 1961-1963*, ed. Georg Frei and Neil Printz, London: Phaidon, 2002, 331. The BBC Warhol programme maintains this timeline.

through until the 1970s. The dramatic montage also prepares us for the next sequence with its challenging subject matter.³⁷

There are various visual tropes that the programme utilises to visually and aurally translate live archival footage from the 1963 violence against the Civil Rights protestors into contextualising stills of Warhol's *Pink Race Riot* [*Red Race Riot*] and *Mustard Race Riot* paintings.³⁸ The viewer is led through fast edits of archival footage, overlaid with dramatic music, witness testimony and conflicting opinions, which build up to the reveal of Warhol's two canvases. The seven-and-a-half-minute segment on the Birmingham, Alabama protests is introduced with an extract from a speech by Martin Luther King on segregation. Each interview and image is juxtaposed to build a story that highlights black-and-white images by the photographer Charles Moore of peaceful Black marchers being attacked by white policemen with dogs. These images, used by Warhol as source material for his *Race Riot* images, were taken on 3 May 1963 in Birmingham, and published in *Life* magazine two weeks later.³⁹

Whately's translating of the sequence of events brings the riots alive and into our contemporary psyche. We see the peaceful marchers violently assaulted by fire hoses and flung to the ground by the force of the water. Eyewitnesses, such as Jefferson Drew, who observed the hosing of protestors and the dog attacks, and Denise Barefield-Pendleton, a Black doctor from Alabama, give the contextual observations on Eugene (Bull) Connor, Birmingham's Commissioner for Public Safety,⁴⁰ with his staunch racism and use of attack dogs on the peaceful marchers. Their testimonies are preceded by the inflammatory archival television footage from 1963 of Connor, who, when asked if he can still keep Birmingham segregated, retorts that he 'may not be able to, but [he'll] die trying'. Connor had directed the police and fire departments to halt the demonstration and Drew's chilling account in the programme of a racist police officer and his German Shepherd dog is given extra impact as the camera pans from a close-up detail of Moore's image of a dog tearing at a Black protester's trousers to a slow reveal of the entire photograph,

³⁷ Whately, interview with Jean Wainwright, 20 December 2021.

³⁸ The titles of the works are themselves inaccurate, as the marches for Civil Rights Movement: Project C, better known as The Birmingham Campaign, were peaceful and it was the actions of the police and fire department that were violent.

³⁹ Charles Moore was a staff photographer for the *Birmingham Advertiser*. For a reading of Charles Moore's photographs, see the chapter 'Skin Problems' in Jonathan Flatley's *Like Andy Warhol*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2017, 185-210. See also *Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 1, 380-4 and Okwui Enwezor, 'Andy Warhol and the Painting of Catastrophe', in *Andy Warhol: From A to B and Back Again*, 34-41.

⁴⁰ Theophilus Eugene 'Bull' Connor (11 July 1897–10 March 1973) was a white supremacist and politician who served as Commissioner of Public Safety in Birmingham, Alabama for more than twenty years. He strongly opposed the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. He had responsibility for administrative oversight of the Birmingham fire and police departments. He directed fire hoses and police attack dogs at civil rights activists, including children, documented in footage that was broadcast to the world. The publicity served as a catalyst for social and legal change in the southern United States and contributed to the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This history, in connection to Warhol, is discussed in Flatley, 'Skin Problems'.

where we are left staring directly into the muzzle of a German Shepherd which has us in its sights – we are now in the frame. The art dealer and curator Jeffrey Deitch claims to camera that Warhol was sympathetic to the Civil Rights Movement, and that he had the ‘genius’ to, out of the hundreds of images, ‘instinctively know which ones would create the most impact.’ Warhol associate and later biographer, Victor Bockris, also mounts a defence, claiming that it is at this point in 1963 that he ‘begins to paint the history of America’.⁴¹ As the camera begins to linger on *Pink Race Riot* [*Red Race Riot*] (fig. 1) and *Mustard Race Riot*, Barefield-Pendleton asserts that ‘Sometimes images that are taken don't need to be doctored or modified. [Warhol] sees the world in pink. We did not.’ With her measured and authoritative tone, she offers a persuasive indictment:

I don't actually understand what [Warhol's] purpose was when he did those paintings, and I'm not certain he even knew what his intentions were to be. My impression is that his intentions were strictly to generate money for him and so he decided to employ the struggles of Black Americans into his artwork – very nice.



Figure 1 Andy Warhol, *Pink Race Riot* [*Red Race Riot*], 1963, silkscreen ink and acrylic on linen 325.8 x 210.8cm (128 1/4 x 83 in.). Museum Ludwig, Cologne. © 2022 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. / Licensed by DACS/Artimage, London.

⁴¹ Victor Bockris published many pieces in Warhol's magazine *Interview*. Warhol wrote that ‘Victor Bockris is a brilliant young writer who only writes about three people: William Burroughs, Muhammad Ali and me. Victor Bockris has more energy than any person I know. He types like Van Cliburn plays the piano. He's always tape-recording and taking pictures. I can't keep up with him’; *Andy Warhol's Exposures*, New York: Andy Warhol Books/Grosset & Dunlap, 1979, 210. After Warhol died, Bockris published the biography, *Warhol*, London: Frederick Muller, 1989. On the various editions of this book, and its translation into French, see Jean-Claude Lebensztejn's article, ‘Warhol in French’, in this issue of the *Journal of Art Historiography*.

Barefield-Pendleton's impression is an inevitable compression of historical intricacies, but it also needs to be read against the art historical contextualising of Warhol's *Race Riot* canvases in terms of how Warhol's intentions are translated and what might be missed or distorted. As we are once again shown the Moore photographs, it is left to Deitch to defend Warhol, to state that if he had not executed the paintings, Moore's images would have remained on the pages of *Life* magazine (a debatable point), and that by taking them out of context and suffusing them with colour, they are able to enter into 'our cultural history.' A modern-day shot of *Pink Race Riot* [*Red Race Riot*] on the wall of a museum (contextualised by the COVID masks) provides a visual affirmation. As the sequence draws to a conclusion we hear from Warhol's former assistant, Joseph Freeman, that Warhol was 'very authentic', and that he would 'never say we live in a violent culture'. This point is driven home by footage from 1966 of Warhol responding with a characteristically evasive reply to the question, 'Are you saying you are involved in this idea of making people more conscious of their lives, but you don't really want to get into their lives deeply?' with a succinct 'Yes, [I] don't want to get too involved.'

An unpicking of what we see on the screen and its historical compression needs to be read against the source material of Moore's photographs and how they are presented—from archival live action film to Moore's 'freeze frame' photographs to Warhol's paintings. The sequencing involved weeks of production discussions on how to represent the sensitivities inherent in the images, both from Warhol's viewpoint and in light of recent history and the Black Lives Matter movement. As Cairney explains: 'Doing so without overwriting the events, because Moore's photographs were of an event, so you are already several times removed from the actual people involved. How do you really deal with Warhol's ethical position?'⁴² Ultimately both Cairney and Whately decided that, on balance, they would have to 'jettison' that idea and give people who were part of the story their voice, 'Because ... ultimately, things become confused in television when they raise more questions, or any questions really, apart from what's being said, and the implications of what's been said. It just doesn't work; it's got to be a clean line unfortunately.'⁴³ This explanation goes some way to justify the decision for the programme not to have the contextualising voice of art historians explaining in detail the intricacies of Warhol's work and also serves as a way to keep the audience engaged, with its pace of rapid-fire imagery and music.

So what then are we not seeing and what is implied? Warhol had clearly been affected by the coverage of the Birmingham peaceful protests and the aggressive actions by the police. In his book, *Like Andy Warhol*, Jonathan Flatley observes that 'one can discern [in Warhol's work] a preoccupation with the colour line.'⁴⁴ Warhol selected Moore's double-page spread from *Life* and sent it to his silkscreen maker with instructions to make the contrasts 'very black + white' (fig. 2).

⁴² Cairney, interview with Jean Wainwright, 30 December 2021.

⁴³ Cairney, interview with Jean Wainwright, 30 December 2021.

⁴⁴ Flatley, *Like Andy Warhol*, 180. Flatley draws attention to the fact that in Warhol's 1963 film *Kiss* he features an interracial kiss between Rufus Collins, an African American man, and Naomi Levine, an early Warhol 'superstar', before such imagery appeared on television.



Figure 2 Andy Warhol, mechanical ('The Dogs' Attack is Negroes' Reward', *Life Magazine*, 17 May 1963), newsprint clipping, graphite, tape and gouache on heavyweight paper, 50.8cm x 57.15cm. The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, Founding Collection. © 2022 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. / Licensed by DACS/Artimage, London.

He also cropped the images in the same way as Moore, but rather than following the layout of the *Life* spread, in which one image is larger, with the police dog handler central frame, baton ready and the German Shepherd dog looking directly at the viewer, Warhol asked that all the images be the same size.⁴⁵ Warhol's focus may also have been due to the offensive and incendiary caption accompanying the *Life* spread under the heading 'The Dogs' Attack Is Negroes' Reward' (which he did not include in his final silkscreen although clearly he had read it):

With vicious guard dogs the police attacked the marchers—and thus rewarded them with an outrage that would win support all over the world for Birmingham's Negroes ... This extraordinary sequence—brutal as it is as a Negro gets his trousers ripped off by Connor's dogs—is the attention-getting jack pot of the Negroes' provocation.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ See Georg Frei and Neil Printz, eds, *The Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 2: *Paintings and Sculptures 1964-1969*, London: Phaidon, 2004, cat. nos. 1417-1422.

⁴⁶ On Warhol and this 17 May 1963 *Life Magazine* story, 'They Fight the Fire that Won't Go Out: The Spectacle of Racial Turbulence in Birmingham', also see Enwezor, 'Andy Warhol and the Painting of Catastrophe', 37, and Flatley, *Like Andy Warhol*, 186 (his footnote on dogs and the history of white supremacy gives some excellent references on the subject).

This caption, however important to the contextualising of the *Race Riot* paintings, is not explored in the television programme, the language being inappropriate for a contemporary TV audience. Curator and art critic Okwui Enwezor also makes the case that 'the recursive registers of the imagery make the frame-by-frame display [Warhol] uses in the painting feel almost prosecutorial, as if he were putting America on trial',⁴⁷ yet we only observe this aspect of Warhol's composition fleetingly on the screen as the camera moves from the photographs to the canvas, highlighting Warhol's appropriation.

Crow, writing in 1987, stated that he believed Warhol was attracted to 'the open sores in American political life, the issues that were most problematic for liberal Democratic politicians such as [John F.] Kennedy and Edmund Brown.'⁴⁸ Enwezor argued that Warhol was engaged with an anguished reflection on his country's condition, and that his deployment of Moore's photographs 'becomes an act of participation as a citizen', arguing that Warhol worked with the 'objectionable images, not as mere photojournalistic spectacle ... but to assert his own capacity to see the nature of a brutal sovereign force arrayed against citizens like himself.'⁴⁹ Borrowing from the philosopher Georges Didi-Huberman, Enwezor proposed that Warhol's *Race Riots* don't say the truth but rather are a fragment of it, its 'lacunary remains'. He concluded that the *Race Riot* paintings seek to make visible the image of 'an American catastrophe' and that ultimately, they tell of the violence against the Black body, 'its constant violent desecration by apparatus of state violence'. For Enwezor, Warhol's *Race Riots* display 'the wound in its resplendent and sickening colours.'⁵⁰ If we examine this interpretation against what we see on the screen then we do see the 'American catastrophe' highlighted for us with Warhol's response, but due to constraints of time and because the narrative has to move swiftly on to other stories, we do not see Warhol making decisions about the work. There is however inserted footage that shows Warhol and his assistant Gerard Malanga, who also appears as an interviewee in the programme, screen-printing together, which becomes a televisual cipher for Warhol's making process, something used as a device in a number of different sections. As (present-day) Malanga comments in the programme: 'Well the whole image is pretty shocking, but Andy always felt that colour diminished rather than intensified the violence of what the image was projecting.'

Warhol purported 'not to care'⁵¹ and that is the impression given by the archival footage of him on screen, yet he vividly responds to Moore's photographs with a number of canvases, screen-printing them in black on different colour grounds: red or pink, mustard (a diptych), mauve and white.⁵² In her article 'Warhol

⁴⁷ Enwezor, 'Andy Warhol and the Painting of Catastrophe', 39.

⁴⁸ Crow, 'Saturday Disasters', 143.

⁴⁹ Enwezor, 'Andy Warhol and the Painting of Catastrophe', 39.

⁵⁰ Enwezor, 'Andy Warhol and the Painting of Catastrophe', 40.

⁵¹ Warhol made this statement in one of his most often quoted and influential interviews, with Gene Swenson, 'What is Pop Art? Answers from 8 Painters, Part 1' *ARTnews* 62: 7, November 1963, included in *I'll Be Your Mirror: The Selected Andy Warhol Interviews*, ed. Kenneth Goldsmith, New York: Carroll and Graf, 2004, 16.

⁵² See Frei and Printz, *Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 1, cat. nos. 421–424, and *Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 2, cat. nos. 1417–1422.

Paints History, or Race in America' of 1996, the art historian Anne Wagner argues that the reason Warhol chose the Moore images was that the Black protests in 1963 were 'emphatically topical' as Black activism gathered a new urgency and visibility under the John F. Kennedy administration and the leadership of the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.⁵³ Birmingham was the most segregated city in America, and *Life* magazine was the mainstay of 'photojournalism and prime source for white middle-class impressions of the week's actualities'.⁵⁴

Moore's black-and-white images are shown in close-up five times on the screen with zoom, as specific archival footage is focused on and then frozen into images of his photographs, which gives the viewer the impression of literally being there with Moore as he is framing his shots in camera. With pan shots to Warhol's canvases, we then see fleetingly, from the contrast between the photograph and canvas, how Warhol has used repetition of Moore's images and the pink and mustard paint washes to translate the source material. Cairney admitted that he and Whately wondered what the canvases implied: 'What does it do to the image when you just repeat it over and over again? Does it reiterate it? Does it make you think about it more? Or does it make you think about it less? Does it do both things at the same time, which is probably what I think ... ? That's what makes them such amazing paintings.' He suggested that the entire TV series and the opinions by interviewees on the marches in Birmingham in relation to Warhol's paintings conformed to the Rashomon effect, the device of telling stories from different points of view: 'You get these kind of fractured, very specific perspectives on America and Andy ... all the people and voices that are there are some sort of polyphony in the end, everybody comes from a very specific angle.'⁵⁵

Regarding the *Race Riots*, Anne Wagner asks:

The images may have been familiar, but are they quite empty enough? The question is relevant because one main requisite of Warhol's tested painterly strategy – that sensation of attention sapped or exhausted in confrontation with a repeated visual form – no longer prevails in quite the same way. Though now suffused with color, the photographs survive within Warhol's paintings: a bit grittier, more like newsprint, they still seem pretty much intact.⁵⁶

Wagner sees them as history paintings with multiple protagonists of the 'drama of race'. It could be argued that the translation to the screen implies both Warhol's distancing from the action and yet a perpetuating of it, which is in line with much art historical writing on the series.

What then is gained or lost by bringing the riots alive through interviews, archival footage, freeze frames, the quick edits from Moore's photographs to the paintings and back again in translating the sequence of events onto the screen as a

⁵³ Anne M. Wagner, 'Warhol Paints History, or Race in America', *Representations*, 55, Summer 1996, 104.

⁵⁴ Wagner, 'Warhol Paints History', 105.

⁵⁵ Cairney, interview with Jean Wainwright, 30 December 2021.

⁵⁶ Wagner, 'Warhol Paints History', 106.

context for Warhol's art? This condensing of the intricacies of Warhol's work is now translated through a particular historical contextualisation within the framework of a documentary overview. The question arises of whether we need an art historical reading of the *Race Riot* canvases and their 'nightmare colouring' that Crow refers to, or his sense that what Warhol's series of paintings add up to is a:

kind of *peinture noire* in the sense that we apply the term *film noir* ... a stark, disabused, pessimistic view of American life, produced from the knowing re-arrangement of pulp materials of an artist who did not opt for the easier pathos of irony or condescension.⁵⁷

In the *Race Riot* sequence there is no expert discussion on the placement of Moore's images and the significant differences between the two paintings. Instead, we are shown the canvases in zooms and tracking shots and significantly we are placed as if viewers at the actual scene. We can visually access the fact that *Mustard Race Riot* is a diptych, with a mustard monochrome canvas on the right-hand side (fig. 3). (This is a device that Warhol first deployed in his *Death and Disaster* series.) We see a repetition of four rows of three of Moore's photographs with the cropping of each image on the far right-hand side.



Figure 3 Andy Warhol, *Mustard Race Riot*, 1963, synthetic polymer paint and silkscreen ink on canvas, 289.76 x 213.36cm each (two panels), Museum Brandhorst, Munich. © 2022 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. / Licensed by DACS/Artimage, London.

In contrast, *Pink Race Riot* [*Red Race Riot*] has four rows of images in a three, two, one, and two configuration. This time only the top right-hand image is cropped. The uneven distribution of the reddish pink ground is obvious with the

⁵⁷ Crow, 'Saturday Disasters', 143. Crow was speaking more generally about the *Death and Disaster* images here and not specifically of the *Race Riot* paintings.

marks giving the impression of the colour being 'mopped' across the canvas. There are irregular patterns of repetition and cropping which were not in the original source material and which interrupt their narrative coherence. We are left to follow the camera as it zooms in on the unevenly screened photographs, with a repetitive visual scrolling back and forth from Moore's photographs to the canvas, and to draw our own visual conclusions, guided by Bockris' comment that, 'He saw death and disaster in America, that's what he saw. Andy was using what was happening in the society.' The onscreen political comments are, for expediency, curtailed to a quick contextualising soundbite.

In his review of *Andy Warhol's America* for the *Financial Times*, Peter Aspden points to the absence of an 'intellectual counterweight' to the 'frothier claims made on Warhol's behalf.'⁵⁸ Instead, the platform is given to people who were part of the story, who screened the works (Gerard Malanga) and otherwise were part of Warhol's life. It is their voices that create the links and provide the pulse of the dramatic tension.

Television is, by definition, a medium with a different set of rules from the writing of a book or academic paper. The mission is to reach both general audience and specialist. Although a documentary, *Andy Warhol's America* does not aspire to be an in-depth look at each body of work that is featured; its remit is different, its focus evident. Whately believes that Warhol chose subjects that were important to him. He conceded though that there are dangers in any interpretation of Warhol's work when making a television programme, given the sensitive issues he explored through his subject matter. One key reason the series was 'green lit' was the 'really interesting points of articulation, where [Warhol] comes into contact with an image that resonates at some level.'⁵⁹ For Cairney, Warhol is an observer, his 'raison d'etre was to look intently at people, images and objects.' The visual era that he was, and we are still, living in is saturated with images, and it was those images that were source material for his work.⁶⁰ For Whately, 'Warhol was able to distil the images down to the ones that matter most.'⁶¹

Ultimately by showing the Moore images so insistently intercut with archival footage and then the zoom cut to Warhol's artworks, we are being reattached to the referent. We are perhaps now firmly in Hal Foster's territory with the repetitions of Moore's images, the tearing at the peaceful protestors' clothes, the experience of a 'warding away of traumatic significance *and* an opening out to it: a defending against traumatic effect *and* a producing of it',⁶² but from a different perspective. The *Race Riot* paintings are 'seeking to make visible the image of an American catastrophe ... Rather than distance history and consciousness, these images continue to carry a metonymic charge.'⁶³ The strength of this translation is

⁵⁸ Peter Aspden, 'Andy Warhol's America – Are We Still in the Thick of It?' *Financial Times*, 6 January 2022; <https://www.ft.com/content/baf30220-f919-4124-a4eb-c6323bffc7ac>.

⁵⁹ Whately, interview with Jean Wainwright, 20 December 2021.

⁶⁰ Cairney interview with Jean Wainwright, 30 December 2021

⁶¹ Whately, interview with Jean Wainwright, 20 December 2021.

⁶² Hal Foster, 'Death in America', *October*, 75, Winter 1996, 36-59, as reprinted in *Andy Warhol (October Files)*, ed. Annette Michelson, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001, 72.

⁶³ Enwezor, 'Andy Warhol and the Painting of Catastrophe', 40.

that it leads us back to the crucial site of the event, itself a powerful contextualising tool. But, to reiterate, there is also inevitably an absence lurking in the analysis of Warhol's very particular screen-printing aesthetic and his complex personality traits of presence and absence which by 1963 he had crafted into a transformative act.

The decisions that are made for each segment of the documentary by necessity have a consistency of emphasis and tone of voice, through which the translation is guided. Thirteen years after creating his *Race Riot* paintings, Warhol appeared to highlight another political cause through his series of portraits of Russell Means, an Oglala Lakota American Indian who had become known for his role as a spokesperson and activist for the American Indian Movement (AIM).⁶⁴ Warhol produced this series, entitled *The American Indian (Russell Means)*, between August 1976 and early 1977. Rather than appropriated photographs, this time his canvases and drawings were based on a Polaroid photograph by Warhol, selected from around forty images taken by him during a single sitting with Means.⁶⁵ The seven-and-a-half-minute segment in episode three of the documentary that features the Russell Means story and Warhol's series of portraits follows a similar format and narrative sequencing to that of the *Race Riot* segment in episode two. Once again it is Penny Arcade who guides us into the narrative: Warhol, she explains, understood that this period of the 1970s was a quest for 'liberation and equality' and that 'he was not immune to the individuality and power of certain individuals.' In 1976, Means had been arrested for his role in the seventy-one-day protest in 1973, covered extensively in the news, at the site of the Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890 in South Dakota.⁶⁶ The inclusion of archival BBC footage of the protest in the programme bears comparison with the Birmingham protests through the way in which the editing prepares us to view Warhol's art. In the *Race Riot* sequence, we are repeatedly visually reminded of news and photographic footage of the violent atrocities that Warhol transposed onto his canvas; in the American Indian footage we are constantly drawn in by the edit to Means' face. He is shown close-up, the camera zooming in and then slowly tracking across a black-and-white photograph of his upper chest and face in a similar framing that Warhol uses for his portrait. This imagery is inter-cut with contemporary interview footage of his son, the

⁶⁴ The Oglala are one of the seven subtribes of the Lakota people who, along with the Dakota, make up the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ. A majority of the Oglala live on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, the eighth-largest Native American reservation in the United States. The American Indian Movement was founded July 1968 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. It was initially located in urban areas to address systemic issues of poverty, discrimination, and police brutality against Native Americans.

⁶⁵ In his autobiography, Means described the sitting and recounted that 'they flew me to New York and Warhol took more than one hundred Polaroids of me'; Russell Means with Marvin J. Wolf, *Where White Men Fear to Tread: The Autobiography of Russell Means*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995, 361–2. For a comprehensive description of the sitting, see Neil Printz and Sally King-Nero, eds, *The Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 4: *Paintings and Sculptures, Late 1974–1976*, London: Phaidon, 2014, 494–6.

⁶⁶ The American Indian Movement armed occupation of Wounded Knee, on the site of the massacre of Native Americans by US soldiers in the late nineteenth century, lasted seventy-one days and began on 27 February 1973 when two hundred AIM-led Sioux seized control of Wounded Knee.

activist, actor, boxer, comedian, and entrepreneur Tatanka Means, reinforcing that his father had been the 'stand out' leader of AIM and used 'everything he could to bring awareness of the Native Americans at the time.' Echoing Martin Luther King's impassioned speech at the start of the *Race Riot* segment in the previous episode, there are then three clips of Means making powerful speeches on the oppressions of Native Americans to a background soundtrack of John Kangos' *He's Gonna Step on You Again* (1971). Each segment was edited from archival film footage and again focuses on a close-up of his face. Building up dramatic effect, the first is intercut with drumming and then the screen is filled with Means' face in profile as he says, 'Hopefully within the next few years we will see the birth, the rebirth, of total Indian sovereignty in this country'. With his second statement, 'The White Man can't afford to face the truth about what he has done in this country. We have no rights as human beings', we see him positioned against the site of the Wounded Knee Massacre and a black-and-white photographic still of him having 'war paint' applied. The third statement gives more visual context with cuts to federal agents and Native Americans bearing arms while acknowledging, 'We knew that when we came here, we would probably be massacred, and we are preparing to die. Whether we get massacred or not we will still win'. Means' son then provides us with the context, as he reads directly to camera the key points of the siege: 'Thousands of shots were fired, Indians were killed, and an agent was paralyzed. Russell Means and his fellow protest leaders were charged with assault, larceny and conspiracy'.

One of the challenges with television documentary is in the choices made about continuity, how the narrative flows from shot to shot. The aim of *Andy Warhol's America* was to have Warhol centre stage and for this to be a translation to screen of Warhol's intentions. Thus, there needed to be a clear pathway from the highly emotive protest highlighting the plight of Native Americans to an explanation of why Warhol felt driven to embark on his Means portraits, and the editing of the interviews, footage of a historic event and Warhol's art all needed to be condensed to a few minutes.

We are first introduced to a 1977 version of Warhol's painting *The American Indian (Russell Means)* with a tracking shot that moves slowly from his torso up to his face while we hear Penny Arcade saying, 'It's irrefutable dignity, but I mean it's fierce, it's also raw, it's also stripped away. I think Andy always sought simplicity. His work was kind of like an X-ray.' We are focused by the camera on Means' face. The camera then cuts to another painting of Means, also from 1977, where the face is almost portrayed in negative – it is dark, against a bright yellow background as if he is standing against the sun. This is the image we see when Arcade says the word 'X-ray'. In the final portrait of Means that we see on the screen, this time from 1976, the painting is much more colourful and a comment by Gopnik begins to hint at the very complexity of the portrait-sitting and Warhol's often subversive use of colour. Gopnik tells us that one of the things that interested him in particular,

... is that in a lot of the pictures of Russell Means, the colour that's supposed to represent his face slips off the actual image of his face. It's as though his race, his colouring, his status, as what would have still been called in those days a 'Red Indian', slips off. It's not something true, it's not something melded to his persona and that I think is interesting.

When we look closely at the images, it is the face of Means and his expression that lures us in, both on the television and in front of the paintings themselves. In each one there are brushstrokes of paint on his face on the right-hand side which Gopnik is alluding to. There is however in the short sequence no other discussion or pursuit of the implications of the statement, of Means' background, or of his own relationship to his identity. Rather, what we hear is a particular strategic television shorthand, each word and image selected to alert our curiosity. Douglas Christmas of the ACE Gallery in Los Angeles tells us that Warhol had wanted to do a portrait 'that would hold up in time, historically, about this man who was a very powerful communicator for the North American Indian cause'. According to Christmas, 'I remember I asked Andy, what is your biggest desire to paint? ... He said, "I wanna do—do an American Indian series." Then when [Andy] saw the images of Russell ... [he] responded big time ... and wanted to do it immediately, so I shot from the hip and I said: "Twelve big paintings, twenty-four medium-size paintings, and with that we can select out and do multiple exhibitions."' ⁶⁷ By 1976, Means would have been an obvious choice for Warhol for a number of reasons, and not least because he was the 'face' of the modern indigenous resistance movement. Warhol's enthusiasm to create portraits of Means led to a business arrangement with Christmas, resulting in several exhibitions.

The segment plays out with Tatanka Means suggesting that although his father was not impressed by the portrait, 'he did like Andy as a businessman and thought he was a better businessman than an artist', a point supported within the documentary by the references to exhibitions of the portraits and the circumstances of the arrangements with Christmas. This information, and a quote from the *Philosophy of Andy Warhol* that making money is art and working is art and 'good business is the best art' to the music of *King in a Catholic Style* by China Crisis (1985) leads us to the next storyline.

We are as viewers given a finely tuned synopsis of the translation of both the story of Means' activism in the moving imagery and examples of his artworks. In 1976 Warhol was not emotionally, physically, or financially in the same position as in 1963. In 1968 he had been shot by Valerie Solanas and nearly died.⁶⁸ The optimism of the 1960s had dissipated and Warhol was reinventing himself as a 'business artist', with a manager and an entourage charged with getting him portrait commissions.

In his essay on Warhol's portraits of Means, Gregg Deal argues that they are on the one hand symbolic of America's need to 'see, recognise and hopefully

⁶⁷ Warhol entered into an exclusive option to acquire, exhibit and sell and paintings over a ten-year period. Christmas organised three exhibitions: at FIAC, Paris, October 1976; Ace Vancouver, November-December 1976; and Ace Los Angeles, February-March 1977. He also lent and consigned paintings to museum and gallery exhibitions, including at the Musée d'art et d'histoire, Geneva, October-January 1976-77, the Kunsthaus, Zurich, May-July 1978, and the Louisiana Museum, Humlebæk, October-November 1978.

⁶⁸ Episodes two and three of *Andy Warhol's America* cover Warhol's shooting, including archival footage. The shooting and its impact on Warhol has been discussed extensively, including in Bockris, *Warhol*, 296-312, and Gopnik, *Warhol*, London: Penguin/Random House, 2020, especially 614-32.

reconcile a modern indigenous person's place in America', while on the other they represent 'the consumption of the indigenous image.'⁶⁹ Warhol's canvases of Means provided a point of intersection between American culture, history, politics and society and the challenge for the producers was how to convey the moral complexities 'without the programme becoming congested'.⁷⁰ How are we introduced to Warhol's portraits of Means on screen and what might have been missed in the multifarious edited components that expose gaps in the translation? When Christmas contacted Means to ask him to pose for Warhol, Means was in prison.⁷¹ With this information as a dramatic lead into the context, we are then shown a series of the portraits. The only indication that the work originated with Warhol taking Polaroids is the sound of a camera shutter click. Do we need to see how Warhol transformed the image in his process of screening and adding paint and interpretive colour from the selected image that he eventually chose out of the numerous photographs he took? On the screen we are not shown any of these Polaroids, in which Means strikes a variety of poses, looking straight into the camera and to the left and right, composed and clearly someone who is comfortable being photographed.⁷² Gregg Deal, whose mother was a Native American, claims that they were important not only because they were created during the struggle of American Indians for equal rights, but also because 'America was seeing our faces for the first time, and the idea of Natives' as 'modern living' beings.⁷³

There is a compelling backstory that does not make the translation onto the screen due to the constraints of time and flow of the narrative. For Warhol Native American art was a subject in which he had some investment. He amassed an extensive collection of Navajo Indian blankets, rugs, jewellery, baskets, beadwork, and other artifacts. This collection contained 650 items.⁷⁴ Among them were a number of photogravures of Indigenous Peoples of the United States by Edward S.

⁶⁹ Gregg Deal, 'The American Indian (Russell Means)', in *Warhol and the West*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019, 71, 68.

⁷⁰ Cairney, interview with Jean Wainwright, 10 January 2022.

⁷¹ Means and his friend Dick Marshall had been charged with the murder of Martin Montileaux on 7 March 1975 in a saloon just inside the Pine Ridge Reservation. In *Where White Men Fear to Tread*, Means notes, 'For weeks I had been dickering with Doug Christmas and Andy Warhol about when to do my portrait. Just before testimony began on the trial, I told them "I might be put away for the rest of my life, or I might be dead. Better to do it now"'; see Printz and King-Nero, *Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 4, 494.

⁷² See Printz and King-Nero, *Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 4, 494–6.

⁷³ Deal, 'The American Indian (Russell Means)', 68.

⁷⁴ Ellen Napiura Taubman, who was the organiser of major American Indian art sales for Sotheby's, remembers Warhol as an 'amateur, whose spread was greater than his power of analysis ...'; Ralph T. Coe, 'American Indian Art', in *Possession Obsession: Andy Warhol and Collecting*, ed. John W. Smith, Pittsburgh: The Andy Warhol Museum, 2002, 115–6. Bob Ashton, the founder of *American Indian Magazine*, recalls that around 1972 or 1973, 'one afternoon Andy Warhol and his entourage ... came to my shop. They asked to look at Navajo textiles. Andy was particularly interested in what is called a Moki (Hopi) blanket, in which a series of brown and blue stripes alternate with bands of red ravelled wool called bayeta running through the center'; Coe, 'American Indian Art', 119.

Curtis. One, entitled *Standing on the Earth—Oto* (1928), bears a remarkable similarity to the Means portrait (figs. 4, 5).⁷⁵

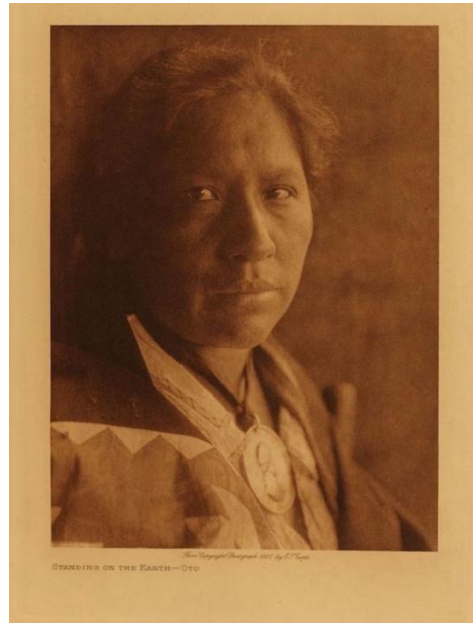


Figure 4 Andy Warhol, *The American Indian (Russell Means)*, 1976, synthetic polymer paint and silkscreen ink on canvas, 127 x 106.68cm. The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh. © 2022 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc. / Licensed by DACS/Artimage, London.

Figure 5 Edward S. Curtis (American 1868-1952), *Standing on the Earth—Oto*, 1928, photogravure, 22.86 x 16.51cm. Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections of Northwestern University Libraries, Evanston, Illinois. © Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections of Northwestern University Libraries.

In her essay of 2019, 'The American Indian and Warhol's Fantasy of an Indigenous Presence', Heather Ahtone provides a lengthy examination of the construction of Warhol's images of American Indians with particular reference to the photographs of Curtis, whose images were, she observes, 'THE images of the West.' She notes that Curtis' desire for his images to be recognised as American Indians was more important to him than for the image to represent 'the truth of the subject', and that the American Indian community remained antagonised by Curtis and his project.⁷⁶ Neil Printz suggests that Warhol, similarly, was not interested in Means as a personality but as a regional type.⁷⁷ Warhol did, however, engage with him during the sitting. Means related in his autobiography that he had taken Warhol to a Puerto Rican club and later that evening Warhol had taken him to a 'ritzy nightclub'.⁷⁸ Warhol had invested time and energy producing a substantive

⁷⁵ The Sotheby's New York catalogue, *Andy Warhol: American and European American Paintings, Drawings and Prints*, for the sales of 29 and 30 April 1988, includes, in item 2907, *The North American Indian*, volume 19, including thirty-four photogravures of Pacific Northwest Indians on vellum, one of which is this image.

⁷⁶ Heather Ahtone, 'The American Indian and Warhol's Fantasy of an Indigenous Presence', in *Warhol and the West*, 33.

⁷⁷ Printz and King-Nero, *The Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné*, vol. 4, 493.

⁷⁸ Means and Wolf, *Where White Men Fear to Tread*, 362.

number of portraits of Means. Although there is some loss of translation contributing to the entire backstory, once more it is the archival footage and clever editing with close-up shots of Means' face which makes a persuasive human link to the brightly coloured portrait paintings.

Andy Warhol's America is a translation of Warhol as a 'bellwether' of American culture, as someone who, in the remit of the programme, as emphasised by Jerry Hall in the repeated title sequences to each episode, would, if everything were destroyed except Warhol's work, 'give you a very good idea of America'. A number of storylines in the programme comprise the translation: one is the context of American history and certain key events that the producers emphasise; a second is how the work of Warhol is encapsulated and brought to life through footage and eyewitness accounts and interviews; and a third is the artworks that are translated on screen.

When you watch television programmes there is an imposed linear format. *Andy Warhol's America*, with its three distinct but interlocking episodes, is connecting with an audience who may have seen Warhol's artworks garnering record saleroom prices, or who know him from an art historical viewpoint, or who have seen his work in museums, galleries, private collections, or through their circulation within popular culture. We are, in *Andy Warhol's America*, propelled along with the producers' pre-conceived narrative, seeing Warhol's translation of American history into his art as packaged through a number of filmic stratagems. Television can be, as Cairney acknowledges, 'extraordinarily manipulative', and what it should be doing is 'forcing [us] to think about what [people] are saying in the different way ... it reframes everything and makes Warhol feel more contemporary.'⁷⁹

Reflecting this statement was the handling in *Andy Warhol's America* of the *Race Riots* and the portraits of *The American Indian (Russell Means)*. Significantly, as already noted here, these works had not featured in previous television documentaries on Warhol. A television documentary translation does of course contain bias, based on such choices. It is selective, with a dominant narrative, to which interviewees' opinions and counter-opinions contribute. The soundtracks and choice of music lift the narrative or suggest a mood. The material is manipulated and condensed and transformed by the vision of the director and producers. It is a 'semantic and iconographic coherence'.⁸⁰ This cohesion encompasses all the visual and aural effects, including short quotes from Warhol's books, both narrated and shown on screen. There are essential differences in the translation from one medium to another. Written biographies and texts on Warhol are not set to a musical score. There are not the numerous nuanced visual devices that add subtle narratives. Part of the translation process is the embedding of narrative clues in the cold open sequence, such as that 'Warhol was like a reporter' (Robert Heide), that there is 'something essential about Andy Warhol, it is this very American story' (Jeffrey Deitch), that 'He was blowing up everything so we could see it' (Eve Ensler, also

⁷⁹ Cairney, interview with Jean Wainwright, 10 January 2022.

⁸⁰ Cristina Valdés and Adrián Fuentes Luque, 'Coherence in Translated Television Commercials', *European Journal of English Studies*, 12: 2, August 2008, 133–48.

known as V). These ideas then are stored in our memory bank and when we come to the segment of the story they relate to, we recognise the thread and make links.

The aim of *Andy Warhol's America* is to persuade us that Warhol was an interpreter, a 'history painter', someone who Whately believed was a 'cypher' who appropriated, translated and repositioned our focus and dissipated our traumatic responses through his art. Whately translates him for us, but like Warhol's early canvas *Crossword*, of 1961, we do not have access to all the clues.

The biggest translation challenge is the edit. How much can be cut while still retaining the essence of the story? When we see the *Race Riot* or *Russell Means* paintings as they appear on our screens, we are being guided by editorial decisions and the fact that, unlike in a book where we are able to navigate backwards and forwards through the text, moving, reading and evaluating at our own pace, in television (unless we stop and rewind) we move swiftly through the carefully selected filmic constructions, often at a relentless pace. Nothing is incidental, everything has been pared down to be essential to the storyline. While we absorb one story, we are swiftly led into the next, the editing 'heartbeat'. Interviewees, who may have been filmed from forty-five minutes to over two days, are reduced to the essential components of what they are saying, a form of brutal synopsis. What the filmmakers consider to be the most powerful statements make the edit to screen, and these ultimately create a bias, their statements having inevitable gravitas. There is, as Whately describes, the need to balance different voices, different points of view. These are televised counterpoints: 'It's the grammar of film', he suggests, 'what words fit together and what sentences fit together ... the musicality of it, the light and shade of the entire filmic score'.⁸¹ The pace of the episodes, the highs and lows – for example we move from the *Race Riots* to a Kennedy sequence with Bockris intoning that 'at that point the American Dream still exists'. The use of links, whether spoken or visual, are an essential component in the translation, as is the real-time making of the programme. As he moved through the process from scripting to filming to directing and editing the programmes, Whately found revelations that surprised him, that went against the impression that he had when he first began researching. He had no idea that Warhol worked in a soup kitchen in New York serving food to the poor, and he was not aware of his interest in Russell Means. He initially thought Warhol was 'more of a sensationalist, more of an opportunist, probably not as nice as I think he is now ... he's such a deeply complex character. There are as many views on him as there are books on him.'⁸² Ultimately that is one of the biggest challenges of translating him for the screen.

For Cairney there was nobody better than Warhol as a lens onto American culture, and he suggests that the sequences for both the *Race Riots* and *Russell Means* portraits illustrate that he

... always has one foot inside and one foot outside culture ... he manages to shape-shift in that way. He has an eye for people who are disenfranchised, or who are outliers. I think that's why, for the purposes of our series, you have so many great stories, because he's

⁸¹ Whately, interview with Jean Wainwright, 20 December 2021.

⁸² Whately, interview with Jean Wainwright, 20 December 2021.

drawn over and over again to people who are hard done by, whose plight may be well known, but the balance hasn't been redressed.⁸³

Cairney's words underscore how *Andy Warhol's America* reflects our particular contemporary vantage point. Cairney agrees that while you are breathing life into the images, you are not 'talking about paint and its handling, you are not talking about framing or impasto or gestural brushwork and because you're not, all that goes out of the window.'⁸⁴ The artmaking process, then, perhaps is one aspect of Warhol's work lost in this translation. However, in its translation, *Andy Warhol's America* gives us a focus on the significance of the actual events Warhol was responding to, and we reconnect with the 'real'. As Cairney emphasises, the programme answers the questions, 'what happened on that day when those protesters were viciously attacked? Who was involved in the *Russell Means* commission and what impression did the portrait make? Cairney believes that 'coming at the programme through an historical rather than through an art historical lens, it does so much more heavy lifting for you. The film becomes a kind of re-populated landscape, you feel as if you are there. The programme has to somehow relate to the lives of the viewers. They need to find a contextual and contemporary resting place, whether to do with gender or race or violence, celebrity or identity.'⁸⁵

Medium specificity is something that Warhol embraced his entire working life. There are losses or omissions in the translation that lie somewhere 'on the cutting room floor': the hundreds of versions of the script, numerous hours of interview footage, the huge task of trawling through archival footage, picture libraries, museums, books and biographies on Warhol – all reduced to three hours of television viewing. Yet when you watch the three episodes, you are reminded of the vibrancy of the medium, the viewing sensation it can provide, the crafted presentation, the way that the images are brought to life – a reminder that translations, particularly from one medium to another, can provide a different narrative and emphasis, and in this case a discourse using a distinct visual and aural vocabulary. What is gained by the particular translation in *Andy Warhol's America* is that we are propelled back to Birmingham, Alabama, and then see Warhol's resulting images; we see Russell Means protesting and the context of how his portrait came to be made. What is lost is that we are not shown Warhol's decisions, the crops and layout of the *Pink Race Riot* [*Red Race Riot*] or *Mustard Race Riot*; we do not have an art historian giving an in-depth critique of the work – but then that would have been a different programme. Nor are we shown that Warhol took numerous Polaroid photographs of Russell Means, nor the commentary that he produced on sitting for the portrait. But I would argue there is a balance, and what may be lost is balanced by a translation which gives us a different, multifaceted viewpoint on Warhol's work.

⁸³ Cairney, interview with Jean Wainwright, 10 January 2022.

⁸⁴ Cairney, interview with Jean Wainwright, 10 January 2022.

⁸⁵ Cairney, interview with Jean Wainwright, 10 January 2022.

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