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The Face in Flight: Andy Warhol's *Henry Geldzahler*

by JUAN A. SUÁREZ

Abstract: Existing analyses of Andy Warhol's *Henry Geldzahler* (1964) interpret it as a psychological portrait that reveals its subject's interiority. This article, by contrast, refutes such claims of psychological depth. Through a close analysis of the film's surface and of Geldzahler's performance, it reads the work in terms of parody, play with props and materials, and queer affect. It illuminates its peculiar nonpsychologizing portraiture through William James's theses about transitional mental states and the continuity of the psychic and the material. It concludes with a reconsideration of Warhol's film portraits in light of these ideas.

Part minimal exercise, part portrait, *Henry Geldzahler* (1964) remains among the least studied of Andy Warhol's early films: the silent works made after he acquired a 16mm Bolex in July 1963 and before he shifted to sound cinema at the end of 1964, when he started using an Auricon capable of synchronous sound registration.¹ It captures Warhol's good friend at the time, the art critic and curator Henry Geldzahler, sitting in front of the camera and smoking a cigar—an apparently simple premise that, as this article shows, belies the performative and conceptual complexity of the film. By comparison with Warhol's other films of the period, *Henry Geldzahler* is relatively unremarkable. It is not enlivened with the erotic innuendo of *Blow Job* (Andy Warhol, 1964) or the frank eroticism of *Couch* (Andy Warhol, 1964), a film that contains nudity and sexual encounters between Factory regulars, and it certainly lacks the monumental scale of *Empire* (Andy Warhol, 1964) and *Sleep* (Andy Warhol, 1964), which consist, respectively, of a static shot of the Empire State Building lasting just over eight hours and of twenty-two takes of poet John Giorno fast asleep, looped and repeated for five hours and twenty minutes.² In contrast, the one hundred

1 July 1963 seems to be the date when Warhol purchased the Bolex camera with which he embarked on film production. For a thoughtful account of the complications of dating Warhol's entrance into filmmaking, see Glyn Davis and Gary Needham, introduction to *Warhol in Ten Takes*, ed. Glyn Davis and Gary Needham (London: British Film Institute, 2012), 7.

2 Here, I provide screening time for these films when shown at silent speed. Warhol's silent films were shot at the standard sound speed of twenty-four frames per second but screened at standard silent speed, which was, until 1970, sixteen frames per second; this manipulation of screening speed caused a slight flicker and retardation.

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minutes of *Henry Geldzahler* are hardly noteworthy, yet like these titles, or, to add another example, like *Eat* (Andy Warhol, 1963)—twenty-eight minutes of artist Robert Indiana eating a mushroom—the film also emphasizes duration and distended temporality. Structurally, however, *Henry Geldzahler* is closer to *Empire* than to *Eat* or *Sleep*. While the latter two were put together in four-minute increments (100-foot rolls of the Bolex), the compositional units of *Empire* and *Henry Geldzahler* are fifty-minute-long takes (the equivalent screen time of the 1,200-foot reels of the Auricon camera projected at silent speed).

Henry Geldzahler is in some ways a spinoff of *Empire*. It was filmed the following day—Sunday, July 26, 1964—and with the same camera, a rented Auricon that was perversely used in both films with the sound turned off.³ The camera was not due back at the rental shop until the following Monday, so Warhol, legendarily thrifty, decided to optimize expenses by making a film of his friend. In this manner, he could also use two unexposed reels left over from the marathon shoot of the previous evening. Warhol summoned Geldzahler to his studio, where the latter found the camera already set up on its tripod pointing at the Factory’s art-deco red-velvet couch. Geldzahler was asked to sit on the couch, the camera was switched on, and it recorded his presence, just as the previous day it had recorded that of the Empire State Building from early evening to early morning. This is Geldzahler’s description of the event:

So I called Andy and he was making a film. I got to the studio and said “What are you making a film of?” and he said, “Of you.” I said, “What should I do?” He said “Smoke a cigar.” I had a big cigar with me. I was also stoned, mildly stoned, on some good pot, if I remember correctly. I said, “How long is the film going to be?” and he said, “An hour and a half.” I said, “What should I do?” He said, “Don’t do anything. Just sit there and smoke a cigar.” So, I sat on the edge of the couch. . . . I was horrified, because Andy didn’t stand behind the camera. He didn’t tell me to move. He put the magazine on, he loaded it, he started it, he went to make some phone calls, and he’d come back once in a while and wave at me. It was a fantastic experience for me, first of all, because the hour and a half went by so quickly. But seeing the film, I suddenly realized that Andy’s nature really is a great portraitist, and that if you sit somebody in front of a camera for an hour and a half and don’t tell them what to do, they’re going to do everything, their whole vocabulary. I went through my entire history of gestures. I could see from viewing the film later on that it gave me away completely—the extent to which I am infantile, the extent to which I am megalomaniacal—all the things one tries to hide come through on the film.⁴

This is not the first portrait that Warhol made of his friend. The reel *Henry in Bathroom* (1963), which Geldzahler claimed is the first footage Warhol ever shot with his Bolex, shows him smoking a cigar in the bathroom, flushing the cigar in

3 Callie Angell, *The Films of Andy Warhol: Part II* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1994), 20.

4 Henry Geldzahler, interviewed by John Wilcock, in John Wilcock, *The Autobiography and Sex Life of Andy Warhol*, ed. C. Trela (New York: Trela Media, 2000), 65.

the toilet, and then brushing his teeth: “He was just trying to see what it looks like through the camera.”⁵ The conception of the longer film is closer to the screen tests that Warhol had started to take, probably at the very beginning of 1964: film portraits whose length was that of a hundred-foot Bolex reel.⁶ As a portrait of his friend—“a film . . . of you”—*Henry Geldzahler* can be read as an extended screen test, but it also differs in some ways from one. The attempt to approximate the still image in some of the screen tests—Warhol or his assistants often asked models to be as still as possible—is here forsaken from the start, as Geldzahler cannot possibly try to resemble a still picture for over an hour.⁷ Instead, he fidgets throughout, settling and resettling on the couch for the duration of the shoot. While some screen tests give rise to brief bursts of self-dramatization and performing wit, Geldzahler calmly submits to Warhol’s gambit—“Don’t do anything. Just sit there and smoke a cigar”—but about fifteen minutes into the film, he begins to appear drained from the exposure and takes occasional breaks, covering his face with his hands or feigning sleep.

Geldzahler posed for Warhol’s camera several times afterward. He appears fleetingly in a number of films from 1964 and 1965, and in 1965 he also sat for a conventional screen test, which was occasionally projected behind the Velvet Underground in the Exploding Plastic Inevitable shows.⁸ The screen test shows him, in Callie Angell’s words, “placidly untying and removing his necktie, turning his collar up, retying the tie, and smoothing his collar down again.”⁹ All these portraits of Geldzahler are similarly task oriented: he brushes his teeth, smokes, takes off his tie and puts it back on, and plays with his shirt collar. The trifling, playful quality of their content contrasts with the idiom of psychological depth that Geldzahler uses to describe his reaction to Warhol’s extended portrait of him.

Geldzahler is not alone in this. In fact, most readings of the film have picked up on the psychological seriousness of his account and added other ingredients to the mix. I will mention only the three most extended glosses: Callie Angell rephrases Geldzahler’s idea that the film “use[s] the unmitigated scrutiny of the camera to gradually evoke

5 Patrick Smith, “Interview with Henry Geldzahler,” *Andy Warhol’s Art and Films* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1988), 305–306; for a similar account, see also Wilcock, *Autobiography*, 65. In “Andy Warhol: A Memoir,” Geldzahler reiterates that Warhol’s first film was “a hand-held, eight-millimeter, three-minute film of me brushing my teeth in the bathroom of a one-room apartment I had on Central Park West.” He also describes *Henry Geldzahler* as “a long portrait of a helpless creature smoking a cigar. . . . It was a boring film but revealing of its subject.” Henry Geldzahler, *Making It New: Essays, Interviews, Talks* (New York: Turtle Point Press, 1994), 42–44.

6 According to Callie Angell, “The earliest mention of these films is found in the diary of Kelly Edey, who noted on January 17, 1964” that Warhol had been making—in Edey’s words—“a series of portraits of beautiful boys”; Edey was one of them. Angell, *Andy Warhol Screen Tests: The Films of Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné* (New York: Whitney Museum and Harry N. Abrams, 2005), 13. However, it seems that shortly after he acquired his first Bolex, Warhol made several portrait reels that may well be predecessors of the screen-test series: in addition to *Henry in Bathroom*, Davis and Needham mention several unpreserved reels filmed in the summer and early fall of 1963, among them *Wynn Gerry Claes*, *Taylor and John*, *Bob Indiana Etc.* Davis and Needham, introduction to *Warhol in Ten Takes*, 7.

7 On the intended stillness of the screen tests, see Angell, *Andy Warhol Screen Tests*, 13–14.

8 Angell, 82, 266, 275.

9 Angell, 82.

hidden aspects of Geldzahler's personality."¹⁰ She places the film in the sphere of high modernism by remarking on the similarity between Geldzahler's pose and setting and Pablo Picasso's 1906 portrait of Gertrude Stein in New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. The similarities are not just visual. Just as Stein supported Picasso in the 1900s and 1910s, Geldzahler was a steady "patron and supporter" for Warhol during the early 1960s; in addition, as Edward Powers has recently pointed out, both Stein and Geldzahler were Jewish and queer.¹¹ Pose and biography aside, however, the two portraits are vastly different. The photographic likeness and the constant animation of Geldzahler's features in the film contrasts sharply with the deliberately antimimetic rigidity that Picasso depicts in Stein's face, which was inspired by an Iberian mask.¹² Angell further sees in the film a struggle of egos between Warhol and Geldzahler, or rather, between Warhol's indifferent camera and Geldzahler's softness and vulnerability: "The majestic pose with which Geldzahler begins this ordeal—sitting upright on the couch, glasses on, hand on hip—is soon replaced by obvious expressions of ennui and discomfort, and disintegrates into a nearly fetal posture by the second reel" (Figure 1).¹³

Writing shortly after Angell, Amy Taubin describes the film along nearly identical lines while also underlining a queer element in Geldzahler's presence. After recalling Angell's interpretation—the echoes of Picasso's portrait of Stein—she proceeds with her own account. Geldzahler starts out "nonchalantly staring down at the camera": one of the few intellectuals to sit for Warhol's camera, she writes, "he makes sure that we know that he means to outsmart it." He looks at the beginning of the film as if he were "pondering the entire history of Modernist portraiture and the place of the motion picture within it." Yet as the film advances, he loses his self-possession and control: "The involuntary gestures keep coming. Now there is something decidedly swish about them. And Spanish. Is he following a train of thought initiated by Picasso? Or has Geldzahler been inhabited by Mario Montez, the Factory's reigning drag queen?" Taubin's train of thought is a little elliptical. Is she invoking the old idiom "rather Spanish than mannish" to bring Geldzahler and Montez together under a shared "Spanishness"—that is, "queerness"—that was more literal in the case of the Puerto Rican performer?¹⁴ Taubin continues by noting that Geldzahler becomes increasingly sweaty, twitchy, bored, "slumped over," and "anxious" toward the end of the film: "He scrunches down into the couch, curled in fetal position, his hands over his face. A few minutes later, the film is over." Geldzahler's eventual withering, she claims, results from the tense "narcissistic self-splitting" inherent in the filming situation, in

10 Angell, *Films of Andy Warhol*, 20.

11 Edward D. Powers, "For Your Immediate Attention: Gertrude Stein, Andy Warhol, and Henry Geldzahler," *Word & Image* 30, no. 4 (2014): 416–430. My thanks to Glyn Davis for bringing this article to my immediate attention.

12 James Johnson Sweeney, "Picasso and Iberian Sculpture," *Art Bulletin* 23, no. 3 (September 1941): 191–198.

13 Angell, *Films of Andy Warhol*, 20.

14 Montez was not yet the Factory's "reigning drag queen." He first stepped into the Factory in December 1964 for the filming of *Harlot*, Warhol's first sound film, and the Mario Banana screen tests. Ronald Tavel, "The Banana Diary: The Story of Andy Warhol's *Harlot*," *Film Culture* 40 (1966): 43–66, reprinted in Michael O'Pray, ed., *Andy Warhol: Film Factory* (London: British Film Institute, 1989), 66–93.



Figure 1. Andy Warhol, *Henry Geldzahler*, 1964. 16mm film, black and white, silent. © 2018 The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA, a museum of Carnegie Institute. All rights reserved.

which sitters are both generators and careful observers of their own images, which are at once too much and never enough.¹⁵

J. J. Murphy echoes and expands Angell's and Taubin's views while quoting Geldzahler's testimony to show how Geldzahler went beyond the inexpressive rigidity of Picasso's painting and "attempted to go through a repertoire of facial expressions, presumably based on various art historical portraits." Murphy reiterates the adversarial conceit spotted by Angell and sees Geldzahler, filmed from a slightly high angle, "at a distinct psychological disadvantage," sweaty, "ruffled," "regressing," and eventually defeated: "Geldzahler clearly loses his battle with the camera."¹⁶

My own reading differs sharply from these accounts. Neither the rhetoric of authenticity and self-revelation nor the alleged psychological duel between sitter and filmmaker seem to me the most significant aspects of the film, but rather the dynamism of the film's surfaces and materials. These elements acquire a new protagonism when one places *Henry Geldzahler* in relation to *Empire*, with which it has a generative connection and which it strongly resembles: both films extract from rather static situations an undertow of subterranean resonance and hidden noise. Sources of this noise are Geldzahler's strategies of occultation, mimicry, contestation, and role-playing, along with his manipulation of two pregnant objects: his sunglasses and his cigar. The ideas

15 Amy Taubin, "My Time Is Not Your Time," *Sight and Sound* 4, no. 6 (June 1994): 24.

16 J. J. Murphy, *The Black Hole of the Camera: The Films of Andy Warhol* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 36–37.

of American philosopher William James are helpful for mapping the kind of “being” that Warhol’s film presents: rather than deliver any form of subjective truth, the film stages emergence without *telos*—a gestural and affective flow without necessary reference to personality or self.

Henry Geldzahler, *Empire*, and Noise. One way to detach *Henry Geldzahler* from registers of subjective reference is by reading it against *Empire*. The connection between the two titles is strengthened by the fact that the camera original of *Henry Geldzahler* was packed away with the reels of *Empire*. It was stored as reels 11 and 12 of *Empire*’s original negatives, and, with them, it remained lost for years in a New York photographic laboratory. The cans, however, were labeled with the film’s current title—an indication that it was conceived as a separate project.¹⁷

That being said, the two separate projects are intriguingly similar: a building and then a body—the body of a friend—are placed in front of the camera for endless contemplation in two consecutive sessions. These are two very different kinds of objects: the blank face of the famous building, on the one hand, and the endlessly expressive modulations of Geldzahler’s face and body, on the other. At some level, however, both building and person were background elements to Warhol at the time, part of his immediate environment. The building was part of his material landscape, scenery to Warhol’s New York life, subliminally noticed, one might conjecture, in his ramblings around the city, particularly because it was still the tallest structure in the greater New York area. The building was even more present than usual in the press around the time of the shoot. Angell recalls that floodlights had been installed at the top of the building and first lit on April 15 to celebrate the opening of the World’s Fair in Flushing Meadows, only a few months before the filming of both *Empire* and *Henry Geldzahler*.¹⁸

Geldzahler was a different kind of background figure, a very animated, intensely interactive part of Warhol’s milieu. Geldzahler and Warhol had been close since July 1960, when the gallerist and critic Ivan Karp, a friend of Geldzahler and an assistant to art dealer Leo Castelli, brought Geldzahler to Warhol’s house on Lexington Avenue. Geldzahler was at the time the curator for contemporary art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Warhol was quickly taken with his educational credentials—he had pursued a PhD in art history at Harvard—as well as his accepting attitude toward mass culture, love of pop music, sense of humor, and intelligence.¹⁹ Just by looking around Warhol’s apartment on his first visit, Geldzahler figured out that the artist must like Florine Stettheimer, a faux-naïve painter and member of New York’s Dada circles in the 1920s, and quickly offered to show Warhol the Stettheimers in storage at the Met the following morning. Warhol, who was indeed a Stettheimer fan, was

17 Angell, *Films of Andy Warhol*, 20.

18 Angell, 16.

19 For biographical information on Geldzahler, see Calvin Tomkins, “Profiles: Henry Geldzahler,” *New Yorker*, November 6, 1971, 58–60; Paul Goldberger, “Henry Geldzahler, 59, Critic, Public Official and Contemporary Art’s Champion, Is Dead,” *New York Times*, August 17, 1994, B11; and the documentary *Who Gets to Call It Art?* (Peter Rosen, 2006).

completely taken: “Right away we became five-hours-a-day-on-the-phone-see-you-for-lunch-quick-turn-on-the-‘Tonight-Show’ friends.”²⁰

The friendship would eventually cool down, in part because, after 1965, Henry lived with his partner Christopher Scott, in whose orbit he developed a new circle of acquaintances away from the Factory. Concurrently, Geldzahler felt that the Factory was becoming more a celebrity haunt than an art studio, and he disliked its new notoriety. The friendship nearly ended when Geldzahler was appointed curator of the American Pavilion at the 1966 Venice Biennale and failed to tell Warhol (who found out from others), and, in addition, did not select Warhol’s work over other artists.²¹ They would later make up, but for a while Warhol felt bitter about this desertion. However, he never forgot that when he did not have a gallery and none would take him, Henry was, as he put it in *POPism*, “pounding the pavement” for him, trying to interest dealers in his art.²² During Warhol’s tough transition from commercial to gallery artist, Geldzahler had been a source of constant encouragement. After Warhol established himself as a leading pop-art star, Geldzahler was also the conceptual source for some of Warhol’s most brilliant works, including the *Death and Disaster* silkscreens and the *Flowers* series, to cite just two.

For his part, Geldzahler remained a passionate defender and insightful commentator of his friend’s work to the very end. He closed his critical career with an essay on Warhol’s portraits in which he recalled “learning a lot” from him in the early days and defended the artist’s unerring “aesthetic instinct” and integrity.²³ In an undated brief memoir about his friendship with Warhol, he omits any mention of their disagreements and the years of detachment, concentrating instead on his role as “friend and advisor,” as well as on a number of Warhol’s endearing mannerisms and eccentricities.²⁴ In the summer of 1964, when the film was made, Warhol and Geldzahler were still very close, speaking several hours a day on the phone, calling each other any time for banter and gossip. No wonder Warhol used to say that he had been the first “Mrs. Geldzahler.”²⁵

In sum, both the Empire State Building and Henry Geldzahler were part of the backdrop of Warhol’s life, but further ties connect the two films. Both may be watched at length, yet they remain inscrutable, fulfilling in some ways Warhol’s dictum that the longer you look at something, the more it becomes drained of meaning and the emptier and the better you feel.²⁶ The idea is witty and reflects Warhol’s praise of surface and mechanical inexpressiveness, yet it is not entirely accurate. The more one looks at something—especially if one does so through Warhol’s films—the

20 Andy Warhol and Pat Hackett, *POPism: The Warhol Sixties* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1980), 15–16.

21 Wilcock, *Autobiography*, 66–67; Warhol and Hackett, *POPism*, 139, 195–197.

22 Warhol and Hackett, *POPism*, 22.

23 Henry Geldzahler, “Andy Warhol: Virginal Voyeur,” in *Andy Warhol Portraits*, ed. Robert Violette (London: Thames and Hudson and Anthony d’Offay Gallery, 1993), 13–29, reprinted in Geldzahler, *Making It New*, 357–368.

24 Geldzahler, “Andy Warhol: A Memoir,” in *Making It New*, 42–44.

25 Emile de Antonio and Mitch Tuchman, *Painters Painting: A Candid History of the Modern Art Scene* (New York: Abbeville, 1984), 129–130; this is the book companion to de Antonio’s documentary of the same name, *Painters Painting* (1973).

26 Warhol and Hackett, *POPism*, 50.

more this something shivers, pulses, and mutates; the more it becomes inhabited by a micrological agitation, a molecular quiver that brings about endless variation and prevents the observed phenomenon from fully coinciding with itself. Such molecular vibrancy lies at the heart of stardom, one of Warhol's obsessions: "the great stars," he wrote, "are the ones who are doing something interesting every second, even if it's just a movement inside their eye."²⁷ However, with the right kind of attention, everyone and everything is a star "doing something interesting every second," including the Empire State Building, as Warhol enthused during the shooting of *Empire*.²⁸ After all, everything has a tendency to morph and exfoliate if one watches it long and closely enough.

In *Empire*, this agitation begins with the boiling grain of the film in the first reel, which slowly changes from a near-complete whiteout—the lens aperture was set to night illumination—to the outline of the Empire State in a field of shimmering grays as the light ebbs out of the sky and the sun goes down. This transition is one of the summits of Warhol's filmmaking. Once the image settles into darkness and the top of the Empire State blooms with light, the internal movement in the image arises from a series of largely involuntary phenomena, including flares and whitewashes caused by improper exposure of the negative, faulty push-processing, light occasionally leaking into the magazine, and the regular recurrence of the blinking light on top of the Metropolitan Light Insurance Company on the left of the image. Further surprises arise when the lights are turned on momentarily in the room where the camera has been positioned to film the building. In three separate instances, Warhol, his assistant John Palmer, and the underground filmmaker, programmer, and critic Jonas Mekas are briefly reflected in the window panes before the light goes out again. Given these spectral appearances, it makes sense somehow that *Henry Geldzahler* ended up spirited away with the reels of *Empire*, turned into a latent ghost waiting to be raised, in some ways as still, and in some ways as astir, as *Empire*. The surface disturbances that punctuate *Empire* could be regarded as *noise*, a fuzzy growth on the image that prevents straightforward reception, muddles its sense, and pushes it toward the indiscernible and formless.

Henry Geldzahler is affected by similar surface disruptions. Throughout the first reel, especially after the first twenty minutes, there are periodic flares and whiteouts, perhaps because the magazine was not properly closed and light leaked in at regular intervals. The flares give the film a hiccupping rhythm. They introduce an oscillation between tension and release, between readable image and whiteouts, that allows the attention to relax. They also bring to mind the pulsing quality of Marcel Duchamp's *Anemic Cinema* (1926), in which rotating circles seem alternately to approach and withdraw from the spectator. Aside from an involuntarily humorous moment when Geldzahler sneezes in sync with a whiteout, the flares' regular, mechanical pace is completely independent from the more irregular, unpredictable movements of the

27 Warhol and Hackett, 109.

28 According to Jonas Mekas, while shooting *Empire*, Warhol exclaimed, "The Empire State Building is a star!" Mekas, "Warhol Shoots *Empire*," *Movie Journal: The Rise of the New American Cinema, 1959–1971* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 150–151.

sitter, who is abuzz throughout. While Geldzahler does nothing in particular, he never stops doing something. Shortly after the film starts, he pulls out a cigar, lights it up, and starts smoking, and he continues to do so until about ten minutes before the end, when he stubs it out energetically. In addition to smoking, he pulls a pair of sunglasses out of his pocket and puts them on; later he pushes them up on his forehead and down again on his face, wipes them off, and eventually stores them away in his shirt pocket, only to retrieve them at various points throughout the film. He produces a handkerchief, blows his nose on it, folds it, and puts it away. He pretends to sleep, then frowns and smiles, stares down at the ground, and looks straight into the lens. He is occasionally lost in thought, apparently oblivious of the camera, but at least twice he is pulled out of his reverie by an off-screen presence (perhaps Warhol himself) at which he smiles and arches his eyebrows with subtle mischief. He frequently runs his hand through his hair and tucks it behind his ears. He not only moves his facial features and hands; his body also shifts vertically and horizontally, within a sort of cross inside the frame. He slides up and down the couch; when he slides down, his hair sticks up rather comically against the back of the couch. And he leans sideways, propping his head against the arm of the couch or coming to rest odalisque-like on his elbow, facing the camera. Throughout, Geldzahler appears immensely likable and even handsome; one can see the liveliness, charm, and responsiveness that lured Warhol. And yet his gestures do not necessarily deliver a personality or a distinct image of a subject the way traditional portraiture does; rather, they make up a gentle rumble, the murmur of a body just being, rubbing against the things of the world.

Shades, Smoke. Geldzahler's subtle effervescence in *Henry Geldzahler* is emphatically not about himself or about *a* self. He stages a mute, gestural dialogue with some objects at hand; his performance contains moments of citation, mimicry, and provocation that take us away from interiority and place his activity in an external, suprasubjective constellation. This is in fact what is at work with his smoking and with the manipulation of his glasses. Both actions are a sort of *basso continuo* running through the film. We know, from Geldzahler's testimony, that smoking is what Warhol had in mind as the skeleton activity on which to hang his friend's gestural exuberance. The glasses, then, must have been Geldzahler's contribution to the *mise-en-scène*. He pulls them out at the start of the film, and they trigger considerable play. They look quite similar to the kind Warhol tended to favor: Moscot Milzen tortoiseshells, first marketed in the 1930s as a leisure accessory for golfing, tennis, sunbathing, or driving. By the 1960s, they had a vintage touch. During Warhol's filmmaking years, they were part of his persona. He wore them day and night, indoors and out, at leisure and—what may be more shocking, considering the tinted lenses—at work. It is odd that Warhol painted and silkscreened with tinted glasses on, as if completely disregarding nuances of shading. Thus, by putting on glasses that were practically identical to those of his friend, Geldzahler may have been mocking Warhol, offering himself as a satirical double of the artist. He may have been resisting Warhol's conceit that the film was “about” Geldzahler in any straightforward fashion. Did Warhol want “Geldzahler” on film? He would get imitation Andy instead. We may see here a different form of ego-machy than that suggested by Angell and Murphy, a more equal, playful struggle than these



Figure 2. Andy Warhol, *Henry Geldzahler*, 1964. 16mm film, black and white, silent. © 2018 The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA, a museum of Carnegie Institute. All rights reserved.

critics concede. Geldzahler does not wilt under a camera placed, as Murphy writes, “at distinct psychological advantage”; rather, he acts back, not in an idiom of personal authenticity or self-defense but in parody.

The sunglasses block his eyes, but not completely, and one can still divine their movement and expression behind the lenses. Still, despite their relative translucence, the darkened glass renders solid and somewhat opaque what is usually liquid and transparent, namely the eyes, the ultimate seats of human expressiveness and proverbial windows to the soul (Figure 2). Thus, Geldzahler may have been resisting Warhol’s gaze at the same time that he parodied him, impeding his complete visual availability and thwarting his friend’s voyeurism—a voyeurism that, as Douglas Crimp has brilliantly pointed out in relation to *Blow Job*, is often less about visually possessing others than about basking in their irreducible complexity.²⁹

The dark glasses also make Geldzahler seem partly alien and inert, a vaguely humanoid presence. Because of their original association with technologically mediated experience—flying and motor racing, which goggles helped make humanly endurable—sunglasses depersonalize the face and insert it into machinic and objectual interfaces. In her study of the cultural meaning of glasses, Vanessa Brown maintains that they connote “the inhuman, the cyborg, the alien, even perhaps bondage and fetish”—a sexual practice in which the body is equated to and confused with other things and materials.³⁰ Sunglasses are not a fetish accessory here, however;

29 Douglas Crimp, *Our Kind of Movie: The Films of Andy Warhol* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012), 2–15.

30 Vanessa Brown, *Shades Are Cool: The History and Meaning of Sunglasses* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014).

they contribute to turning Geldzahler into a thing among things. The slightly curved frames echo the loving embrace of the couch, and both couch and shades rhyme with the plumpness of Geldzahler's body.

If sunglasses make Geldzahler appear opaque, remote, and humanoid, what does smoking do? How does it signify in the film? Smoking is the most continuous action he engages in in *Henry Geldzahler*, and he insistently maintains it throughout the film. At one point, the cigar goes out, but he lights up again and puffs away contentedly. Geldzahler makes much of this prop, contemplating the smoke that wafts from the tip and the clouds he blows into the air. At times, he exhales dainty little puffs; other times, powerful mouthfuls. He moves his fingers to disturb the smoke's flow and watches it curl unpredictably. The cigar allows him to stage two different subplots in the film. One is a sort of peekaboo with the camera—now you see me, now you don't—as he blows out clouds of smoke that momentarily hide his face. This game of peekaboo runs in parallel—at times in sync—with the recurring whiteouts and could be, like his wearing glasses, one more strategy of occultation. A second, more suspenseful subplot has to do with the fate of the ashes: will they fall? Fifteen minutes into Geldzahler's placid smoke, they are perilously long and threaten to spill calamitously onto his pants. When collapse seems imminent, Geldzahler produces a thick glass ashtray but does not shake the ashes immediately, postponing the inevitable a little further. Besides allowing for such playfulness, the smoking has a characterizing function; Geldzahler was fond of cigars and savored one often. Indeed, he holds a cigar in Warhol's mid-1970s portrait of him. In this regard, his smoking here is similar to—but gentler than—filmmaker Emile de Antonio's downing a quart of whiskey in *Drunk* (Andy Warhol, 1965). Consuming a quart of whiskey is something that de Antonio often did without Warhol's encouragement, but presumably not in thirty continuous minutes, as he does in the film. But smoking also has further meanings.

Like the sunglasses, which withdraw the subject from immediate availability, smoking creates a sphere of self-enclosure and solipsism and is, in part, a solitary, autoerotic pleasure. It is a delectation that recalls primary orality, that state of fusion with the mother's body. This body and this state of fusion are gradually forsaken by means of what psychoanalyst Donald W. Winnicott famously calls transitional objects, which he regarded as replacements for the mother's breast. Some early transitional objects include the voice, the column of air driven by breathing, and things introduced into the mouth, as well as subsequent props that combine orality and tactile stimulation, such as blankets and stuffed animals.³¹ Smoking may be interpreted as a belated descendant of earlier transitional objects and a remnant of pre-Oedipal enjoyment; its prominence in *Henry Geldzahler* recalls the oral pleasures that—it has often been noted—populate Warhol's universe: the candy he adored; the kissing and eating that appear in some of his earliest films; the banana chomping and fellating in *Couch, Harlot* (1964) and the two versions of *Mario Banana* (1964); and the logorrhea of his superstars, many of whom are nonstop talkers who love to listen to themselves and banter interminably, and for whom chattering away is often in direct continuity with sex, when it

31 D. W. Winnicott, "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena," in *The Object Reader*, ed. Fiona Candin and Raiford Guins (New York: Routledge, 2009), 64–79.



Figure 3. Andy Warhol, *Henry Geldzahler*, 1964. 16mm film, black and white, silent. © 2018 The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA, a museum of Carnegie Institute. All rights reserved.

does not replace it altogether. (The late talkies *Bike Boy* [Andy Warhol, 1967] and *I, a Man* [Andy Warhol, 1967]) are two great examples of this logorrhea, with their male protagonists often entangled in conversations that mix taunt, seduction, confrontation, and indifference, and both promise and deflect sexual encounters.) Geldzahler's smoking in the film is more transitional than sexual. Framed by the enfolding curve of the couch, a sort of amniotic sac in which, as Angell noted, he occasionally curls up fetus-like, his smoking evokes a nurturing, all-embracing plenitude (Figure 3). Smoking may not replace or deflect sex between Geldzahler and Warhol—as sex seems not to have been part of their friendship—but it does channel queer affect. It replaces the endless conversation that usually took place among them—the “five-hours-a-day-on-the-phone”—and that was suppressed during the shoot. In the film, they let the camera and the choreography of smoking mark their time together—the intimacy of two gay friends who, short of a bed, shared everything for nearly five years.

Besides being solipsistic, smoking is a gratuitous luxury. It is an activity without remains, other than ashes, those emblems of ephemerality and finitude, and without purpose, beyond the production of a fleeting pleasure that, as cigarette packages remind us now, does kill. Jacques Derrida has placed smoking in the family of the gift, wanton expense, and luxurious squandering.³² A modern habit in the West—an American import that did not catch on in Europe until the eighteenth century—it introduced a residue of ritual and unrecoverable outlay in a culture progressively characterized

32 Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 102–103.

by functionality, profit, and optimization. Derrida makes smoking synonymous with giving one's time to others as a companion because, though autoerotic, it also fosters friendship and sociability. He also equates it with giving oneself to mere duration. One passes the time smoking, which is also momentarily stepping outside clock time or regulated time, time apportioned to goal-oriented activity. In this regard, tobacco has the temporality of fantasy, daydreaming, or narcosis: experiences that allow us to rise above time as a mere metronomic sequence.³³

Geldzahler's smoking touches on these various significations: he gives his time to Warhol, who captures his friend on film and further slows down his protracted becoming by manipulating the projection speed of the film from sound to silent. Geldzahler also gives himself to duration and thus positions himself outside the gridlock of utility and purpose, becoming absorbed in absorption and losing himself in himself, or in "a" self which is not necessarily in his authentic self—whatever that might be. Thus lost, Geldzahler also delivers us viewers to a time of idling, fiddling, and pondering; to a time, like that of smoking, without a goal, other than the rather diffuse one of exploring the minute convolutions of his face, his body, and the smoke of his cigar. He collapses, in a way, two temporal modes that Parker Tyler identified in Warhol's films: empty, plodding "dragtime" and elated "drugtime," or the temporality of narcotized perception (Figure 4).³⁴ Viewers may feel dragged through the former—which, as I am trying to show here, is anything but empty or eventless—but Geldzahler inhabited the latter, thanks to his absorption in his cigar and to the "good pot" that made the time of the filming fly by. Profitless and profligate, this is also a queer time, in the sense given to the term by Judith Halberstam: the time of queer lives that do not fit the standard narratives of aging, linear evolution, reproduction, and familial heritage; that refuse the discipline of the clock, the demands of practicality, and the strict apportioning of work and leisure.³⁵ By letting the camera run and smoking a cigar, the two friends were simultaneously idling and working, making something out of doing nothing. That something was a film that was still an act of sheer expenditure, did not have market value or immediate purpose, and quickly vanished among the cans of *Empire*.

What Self? William James and Radical Empiricism. By smoking, Geldzahler loses himself and us in a time of joyous waste and idle self-indulgence. But he does not lock himself in a defensive formation against an intrusive camera, nor does he enfold himself in a bubble of authenticity that Warhol—he claims—captured with the skill of the supreme portraitist he was. What aspect of Geldzahler does the film reveal, then? Why did he feel that the film "gave him away completely"? What, in fact, did the film give away?

33 Derrida, 104. On the poetics and meanings of smoking, see also Richard Klein, *Cigarettes Are Sublime* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994).

34 Parker Tyler, "Dragtime and Drugtime, or Film à la Warhol," *Evergreen Review* 11, no. 46 (April 1967): 27–31, 87–88, reprinted in O'Pray, *Andy Warhol*, 94–103.

35 Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 1–21, 152–167. Homay King applies Halberstam's (and Elizabeth Freeman's) notions of queer temporality to several of Warhol's films; see King, "Girl Interrupted: The Queer Time of Warhol's Cinema," *Discourse* 28, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 98–120.



Figure 4. Andy Warhol, *Henry Geldzahler*, 1964. 16mm film, black and white, silent. © 2018 The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA, a museum of Carnegie Institute. All rights reserved.

Three facts that the film gives away are that experience is an endless, ever-changing current of feeling, thought, and affect; most of what appears in this current is ephemeral and inchoate, no sooner felt than quickly dissolved and morphed into another configuration, and the body faithfully registers the minutest whirls and eddies in this stream. One cannot presume to know what Geldzahler was thinking during the shoot, but it is easy to discern the affective tonality of whatever flashes through his mind, which is quickly translated into posture and gesture. At different moments, he appears childish, surly, worried, distracted, happy, insouciant, and, by his own confession, slightly stoned—he looks listless and unfocused at times. These various moods are briefly sustained and keep metamorphosing into different ones. At one point, he mouths the words to a song, then appears concerned again, then relieved, then bemused, then fatigued, and on and on. Each shift in mood is accompanied by changes in posture, as if every new thought triggered a realignment of his entire body. While he mouths the words to a song, his face lights up, and he subtly marks the beat with a loosely gathered fist. Later, irritation makes him frown, tense up, and slightly tighten his jaw, and fatigue brings on a bout of eye rubbing, forehead touching, and face covering.

Geldzahler described the gestural range he put out for the camera as his “whole vocabulary.” The term is doubly accurate. Like a lexicon, what he offers is distinct, material, and discrete: utterances that bespeak particular moods and mental states in terms of tangible corporeal moves and objectual manipulations. Also, as in a dictionary, the terms succeed one another without transition, abruptly shifting from one to the next. There is no predetermined syntax in this parade of affect, only lexical

units in sharp juxtaposition. Cumulatively, they yield less a particular individuality or personal core than a dispersed plurality of moods, traits of character, and dispositions. This profusion may only reductively be brought down to a self, a character, a personality, a “me,” terms that retroactively bind such multiplicity. Hence what may have been revealed in the filming session is less a hardened kernel of individuality than the extent to which Geldzahler—or any subject—is a field of emergence and an affective flow that can be distilled into what we call a substantive self only by means of much trimming and pruning. The “revelation” that the film provides, then, may be, *pace* Geldzahler’s own testimony, that there is nothing to reveal, in the etymological sense of lifting the veil hiding a personality in the depths of the psyche. Rather, the film shows that nothing is hidden; it is all on the surface of the body in the form of an irrepressible flood. Moreover, this flood is both internal and external, mental and physical, as the inner stream is at the same time externalized and materialized in the body’s prose. Externalized psychic experience, materialized thoughts, affects translated into corporeal tension and gesture: they might be further examples of Warhol’s famous dictum that “Pop Art took the inside and put it outside, took the outside and put it inside.”³⁶

The flow of affects and gestures presented by the film illustrates some of William James’s revolutionary notions of subjectivity, emotion, consciousness, and experience as formulated in *Principles of Psychology* (1890). Transposed from their usual philosophical-psychological spheres to Warhol’s *Henry Geldzahler*, they help clarify what is at stake in the film and, by extension, in Warhol’s film portraiture. This is an abrupt transposition. Culturally, there is quite a jump from 1890s psychology to 1960s pop art, and it is quite unlikely that Warhol ever read James. In addition, James has seldom been applied to film in any consistent manner. However, because of the attention he devoted to the dynamism of thought rather than to its more stable configurations, he articulated what could be called a cinematics of mind. And as Gilles Deleuze claims in the closing of *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, no philosophy is, in principle, alien to the cinema, because “a theory of cinema is not ‘about’ cinema, but about the concepts that cinema gives rise to, and which are themselves related to other concepts corresponding to other practices.” In the end, he continues, both cinema and philosophy involve a kindred conceptual play by different means: “There is always a time . . . when we must no longer ask ourselves ‘What is cinema?’ but ‘What is philosophy?’ Cinema is itself a new practice of images and signs, whose theory philosophy must produce as conceptual practice.”³⁷

With its apparent triviality and its kaleidoscopic sifting through the sitter’s “vocabulary,” *Henry Geldzahler*’s “images and signs” embody one of James’s earliest psychological theses: the importance of what he variously called, at different times, “transitive” states, “states of tendency,” “psychic overtones,” “suffusions,” or “fringes.”³⁸ These are the interstitial feelings of anticipation and retrospection, or the dim associations, dif-

36 Warhol and Hackett, *POPism*, 4.

37 Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 280.

38 William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1890), 1:243, 249, 258. A digitized version of this work is available at www.archive.org.

fulcra to hold on to and to name, that surround our better-defined thoughts and make up the greatest part of our thinking. In James's words:

The definite images of traditional psychology form but the very smallest part of our minds as they actually live. The traditional psychology talks like one who should say a river consists of nothing but pailsful, spoonsful, quartpotsful, barrelsful, and other molded forms of water. Even were the pails and the pots all actually standing in the stream, still between them the free water would continue to flow. It is just this free water of consciousness that psychologists resolutely overlook.³⁹

It is exactly the “free water of consciousness” that James highlights against traditional psychology's focus on what he called “substantive states,” those seemingly endowed with a certain fixity and definiteness. Similarly, it is this small change of experience—the negligible gestures and passing affects—that Warhol captured in his film portrait of Geldzahler.

Film is an apt medium for such an enterprise. As it captures the body's external becoming, it simultaneously reads on the corporeal surface some of the vicissitudes of mental life. For James, the psychic stream is not merely an interior phenomenon withdrawn from the outer world, where it would be unavailable to the camera. It is also a fully physical concatenation of corporeal and material effects. In an influential early essay, James reversed the traditional view that regarded feeling and affects as mental phenomena that triggered physiological effects. “My thesis,” he writes, “is that bodily changes follow directly the PERCEPTION of [an] exciting fact, and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur IS the emotion.”⁴⁰ Later he observes, “Whatever moods, affections and passions I have are in very truth constituted by, and made up of, those bodily changes ordinarily called their expression and consequence.”⁴¹ Without them, James argues, there is no emotion as such, only a disembodied, abstract idea of little actual efficacy. As he explains, we do not cry because we are sad, strike because we are angry, or run because we are afraid. The sequence really runs in reverse: we are sad because we cry, are afraid because we run, and are angry because we strike.⁴² If we subtract the actual corporeal reactions from these states—the sobbing and constriction of the chest, the adrenaline rush, the aggressive motility—we are left with the cognitive form of sadness, anger, or fear, voided of their actual emotional strength.

In subsequent writings, James defended the identity of psychic and material phenomena, or of consciousness and things, as entities that are “absolutely homogeneous as to their material.”⁴³ All that is available in the world are events of “pure experience,” in themselves neither internal nor external, neither mental nor physical. They could be either, or both, depending on the context into which they are integrated—that is,

39 James, 1:255.

40 William James, “What Is an Emotion?,” *Mind* 9, no. 34 (1884): 190.

41 James, 194.

42 James, 194.

43 William James, “The Place of Affectional Facts in a World of Pure Experience,” in *The Writings of William James: A Comprehensive Edition*, ed. John J. McDermott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 271.

the series or chains of association they enter. In James's own words, "There is no original spirituality or materiality of being . . . only a translocation of experiences from one world to another; a grouping of them with one set or another of associates for definitely practical or intellectual ends."⁴⁴ As part of a material series, a room—James's example—occupies an unmoving, stable location in a particular space; is the result of a sequence of physical operations involved in its construction and furnishing; and has a particular history. As part of a mental series—as a perception, a thing known—it occupies a less stable position and enters into less predictable combinations with other mental images, including memories, fantasies, images of other rooms remembered or imagined. Once part of psychic life, mental images exist on the same level of reality and with the same causative strength as fantasies, convictions, dreams, or emotions. However, they also possess the same capacity to move, hurt, and motivate as fully physical things. Things, phenomena, and experiences, then, may be counted twice over, as elements of the material world and as percepts and concepts of mental life, depending on the series in which they are actualized.⁴⁵ Such permeability between the physical and the psychical suffuses *Henry Geldzahler*. The trifling twiddling of its subject is both a physical series (of movements, postures, objects, and actions) and a mental series (of emotive configurations in constant fugue). They run in parallel, interact, and merge with each other over the course of the film.

Such an unwieldy mix yields more *and* less than a subject. The series are variegated and streaked with trivial, scattered occurrences; they are not tight enough to be regarded a "unity." They may contain too much periphery and not enough center; too much fringe, suffusion, and transitive blur and not enough substantiation. Subjective unity, in James's view, is contingent and precarious, a matter of additive links rather than intrinsic essence: "The continuous identity of each personal consciousness [is] a name for the fact that new experiences come which look back on the old ones, find them 'warm' and greet and appropriate them as 'mine.'"⁴⁶ Consciousness as a unifying agent and an entity qualitatively different from other kinds of experience does not exist. As James explains, "That entity [consciousness] is fictitious, while thoughts in the concrete are fully real. But thoughts in the concrete are made of the same stuff as things are."⁴⁷ The idea of a continuous consciousness that synthesizes experience into a well-tied whole—a central tenet of philosophical idealism—derives, for James, from the continuity of breathing: "The stream of thinking . . . is only a careless name for the stream of my breathing. The 'I think' that Kant said must accompany all my objects, is the 'I breathe' which actually does accompany them."⁴⁸ Thinking as breathing is indeed made visible in Geldzahler's smoking; this is another way in which the film renders thing-like the presumed intangibility of mental life and evokes abstract depths in mere smoking. In the end, then, the triviality of subjectivity and the profundity of mundane gesture may have been among those nagging truths that the film revealed.

44 James, 275.

45 James, "Does 'Consciousness' Exist?," in *The Writings of William James*, 176–178.

46 James, "How Two Minds Can Know One Thing," in *The Writings of William James*, 229.

47 James, "Does 'Consciousness' Exist?," 183.

48 James, 183.

Portraiture Revisited. *Henry Geldzahler* is far from the only one of Warhol's films to trade in a dissipative, scattered style of personhood. Many screen tests—the Warhol subgenre to which *Henry Geldzahler* arguably belongs—work along similar lines. Despite the frequent attribution of psychological depth to the series, most of the portraits fail to deliver readable, fully rounded, subjective figures or to isolate that commodifiable “secret something” or “screen magnetism” that, Warhol claimed, might be discovered only by watching someone on film.⁴⁹ The screen tests capture instead moments of loss and opacity. This is in part due to the awkwardness, discomfort, bewilderment, boredom, and even hostility projected by many of the sitters. Some—Bob Dylan among them—leave the frame after a while, at times to return after apparently being talked into resuming the experiment. Others boycott the shoot more subtly: by shifting sideways outside camera range (e.g., Freddy Herko, Nico), appearing impenetrable behind sunglasses (e.g., Charles Henri Ford, Susan Sontag), or using their headgear to cover their faces (e.g., Piero Heliczer). Many get into the game and put on a range of moods with actorial dexterity (e.g., Ruth Ford, Dennis Hopper) or emote exuberantly (e.g., Beverly Grant, Isabel Eberstadt), thereby forgoing the stillness on which the screen tests were premised as well as any bid for psychological authenticity. At times it is not the sitter but the shooting style that hinders readability and any sense of subjective immediacy. The lighting is occasionally inadequate, the image shifts in and out of focus, and there are seemingly unmotivated zooms and reframes, spurts of single-frame shooting, and in-camera cuts. A number of reels fragment the model's facial or corporeal integrity by concentrating on an eye or a mouth (e.g., John Cale, Lou Reed, Sterling Morrison, Nico) or a shoulder (e.g., Lucinda Childs). Occasionally, camera mechanics impede straightforward apprehension and further dilute psychological transparency, as when flares caused by light leaking into the magazine temporarily white out the image or failures of registration turn the subject into a blur. These accidents happen at times in a surprisingly rhythmic fashion, as in one of Richard Rheem's reels.

Whether taken one by one or incrementally, the screen tests are less traditional portraiture than records of gestural dissipation, transitional being, and, to recall James's vocabulary, suffusion—much like *Henry Geldzahler*. Although some certainly preserve moments of revelation or cohesive personas performed for the camera, many others capture the sort of gestural and affective dust cast off by mere existence. They are the by-products of moments occupied, to paraphrase Frank O'Hara, with “this and that”; “all too concrete and circumstantial,” they do not necessarily communicate “personality or intimacy,” only fringe personhood distractedly inhabiting

49 Artist and Factory superstar Mary Woronov, for example, states: “You can project your image for a few seconds, but after that it slips and your real self starts to show through. That's why it was so great—you saw the person and the image.” Woronov, *Eyewitness to Warhol* (Los Angeles: Victoria Daley, 2002), 8. I agree more with David James's assessment that the screen tests do not record “their subjects' ability to manifest an autonomous, unified self as much as their anxious response to the process of being photographed.” James, “The Producer as Author,” in O'Pray, *Andy Warhol*, 139. See also Paul Arthur's cognate view that the screen tests “limn a ‘withdrawal of authenticity’ that demolishes humanist claims . . . for the portrait's ability to illuminate, reconditte, psychologically telling essences”; Paul Arthur, “Identity and/as Moving Image,” *A Line of Sight: American Avant-Garde Film since 1965* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 31.

a disaggregated universe.⁵⁰ It is as if Warhol had found in this style of filming a solution to his simultaneous fascination with people and his desire to keep them at a remove: “I still care about people, but it would be so much easier not to care . . . it’s too hard to care . . . I don’t want to get too involved in other people’s lives . . . I don’t want to get too close.”⁵¹ And yet how could he resist, when, as he also observed, “I’ve never met a person I couldn’t call a beauty”?⁵² Filming people not as holistic entities that solicited involvement and response but as collections of looks, gestures, and attitudes offered the delicate middle ground that his peculiar sensibility toward others required.

Beyond offering relief—or not—for Warhol’s psychological quandaries, this middle ground seems also to offer a solution to a more momentous dilemma: how to depict people in the era of their mass evacuation, effected, in part, through what Benjamin Buchloch diagnosed as the “systematic” destruction of subjectivity “in the daily practices of consumption.”⁵³ In the years of Warhol’s rise to fame—the years of his most intense filmmaking—one of the most visible modalities of the consumption-driven destruction of the subject was the transformation of personal quality into what contemporary commentator Daniel Boorstin called the “pseudo-event” of the public personality and Guy Debord named the “spectacle” of the media celebrity.⁵⁴ Using different languages and operating from very different critical optics—Chicago School humanist sociology and late Marxism, respectively—both diagnosed the uncanny ability of the midcentury culture industry to transform people into media-circulated commodities, constellations of singularity and circumstance into stars, new faces, girls of the year, and latest teen heartthrobs. The transformation of individuals into media spectacles started much earlier and was in many ways coterminous with the rise of popular culture in industrial capitalism, yet it reached paroxysmal development after World War II, when the colonization of daily life by the image that lithography, photography, and the illustrated press had initiated more than a century earlier culminated in television. The commodification and spectacularization of personality was effected through immediately recognizable public personas that were built, in turn, on physical features and behavioral idiosyncrasies that acted as consumer hooks. Celebrity formation and stardom, as Edgar Morin pointed out at the time, were both predicated on the parceling out of the star’s body and on its subsequent public dissemination and

50 Frank O’Hara, “Statements on Poetics,” in *The New American Poetry*, ed. Donald Allen (New York: Grove Press, 1960), 419–420; Frank O’Hara, “Personism: A Manifesto,” in *The Collected Poems of Frank O’Hara*, ed. Donald Allen (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 498–499.

51 Gretchen Berg, “Andy Warhol: My True Story,” in *I’ll Be Your Mirror: The Selected Andy Warhol Interviews*, ed. Kenneth Goldsmith (New York: Carroll and Graf, 2004), 96, first published in *The East Village Other*, November 1, 1966.

52 Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again)* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1975), 61.

53 Benjamin Buchloch, “Residual Resemblance: Three Notes on the Ends of Portraiture,” in *Face-Off: The Portrait in Recent Art*, ed. Melissa E. Feldman (Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1994), 58.

54 See Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (New York: Random House, 1961), especially chap. 2, “From Hero to Celebrity: The Human Pseudo-Event,” 45–76; Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Fredy Perlman and John Supak (Detroit: Black & Red, 1977), paras. 60 and 61.

consumption in a form of symbolic cannibalism.⁵⁵ Above all, what was circulated and consumed in celebrity culture was the face. Publicity, as Jonathan Flatley has brilliantly discussed in relation to Warhol, involves acquiring a public face that abstracts and supersedes an individual's embodied singularity and acts, to an extent, as a mask. And Warhol, Flatley points out, gave good face; part of his genius resided in his knowing display of the mechanisms by which individuals were packaged into images with commodity potential.⁵⁶ Yet he did not merely incorporate these mechanisms uncritically into his work; he also undermined and exposed them.

Such undermining is apparent in his art and films, which both celebrate and undercut stardom, the hyperbolic modality of the personality as “a good product to sell.”⁵⁷ In a famous defense of Warhol's early art, Thomas Crow points out that at the start of his pop art career, Warhol picked stars and public figures whose glamorous appeal was challenged by an undertow of “suffering and death,” including the recent suicide Marilyn, gravely ill Liz Taylor, and tragically bereaved Jackie Kennedy. The negativity of these icons hindered their ability to function as fantasy bearers and thereby undermined one of the functions of stardom. In addition, these figures were portrayed in a style that evoked impermanence and precariousness through uneven washes of color, errors in registration and inking, and a graininess that recalled newspaper half-tone printing and, therefore, the disposability of the daily news. At times, Warhol's star depictions staged the oscillation between presence and absence, plenitude and emptiness. *Marilyn Diptych*—one of Crow's examples—brings together in facing panels brightly colored and faintly rendered images of the star, a juxtaposition that allegorizes the star's ephemeral shelf life and eventual dissolution to a dim memory trace.⁵⁸

The films, for their part, often acted as showcases for the dazzling but undisciplined talent of an array of striking yet unusual physiognomies. Warhol described them as “‘superstars’ or ‘hyperstars’ or whatever you can call all the people who are very talented, but whose talents are hard to define and almost impossible to market.”⁵⁹ Elsewhere he characterized them as “the leftovers of show business, turned down at auditions all over town,” who “couldn't do something more than once, but their one time was better than anyone else's.”⁶⁰ Packaged for circulation, if only in the restricted circuit of underground cinema, their bodies, voices, and looks were subject to dissolution, demotion, fragmentation, or blurring through peculiar framing, lighting, and cinematography, or through careless sound capture. Edie Sedgwick, reigning star of the Factory in 1965, is entirely out of focus in the first reel of *Poor Little Rich Girl* (Andy

55 Edgar Morin, *The Stars* (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 90–93.

56 Jonathan Flatley, “Warhol Gives Good Face: Publicity and the Politics of Prosopopeia,” in *Pop Out, Queer Warhol*, ed. Jennifer Doyle, Jonathan Flatley, and José Esteban Muñoz (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 113.

57 Warhol, *Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, 63.

58 Thomas Crow, “Saturday Disasters: Trace and Reference in Early Warhol,” in *Andy Warhol*, ed. Annette Michelson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 49–68. David Bourdon produces a similar reading of other Marilyn paintings in a conversation with Warhol: “Warhol Interviews Bourdon” (December 1962–January 1963), unpublished manuscript from the Warhol archives, reprinted in Kenneth Goldsmith, ed., *I'll Be Your Mirror: The Selected Andy Warhol Interviews* (Carroll & Graf, 2004), 9.

59 Warhol, *Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, 91.

60 Warhol and Hackett, *POPism*, 56.

Warhol, 1965) and largely unintelligible in *Outer and Inner Space* (Andy Warhol, 1965), a two-screen work in which she speaks at the same time as her own recorded image on a video monitor visible just behind her, and the multiplication of her voice resolves into an impenetrable murmur. In a different example, Mario Montez's heartfelt performance as Hedy Lamarr in *Hedy* (Andy Warhol, 1965) is punctured by an unflattering zoom into the thick black hair on his forearm. "I can see you were trying to bring out the worse [*sic*] in me," he reportedly complained to Warhol.⁶¹

At other times, superstars' performances were allowed to run on in such a way that they frayed off into the unclassifiable, random, inconsistent, and even plain boring, as the stars ran out of things to say, lost interest, or failed to sustain their initial personas. *Afternoon* (Andy Warhol, 1965), for example, is partly about the inability of Ondine, Arthur Loeb, Edie Sedgwick, Donald Lyons, and Dorothy Dean to get anything going because of their lethargy on an extremely hot summer day. One can hear Warhol behind the camera prodding them to camp it up, but they seldom comply. It may have been this flickering economy of star and antistar, with its oscillation between devotion and irony, that led Edie Sedgwick to bolt from the Factory after several months of keen collaboration, protesting that she was being mocked in the films.⁶² Similarly, Warhol's oscillating commitment both to the protocols of stardom and to their constant undoing makes his screen tests fail as commodities or as "true" industry-standard product. As Mandy Merck shrewdly notices, "Despite the beauty of these portraits, despite the celebrity of many portrayed, they weren't converted into saleable items, living portraits or commercially distributable films until two decades after Warhol's death, with the 2008 DVD and the 2011 MoMA release of one of Sontag's own tests, ST 321."⁶³

Questioning the commodification of the face and the body was by no means an exclusively Warholian conceit, even if few artists seemed quite so taken with the surface gloss of the mass-produced image. David Joselit has shown that mid- and late-1960s video art responded to the spectacle of the media personality by dramatizing the disjunction between concrete bodies in space and their projections on a screen. In video installations such as Bruce Nauman's *Live-Taped Video Corridor* (1970) and Peter Campus's *cir* (1972), for example, spectators saw their images diminish and disappear as they approached live-fed video monitors, as if the closer they were to the apparatus, the more likely it was that they would turn into deceitful reflections or dissolve into nothing. Similarly Joan Jonas's videos and video performances *Left Side Right Side* (1972), *Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy* (1972), and *Organic Honey's Vertical Roll* (1972) used inversion, tight framings, misleading perspective, and noise to destabilize the relation between her body and its mediated avatar.⁶⁴

These early video works focus on the relation of entire bodies to their image relay. Warhol's reformulation of portraiture is closer to the cinematic explorations of the face by Fluxus artists Mieko Shiomi and Yoko Ono or by the Japanese film and video artist Takahiko Iimura. Iimura's *Face* (1969), starring underground film performers

61 Warhol and Hackett, 91.

62 Warhol and Hackett, 123–124.

63 Mandy Merck, "Susan Sontag's Screen Tests," in *Warhol in Ten Takes*, 105.

64 David Joselit, *Feedback: Television against Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 155–163.

Mario Montez and Donna Kerness and a third person identified as “Linda,” skirts the holistic apprehension of his subjects’ faces and delivers instead their fragments—eyebrows, eyes, glossy lips, chin, and expanses of hair—filmed in hallucinatory close-up while a slightly demented high-pitched giggle twitters on in the soundtrack. Shiomi’s *Disappearing Music for Face* (1965), a prolonged record of Yoko Ono’s fading smile, similarly eschews complete faciality to concentrate on half-opened lips and partial views of a chin and a dimpled cheek. Filmed with a high-speed camera that ran at two thousand frames per second, it yields, when projected at regular sound speed, an extremely slowed-down, grainy image.⁶⁵ Yoko Ono’s *Eye Blink* (1966) and *No. 4* (1967) similarly trade in body parts: respectively, an eye blinking once, also in slow motion, and the bare posteriors of several friends swinging pendulously as they walk on a treadmill. Like Warhol’s films, these examples bring together a double, mutually interdependent materiality: the materiality of the cinematic image—its flatness, graininess, fragmentariness, and peculiarly filmic duration—and the thingness of the body, a thingness that is, however, far from inert, and whose unpredictable animacy thwarts its translation into consumable, commodifiable images.

Along with many of the screen tests and virtually any of Warhol’s films involving portraiture—which is to say most of his films—*Henry Geldzahler* is an emblematic example of this double material undertow. Its distended duration and static framing bring to light the irreducible liveliness of the body, a liveliness that, as these pages have tried to show, cannot be easily encapsulated by such tropes as the struggle between filmmaker and subject, or between subject and camera, in a fight that leads to victory or defeat. Protean, parodic, and playful, Geldzahler’s portrait confounds such linearity. In addition, it blurs the demarcation between inside and outside, psychic and physical, and flouts conventional notions of subjectivity and personality. To the various functions that Paul Arthur discerned in the avant-garde film portrait of the 1960s—the communication of immediacy and spontaneity, the assertion of alternative communities, the depiction of marginal lifestyles—Warhol’s portraits add another: the capture of the ultimate elusiveness of selfhood.⁶⁶ With its rigorous attention to the constant shifts and the minutest fluctuations of a body’s passage through time, *Henry Geldzahler*—like practically any other Warhol film—fails to deliver the finality of the conventional portrait or the closure of the commodified public image. It is a failure that rates among Warhol’s greatest successes. *

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65 Scott MacDonald, “Yoko Ono: Ideas on Film (Interview/Scripts),” *Film Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (1989): 8, reprinted in Scott MacDonald, ed., *A Critical Cinema 2: Interviews with Independent Filmmakers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 139–156.

66 Arthur, “Identity and/as Moving Image,” 24–44.