‘Every real moment’ in photographic work by Andy Warhol

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What I liked was chunks of time all together, every real moment.

Andy Warhol (and Hackett 1980: 138)
Abstract

Andy Warhol died in 1987 leaving behind a complex and profound body of photographs. Despite that his name has been associated with silkscreen canvas visages of Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley and Chairman Mao, Warhol was also a photographer and filmmaker, in addition to public perception of him as simply a fine artist. For Warhol obsessively recorded the world around him for almost three decades with many diverse recording apparatuses. From 1962 his Polaroid camera, film recorder, photo devices, and tape-recorders were always present in his artistic life (Petersen 2011). This thesis therefore seeks to enter his world of photographs to analyze this less discussed body of works. Meanwhile it also aims to debate Warhol himself as a post-war artist, and his relationship to the recording devices. As mediations of gender and sexuality is explicitly expressed in his photographs, the thesis will from a queer theoretical and Foucauldian perspective, aim to examine the politics of the way in which the photograph allowed Warhol to capture homosexual bodies and same-sex desire. Analyzing these images, along many other photographs from 1890 until our contemporary era, the thesis enters the discourses of gender, sexuality and power, as well as wide historical and artistic discipline of the visualization of homosexuality. Entering these discourses the thesis will render new meanings of the means of the photographic image par excellence, by critically analyzing its relationship to the real as well as its power to mediate discourse and language. The argument that I will aim to develop is that Warhol practiced his art and used the photograph not only to capture ‘every real moment’, but also as oppression against the naming of the homosexual subject as the other.
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Introduction

Andy Warhol died in 1987 leaving behind a complex and profound body of photographs. He emerged as an artist in the American sixties and has even since been recognized as one of the most celebrated pop art icons whose work has been discussed by many different academic traditions and disciplines, such as media studies, film studies and art history, to name a few. What these debates however seem to have dismissed is his photographs. Despite Warhol never characterized himself as a photographer the photographic image seems to have been a large part of his creative process - behind each of his famous silkscreen canvases lies a photograph and his body of work contains thousands of photographic images. From the early sixties until his death in 1987, he had captured 40,000 Polaroid images, and went through 3,500 rolls of 36-exposures (Ganis 2004: 16-18). These thousands of photographs were captures of women, drag queens, men, athletes, people from the New York art scene, photographs of his everyday life, and so forth. Warhol also captured thousands of Polaroid photographs of naked men, explicitly displayed genitalia and homosexual acts. These amounts and the diverse subjects photographed exemplify the importance to inquire the significances of the photograph as a part of his art as well as his life. It however appears as many of these photographs were not produced to become art objects per se but captured by Warhol to be archived in his private photo collection. In his bibliographical and eminent reading *Popism* Warhol himself once explained his desire to use the recording device with these words: ‘What I liked was chunks of time all together, every real moment’ (and Hackett 1980: 138). One may note that his remark emphasizes that he desired to record and document the real world around him. Due to the private origin of some of his photographs and his desire to capture every real moment one might argue that they disclose an authentic and intrinsic side of Andy Warhol. Regardless of their previous meanings and purposes this body of work is in our contemporary culture nevertheless recognized as objects of fine arts.
Examining the photographic work by Andy Warhol and his desire to capture ‘every real moments’ to render new political and philosophical significances of his art will be the ambition of this thesis.

An early aspiration for this thesis occurred on a visit to a rather unique art exhibition of some of Warhol’s perhaps less discussed sexual and homoerotic Polaroid photographs. In May 2011 homoerotic and pornographic photographs taken by Andy Warhol were exhibited at the art gallery Rod Bianco in Oslo, Norway. The exhibition represented a selected amount of Warhol’s 1970s and 1980s photographic series taken by himself of friends and visitors of his famous sphere The Factory – his New York studio that in the sixties, seventies and eighties had become a place where a New York cultural elite gathered.1 It meanwhile also was a realm where fag-hags, drag queens, speed freaks and a minority gay culture gathered (Doyle, Flatley and Muñoz 1996). The walls of Rod Bianco explicitly exhibited the original series Sex Parts and Torso, a selection of his self-portraits and photographs of the Rolling Stones members, among other works. This was the first time in history the Sex Parts and Torsos Polaroids were exhibited in Scandinavia. Despite the aesthetic and political values I identified viewing the photographs, this body of work has not have been much debated or written about within neither the field of art history or criticism. One potential reason for this is notably because they represent erected penises, homoeroticism and anal sex – hence they appear as gay pornographic photographs. In art criticism as well as in the academia Warhol has become a central figure in debates on postmodernism, avant-garde art, film studies, pop art and mass culture, yet the queerness of his art seems to have been forgotten and ignored. Mandy Merck, Thomas Waugh and Jennifer Doyle have among a few other important scholars criticized this neglectedness of Warhol’s art and have in Pop Out: Queer Warhol (1996) sought to remember the homoerotic subject and queerness of Warhol’s persona, art and social realm. Under the influence of this criticism this thesis will aim to read Warhol’s photographic work from a queer perspective to endow meaning that has been argued to be the ‘most valuable, interesting, sexy and political about Warhol’s work’ (ibid 1996: 2).

With the sexual denotations of Sex Parts and Torsos and the neglectedness of Warhol’s queer art as the early aspirations for this research, this thesis is about the photographic work by Andy Warhol. It is about the politics of the photograph as matters of representations. As sexuality, in particular homosexuality, appears to be a common expression in his work, discourses of both gender and sexuality as visual representations will become crucial to

1 The Factory existed from 1963 until Warhol’s death in 1987 but was during those years situated at different New York locations (Banes 1993).
explore. The thesis is yet also about Warhol himself as a photographic operator and a contemporary artist of the American sixties, seventies and eighties. Warhol may have been known as a painter and Pop artist and certainly signifies an important break in art history with his commercial and pastiche Pop art as well as his Pop representations of American icons (Crow 1997). Yet he also operated as an active photographer and filmmaker and when he in February 1987 passed away he left a large volume of photographs that during his life had only been known by his inner circle (Petersen 2011: 110-111). Many of these photographs served as aids for painting portraits, yet this thesis will argue that they in themselves are significant works and represent an unknown body of Warhol's work.

When exploring the Warhol’s photographic work it is not only their meanings as photographic representations per se that appear to be of significance. For Warhol’s physical as well as psychological relationship with his photographic devices along with his personal ambitions to photograph and record the world around him will become an area that arguably is crucial to explore and develop an understanding of the politics and meanings of his works. The background aspiration for this particular argument is a an analysis of Warhol’s films and his relation to his diverse recording apparatuses posed by David E. James (1989). In ‘Andy Warhol: The Producer as Author’ James writes that Warhol investigates ‘the technological and social mechanism of the recording apparatuses’ (ibid: 64). James therefore argues that Warhol had identified two potentials of the recording device that he invested and advantaged - the technological and the social mechanisms (ibid.). One may note that the technological mechanism of the photographic apparatuses indicates to the mechanism of the camera to allow mechanical repetition, to produce images that appears as a reference to the real objects that once occurred in front of the camera lens, and to record and document real time and space. The social mechanism of the recording apparatuses arguably signifies its capability to generate photographic mediations that are embedded not only with a realist dimension but also with discursive significance that may render meaning as a cultural representation of for instance gender and sexuality. The social mechanism of the recording apparatuses that Warhol notably invests in is not only the social promises of the photographic image per se, but also the social mechanism of operating the photographic device - viewing the world through a camera lens. Based on the thematic background and the academic ambitions to comprehend this research I have formulated the following as the fundamental aim of this thesis:
David James has suggested that Warhol ‘investigates the technological and social mechanism of the recording apparatuses’ (1989: 64). With this quote as a starting point I will examine Warhol’s photography work and his use of the camera device to consider how those ‘technological and social mechanism’ impact concepts of gender and sexuality as well as how they correspond to a broader context of Warhol’s investment in recording, meditation, and queerness.

**Theoretical Framework**

In respect of the aim of this thesis it will enter a few diverse theoretical frameworks. As it is concerned with the photograph as a means of mediation and how it impacts concepts of gender and sexuality the significance of the photographic image per se will be central to explore. Philosophically the photograph as a means of representation is a complex and large field of study. Yet as Warhol’s desire to capture real moments I will embrace the discourse of photography and realism. What is the relation between a photograph and the real? More precisely, what is the relation between the real and the photographs by Warhol? When discussing such concern the thesis will take advantage of Mary Ann Doane and her contemporary theories of indexicality (2007a). The indexical interpretation of the photograph suggests that a visual image which has been captured by a camera device – film or photographic – desires to reference a ‘trace of the real’ (ibid: 1). It invokes indexicality with a privileged relation to the scene or object that it once photographed. Nevertheless this appearance involves ideological concerns as a photograph always is embedded with language and symbols (Sontag 1977). When discussing these languages I will benefit from Susan Sontag and her symbolically important theories in On Photography (1977). These discourses will be vital in order to comprehend the discourse of photographs as representative and will function as a method to read the photographic image throughout this thesis.

As the thesis moreover aims to examine how Warhol’s photographic work impacts of concepts of gender and sexuality as well as Warhol’s investment in queerness it may be important to enter the discourses of gender and sexuality in relation to photographic representations. Homosexual bodies, same-sex desire, and gender identity has since the beginning of the photograph as a medium been represented and practiced within diverse fields of cultures (Meyer 2002). In this respect Christopher Reed writes that ‘Art and homosexuality have been significantly interwined’ (2011: 1). As this thesis will aim to illustrate, this interwinement has arguably always been a part of resistance and minority
cultures, rather than within the discourse of dominant culture such as art history or criticism. For the photographs by Warhol do not only represent homosexual artwork produced by one of the most famous artists of our time, they also demonstrate a marginalized 1960s and 1970s underground gay culture.

With a focus on the politics of gender and sexuality in relation to Warhol’s work my aim here will be to produce a *queer* understanding of his photographs. Queer theory will therefore become a central theoretical framework, and it seems to be difficult to explore Warhol’s photographs without it. The main concern of queer theory is to challenge the normalizing tendencies of sexual orders and oppressions – that have been constructed and regulated via binary oppositions (Needham 2010). There are numerous binary oppositions that can be identified in Warhol’s photographs but the one that becomes most important in regards of the aim of this thesis are the oppositions between the homosexual and the heterosexual and between the queer and the normative. In her important *Epistemology of the Closet* Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990) – one of the most important queer theorists - writes that oppositions between homosexual and heterosexual definitions and categories generate knowledge about many other binary oppositions such as private - public, masculine – feminine, secrecy – disclosure, and so forth. These are presumably oppositions that become explicitly expressed in the photographic work by Warhol. Under the influence of queer theory I hope to illustrate the relevance of the discipline and how binary oppositions are fostered as well as challenged in the photograph as a means of representation.

When exploring sexual oppressions and power in relation to the photograph the thesis will further embrace Michel Foucault and his approach to post-structuralism (1978). Gayle Rubin has written that Foucault – in particular his *History of Sexuality* – has been the ‘most influential and emblematic text of the new scholarship on sex’ (2011: 146). In *History of Sexuality* Foucault has argued that sexuality is a matter of *desire* rather than biological entities that has been regulated and discursively been culturally and historically constructed via social practices (1978). His notion of sexuality as ‘discursive form of entwined power, knowledge and pleasure’ (Williams 2008: 12) will function as a theory as well as methodology when analyzing the meaning of the photograph as a representation in relation to gender and sexuality. Foucault among the other theories introduced above will be developed consecutively and will function as my central theories throughout this thesis. I will nevertheless embrace many other theoretical perspectives and theorists whom will be presented as the analysis proceeds.
Methodology and Material

This analysis will concentrate on pictorial and contextual elements that pertain to gender and sexuality. Due to the enormous amount of photographs that Warhol captured and collected throughout his years I have not analyzed his entire archive but made a subjective selection of works from 1962 until 1978 - which appears as the time when Warhol most actively photographed. The images I have selected differ from each other in terms of their visual denotations and involve photographs from his Polaroid series Sex Parts and Torsos, photo-booth images as well as photographs he himself collected from magazines and tabloids, and reproduced for his silkscreen canvases (this process will become more clear in the following chapter). However, between 1962 and 1978 Warhol used many diverse mediums that appear to be related to his photographic work. Therefore this thesis will also analyze Warhol’s investments in his films and audiotape recording devices. Analyzing these works in relation to the photographs will arguably amplify the ambition of this thesis for Warhol obsessively comprehended these mediums – film, tape recording, and photography – during the same time and they all seem to be aesthetically and politically disclosed. In addition to Warhol’s works the thesis will furthermore analyze and discuss other photographic work and photographic elements that respond to the aims of my thesis. The works of Robert Mapplethorpe, Catherine Opie, Peter Hujar, and so forth will be interpreted to expand and contextualize my analysis as these works similar to Warhol’s pertain to gender, sexuality and the art photograph. In order to analyze and discuss the meanings of these works - and the photographic image in general – this thesis will employ textual analysis. Textual analysis is a qualitative method of analysis that is concerned with embedded meanings and ideologies within images and written texts. I will base my textual analysis on the premises of the theoretical frameworks introduced above.

Nevertheless, in order to analyze Andy Warhol himself as a contemporary artist in the sixties and seventies and his use of the recording devices this research will furthermore approach historical analysis. This methodological approach will become vital to enter a specific time in the history of arts – one will explore this by chronologically starting in the early 1960s with Warhol’s early photographic and end with some of his latest work in 1978. This appears to be the time when Warhol most actively photographed with his recording device and used the photographic image in his art. As my ambition moreover is to explore the history of the photography and the history of the photographic visualization of gender and sexuality, historical analysis may enable me to read this history and its possible
significances. When exploring these histories I will take advantage of art-historians Richard Meyer (2002), Christopher Reed (2011) and Thomas Waugh (1997) who perhaps are the most influential theorists exploring homosexuality and gender in the history of art, photography and film. They have all focused on the postwar American art history that they explore from a queer theory perspective. When exploring Warhol himself – his practices and thoughts – I will furthermore explore his own bibliographical writings.

**Thesis Structure**

This thesis is divided into five different chapters that each aims to situate Warhol’s photographic work within diverse discourses, frameworks and debates. The *first chapter* will theorize the photograph - it will aim to define and debate ambitions and politics of the photographic as a representation that will become central to analyze Warhol’s photographic work. One will argue that discourses that appear to become important due to the ambitions of this thesis are the discourse of photography as an index of the real and the discourse of photography as art. Warhol’s work as well as his personal recording ambition to capture ‘every real moment’ arguably respond and challenge both these discourses. As one will see, these discourses are embedded with significance and power and provide meaningful readings in how we can interpret Warhol’s work. This idea will be expanded via an analysis of Warhol’s traumatic silkscreen canvas series ‘Death and Disaster’. The work arguably responds to the discourses of photography and realism as well to the discourse of photography as art. In order to theorize the photograph as a representation chapter two will along with Warhol’s work analyze photographic art works by Peter Hujar. Hujar is an artist who has used the photography as an art practice similar to Warhol. In particular the way in which it represents gender identity and sexuality. Examining these works will allow one to more apparent understand the meanings of such themes in the art photograph.

The thesis will then proceed and enter the *second chapter* that explores the discourses of gender, sexuality and photography in relation to Warhol’s photographs. Under the influence of Foucault it will aim to open up his photograph’s connection to a longer history of relations between gender, sexuality and photography - in particular homosexuality, as a subject matter of visual presentation will be examined. It seems that it is impossible to ignore same-sex desire, homoeroticism and sexual politics when analyzing Warhol’s photographic work. This requires me to discuss several other photographic works that many seem to be legacies of Warhol’s way in mediating gender and sexuality. The discourse of gender, sexuality and
photography will lead into the third chapter of the thesis will explore the same concerns in relation to Warhol’s acts of recordings. Warhol was obsessed with diverse recording devices and his photographic devices, film- and tape recorders seem to be an important part of his aesthetics. The chapter will explore Warhol’s use of these devices and debate the politics of obsessively recording for almost three decades as well as the significance of his recordings in relation to gender, sexuality, and the indexicality of the photograph. For it seems that these discourses are expressed in his acts of recordings in a similar way as the photographs per se.

The discourse of the portrait in photography is a theme that runs through this thesis but becomes a central focus in the forth chapter. In an analysis of Warhol film stills Screen Tests the chapter will analyze the role of the portrait in Warhol’s work as well as question what it means to portray someone as well as the relationship between the portrait and the subject is. Despite that the Screen Tests are film material they illustrate an important, an indeed canonical, moment in Warhol’s work and are theoretically interrelated with his photographs. The fifth chapter enters the latest aspect of Warhol’s photographs by finally exploring his Polaroid series Sex Parts and Torsos. The chapter continues my exploration of questions about the significance of the photograph as a representation in relation to gender, sexuality and the real. Exploring the aesthetics and technical possibilities of the Polaroid photography it seems as it challenges the traditional forms of photography as well as responding to Warhol’s desire for ‘every real moment’. After exploring the Polaroid photography per se the chapter will return to the beginning of the thesis and the analysis of ‘Death and Disaster’ by exploring Sex Parts and Torsos in respect of the meaning of mediating real homosexual intercourse, the nude male body and homoeroticism rather than deaths and trauma. The significance of photographing sexual intercourse will be examined in relation to the discourses of gender and sexuality. Meanwhile it will also be analyzed how the Polaroids, in particular Torsos respond to my earlier discussions about Warhol’s take on the portraiture and how he represents homoeroticism and nude male bodies. The conclusion will finally aim to summarize and debate the intrinsically of exploring ‘every real moment’ and mediations of gender, sexuality and queerness in Warhol’s photographic work.

It must finally be admitted that this thesis is also undertaken because of my obsession with Andy Warhol and his art and is being realized due to my many years involvement in both feminism and queer theories. This obsession and political standpoint will both be an advantage and weakness during my research, as my passion will both encourage me and at times make it difficult for me to read things objectively. I have nevertheless throughout this research positioned a necessary critical distance.
1. Theorizing the Photograph

I told them I didn’t believe in art, that I believed in photography
-Andy Warhol and Hackett (1980: 315)

Introduction

One may claim that Andy Warhol’s quotation above illustrates that he believed in photography but not in art. When he wrote those lines the photograph had not been accorded the status as fine art. By art Warhol therefore presumably referred to the traditional art forms of painting and sculpture. There was however something peculiar with the photograph that Warhol desired – a desire to photograph ‘every real moment’ (Warhol and Hackett 1980: 138). With his belief in mind the ambition of this chapter will be to theorize the photograph and debate the discourses that appear to become central when analyzing the photographic work by Warhol. As this thesis is concerned with to examine how Warhol’s photographs correspond to a broader context of mediation the meaning of the photograph as a mediation and how it discursively incites our ways of seeing seem to be elementary when entering these discourses. In order to explore these interpretations one will argue that in particular there are two discourses which will become essential in this analysis of Warhol’s photographic: the discourse of the photograph as an index of the real text; and the discourse of the photograph as art. These discourses are depicted on the basis that Warhol’s photographs arguably can be interpreted as both indexes of the real and objects of art. These two discourses will perspicuity become clear when examining how Warhol’s photographs impact of concepts of gender, sexuality and queerness, as well as when exploring his investment in recording, mediation, and capturing ‘every real moment’.

The first part of the chapter will examine the discourse of the photograph as a text. Taking Warhol’s series ‘Death and Disaster’ as a point of departure one will use Mary Ann Doane and her theories of indexicality, discuss the relationship between reality and the
photograph. This relationship becomes important in my readings of the photograph throughout this thesis. Doane raises some critical notions that seem to enrich my interpretation of the photograph. When exploring the photograph as a text the chapter will further debate the social and ideological meanings of the photograph. Susan Sontag’s critical interpretation of the photograph in ‘On Photography’ will shed some light on the way in which this thesis analyze the ideological discourse of the Warhol’s photographic works (1977). One will argue that rethinking Sontag by bringing her back to debates about photography in relation to Warhol will embrace my thesis to possess a theoretical framework to expand on. Arguably her theories still hold symbolic value in photographic criticism today.

The chapter will finally enter the discussion of the discourse of photography as art. It will be explored how the meanings of a photograph as a text arguably change when it achieves aesthetic value. To discuss these concerns the chapter will along with Warhol’s work, analyze a photographic artwork by Peter Hujar - an artists who has used the photograph as an art practice similar to Warhol. In particular in how they photographically represent the nude body and sexuality.

**Photography as an index of the real**

When exploring Warhol’s photographic works, one of the discourses that will become important to discuss is the discourse of photography as an index of the real. One might argue that one of the immediate readings of the photograph is its appearance as a representation of the *real*. It should be noted that with the real I understand reality to be a set of conventions. Yet can a photograph ever signify the real? Mary Ann Doane discusses the relation between realism and film and writes that the film has a communicating desire to reference the real: a desire to imprint a moment, a person, an object, and so forth, into a visual image (2007a: 2-3). It should however be mentioned that Doane comes from film studies and has applied her theories in her analysis of film rather than the photograph. Nevertheless, this thesis wishes to adopt her arguments and renew them for the photographic image. Returning to her theories one may note that we often, indeed, view our private photographs as a desire to remember moments of our life, and perhaps to remember a meaningful person we might have known in our pasts. Photographs can raise memories, feelings and concerns. One might therefore argue that the photograph has a physical relationship with what once occurred in front of the camera apparatuses - it has a desire to reference and imprint.
According to Doane this desire is the *indexicality* of the photograph (2007a). This theory of indexicality that Doane expands on belongs to a wider context of semiotics as a method of analysis and interpretations. This method, introduced by Charles Sanders Pierce, is concerned with the visual image as an open sign and bearer of meaning (ibid.). I understand semiotics as a complex method of textual analysis but this thesis is nonetheless only concerned with the idea of the indexicality and its relationship to the photograph. When exploring this particular relationship Doane argues ‘the photographic image has an existential bond with its object’ (2007b: 134). What here seems to be underlined is the denotative level of the photograph: its index. The index is enclosed in all texts and signs and is the dimension of the text without significance. It is in other words the physical and existential expression of the photograph that only says ‘There!’ (Doane 2007a: 1). Pierce himself explained the index as a footprint, thunder, a pointing finger and indeed a photographic image (ibid: 2). When interpreting the index of the photograph according to this explanation the photographic image asserts nothing but a trace - it is an imprinted object captured by the camera. In this sense the real and the photographic print are interrelated as the image appears as a mimetic copy of the object once photographed – it appears as an image of the real body or event that once occurred in front of the camera lens.

Nevertheless the real indexical occurrence of the photograph is problematic. For while the indexicality of a photograph has the communicative ability to appear as a physical reference of the real Doane writes that it ‘is always supplemental to meaning and intention’ (2007a: 2). As the only intention of the index, as Pierce suggested, is to point or to make a representation reference to the world physically, it can only ‘reference a real world without realism’ (ibid: 4). This real is without realism because the photograph is not necessary related to the object represented. It is only an illusion of the world that cannot speak of the meanings, intentions or experiences of the indexical copy as it simply only re-presents the captured object. Therefore one can never essentially categorize the photograph as a trace of reality. Via its physical index and its desires to represent an object or event in a resemblance matter but as a mediation it is always embedded with meaning. When reading the meaning of a photograph one can therefore not only interpret it via examining its index as its language needs to be considered to understand its embedded significance. One influential reading that explores the photography in this manner is Susan Sontag’s *On Photography* (1977). Despite that her theories are not the most recent one when exploring photographic criticism they are notably the most symbolic ones when discussing the meaning of the photography and therefore fruitful to adopt here.
According to Sontag the photographic image has the power to both appear as a slice of real time as well as an image that ideologically imposes knowledge and understandings of the world (1977: 22). She writes that the photograph has a rather large authority over the viewer as it can via ideology reinforce certain ideas about the social world in a truthful manner (ibid.) In this sense I understand the photograph to maintain a rather large power over the viewer as it can construct knowledge and certain readings of the social world. Sontag adds that ‘in teaching us a new visual code, photographs alter and enlarge our notions of what is worth looking at and what we have the right to observe’ (1977: 3). This seems to illustrate that Sontag critically understands the photographic image as a cultural information instrument that can be used to control viewers for instance political and cultural beliefs. I would add that one of the reasons why it has the power to control these beliefs and impose our knowledge is for we desire to read the photographs as a physical reference of the real. Yet when overemphasizing the index of the photograph its discursive meanings become invisible. This power to *enlarge* and *alter* notions is presumably the largest privileges of the photography as a subject of representation. For, as Sontag adds, the altering and enlarging is constructed and reinforced by ideology as ideology always determines the meaning of the photograph (1977: 18). This is however problematic as the photograph arguably hides more than what it tells us. Via Sontag we can understand that the photograph is embedded with more than the index, which arguably becomes our immediately reading of a photograph. For the photograph is ideological and has a powerful position in culture (ibid: 19). It is in particular her idea of the photographs power to enlarge and alter that I will be concerned with when analyzing the photographs by Warhol. To examine the discourse of photography as an index of the real, I will explore the photographs of Warhol’s ‘Death and Disaster’ - a series that seems to depict on the relation between realism and representation within Warhol’s photographs in an appealing way.

**The ‘Death and Disaster’ series (1963-1964)**

‘Death and Disaster’ is a series of silkscreen canvases printed from photographs that Warhol collected from newspaper tabloids and crime scene photos. The photographs were in other words footage that Warhol himself had found. The series is arguably a rather dark and melancholy side of Warhol’s photographic aesthetic and represents some of his careers most prolific and powerful work. Art critic and previous friend of Warhol, David Bourdon refers to the collection as ‘Warhol’s most powerful and disturbing pictures’ (1989: 142). This
powerfulness and disturbance is difficult to dismiss when viewing the works. The images of ‘Death and Disaster’ signify subjects and events photographed after disaster deaths, such as car crashes, suicides, accidents, the haunting images of the electric chair. The series also includes the rather famous silkscreen portraits of American female icons Marilyn Monroe and Elizabeth Taylor, which as well emphasize deaths and disasters. The Monroe images, for instance, were produced shortly after she committed suicide and source for the silkscreen of her was a portrait Warhol had collected from a tabloid from when she was still alive (Bourdon 1989). The series therefore contain deaths of ordinary people as well as deaths of American celebrities. Due to the death denotations of ‘Death and Disaster’ it can be interpreted as brutal and grotesque. Most images illustrate dead people, or people who are about to die, in a disturbing and real way. They in other words appear as real tragic accidents.

Figure 1 Tragic death in Ambulance Disaster (1963 ©Andy Warhol Foundation)
The work *Ambulance Disaster* (1963) from ‘Death and Disaster’ arguably emphasizes this relation between photography and the real. *Ambulance Disaster* is a silkscreen canvas that represents two identical photographs situated one underneath the other. The photograph Warhol has depicted is black-and-white and signifies an ambulance car-crash. The ambulance car is heavily damaged and the body of a dead young man is hanging out the back door. Returning to photography and indexicality I will argue that the image appears to have a ‘desire for referentiality’ (Doane 2007a: 1-2). It strives to inform the spectator of the image that it is a reference to a real historical moment. Indeed one might find the information difficult to decline. Because as a visual image it symbolically tells us what happened to the objects of the car crash: that they drove the ambulance car, presumably on their way to the hospital, crashed and died. The horrific appearance of the death makes the works indexicality rather traumatic and perhaps sad. The dead subjects of the photograph are real people. The car is real and the deaths are real. The horror of the death here becomes a strong representation. One might note that Warhol’s work here advances questions about the relationship between the image and the viewer and the indexical assumptions we bring to the picture.

The use of colours in ‘Death and Disaster’ arguably reinforces this real without realism. Warhol printed his death silkscreen canvases in a plural of different colours such as red, blue, orange and green. And many of the images are printed many times in diverse colours. I would argue that the colours have the similar naturalization intention as the repetitions. This affect becomes clear in *Orange Car Crash* (1964). The image’s index illustrates multiple images of a car crash. The car is situated upside down and one person who has crawled out of the car is to be seen. If one carefully looks another person is still lying in the car, the person appears as a dead woman. The death represented in the image is in reality gruesome. Nevertheless one might note that the death does not appear as shocking as perhaps expected. As the silkscreen is printed in a bright yellow colour I would argue that the bright colour erases the horror and trauma from the images. It in other words creates a distance between the gruesome real death of the original photograph and Warhol’s mediation of it. Therefore the colours make death mundane in the similar ways as the repetitions. Despite the dead woman and the gruesome contents the image does not appear as tragic. For through the colourfulness the image denies the emotional relationship between the viewer and the traumatic death. The index is manipulated through colour that consequently erases the real shock and makes the image emotionally accepted.
Challenging the discourse of photography as an index of the real, one might argue that ‘Death and Disaster’ has a political and social dimension to it. Warhol’s deployment of real death photographs collected from tabloids and magazines was arguably not only to make the trauma within them mundane but also to represent a political statement. Thomas Crow underlines the political meaning with the series and argues that ‘Death and Disaster’ is a ‘stark, disabused, pessimistic vision of American life’ (1990: 324). With these words Crow notes that Warhol’s use of photography taken from tabloids and so on was an attempt to represent a diverse view of America. He suggests that the realist or referential aspect of
'Death and Disaster' exposes Warhol’s engagement with American politics and his dispute against the ‘open sores’ in the American system (ibid: 323), and that Warhol ‘belongs to the popular American tradition of “truth-telling” (ibid: 324). What Crow seems to suggest is that ‘Death and Disaster’ can be considered as work that aims to tell the truth about weaknesses of the American political system or other American institutions. Warhol in this sense disputed a vision of the American life by making his statements pessimistic and publically visible – hence enlarges certain political beliefs via the photographs. This argument challenges the simulacra reading of Warhol’s pop art posed by Jean Baudrillard whom along with other poststructuralist thinkers has declined the ideological meaning of Warhol’s art (Foster 1996). Baudrillard viewed pop art and its reference to commodity culture and pastiche ready-made as superficial and that it lacked ‘symbolic meaning’ (quoted in Foster 1996: 38). I would here strongly disagree. For the message in ‘Death and Disaster’ and the way in which it explicitly re-presents real traumatic events via the photographic print illustrate how Warhol and his pop-art aim to provide a sense of critical truth telling view of America. It is therefore ideological and significant rather than superficial and simulacra. Let me return to Sontag to debate this ideology in relation to power and ‘Death and Disaster’ further.

Sontag argues that as the visual image has the power to determine what we have the look to observe it can be used as a tool of power to provide a view of a world that has been ignored (1977: 163). This seems to underline that while it can be used by dominant institutions to construct knowledge, it can also be used as a powerful means to challenge these ideologies and norms. This dispute has throughout the history of photography often been practiced as the photograph has arguably since its’ beginning been embedded with political meaning. In this respect Sontag writes that the photograph can function to shed light on an event or object that have been ‘hollowed out’ or ‘felt to be shrunk’ (Sontag 1977: 163). In other words that it has the power to enlarge a reality that has been shrunk, hollowed out, perishable or remote (ibid.). I wish to argue that the photographs of Warhol have significance in this regard. Truthful representations of homosexuality, ethnic minorities, American culture, life, death, gender identities, and so forth, are arguably subjects who Warhol aims to debate and enlarge through photography. These are subjects that not often are represented in the realm of dominant culture as they arguably have been shrunk. Nevertheless through the power of the photograph one might argue that Warhol could align and enlarge culture according to his own interests and political aims. This becomes expressed in the ‘Death and Disaster’ work Red Race Riots (1963).
Red Race Riots is a silkscreen canvas of a photomechanical repetition of photographs Warhol collected from news coverage of the race riots in Birmingham, Alabama in 1963. It contains a selection of photographs that signify policemen encouraging their dogs to attack civil-rights demonstrators who took part in a non-violent protest against racial segregation and discrimination (Bourdon 1989). He found the three photographs in *Life* magazine, a white middle-class photojournalism magazine that was then an important source for media,
life and culture in America (Bourdon 1989). Warhol printed the race riot silkscreen in three different colours, red, white and blue. These colours connote the colours of the American flag. One might argue that Red Race Riot can be read as an attempt by Warhol to represent the reality of the American life, which Crow has already suggested as the meaning ‘Death and Disaster’, by representing the history of race in America. The image is the only one in the ‘Death and Disaster’ series that does not signify death directly. By adopting and re-producing the photographs as works of art Warhol expressed a political statement and ideas of the contemporary world. Red Race Riots for in this sense can be viewed as a critical statement of how powerful institutions in America, such as the police, reinforce racial difference and segregation rather than challenging and demolishing it. It as well illustrates how racial difference was a large part of the society and that segregation had become legitimated and normative. The non-whites in Birmingham were not allowed to eat at public lunch places, swim in public pools, to use public restrooms, and so forth. The riot was obviously a resistant against these racial discriminations. In this sense Warhol’s paintings can be read as politicizations of art; and the politicization is reinforced by the power of the photography and its technical possibilities. His art therefore enlarges a culture and racial discrimination that has been altered in the realm of culture. ‘Death and Disaster’ are in this sense works of art by Warhol which do not only explore reality and how photographs appear as the real but also how the artist uses photography and its social and political meanings.

Another dimension in the discourse of the photograph as an index of the real that furthermore seems to become useful when analyzing the photographs of Warhol is the idea of the social context. The ideological meanings of visual images will arguably always become established by its social context. It is arguably the context of the image that discursively constructs and reinforces its significance and myth within the culture where it appears. Susan Sontag writes that we never can discuss photography outside its context as ‘Photography is, always, an object in a context, this meaning is bound to drain away; that is, the, context which shapes whatever immediate’ (1977: 106). Sontag here arguably emphasizes that the meaning of the image is constructed by its climate. We thus need to move beyond the visual image per se and explore the production and social position of the image. The meaning of the ‘Death and Disaster’ series for instance illustrates how the meaning of a photograph is determined by social context. The meaning of the photographs of Ambulance Disaster will for example change and demonstrate diverse meanings depending on where it is represented. It is the one who controls the social positioning of the photography who forces and constructs its' meaning. One might for instance argue that the death images gathered a diverse meaning
within the art institution as an object of art, in comparison with the meaning it signified in the
censored tabloid where Warhol initially found it. In the tabloid they were arguably identified
and shocking and traumatic as the tabloid aims to function as truth telling. Nevertheless, on a
wall in a museum we arguably do not perceive death as traumatic. This is presumably due to
its context as an object is always in a context that shapes our perception of what a picture
communicates (Sontag 1977). To expand on the potential meanings of Warhol’s photographic
work within the realm of art it is central to enter the discussion of the discourse of the
photograph as art.

Photography as art
Another discourse that becomes central when exploring the meanings of Warhol’s
photographic work is the discourse of photography as art. The perception of a photograph as
art provides the image new meanings and challenges the readings of the photograph as an
index of the real. For one might argue that the art photography has diverse promises in
comparison with for instance the document photography or the press photography. In this
respect Douglas Crimp writes that when a photograph is viewed as an object of art it

‘will no longer serve the purposes of information, documentation, evidence, illustration, reportage. The formerly plural field of photography will henceforth be reduced to the single, all-encompassing aesthetic’ (1995: 75).

This indicates that when a photograph is viewed as an object of art – that it is represented
within an art institution, or has entered an art circuit of culture – its communicative purposes
as a visual image to evidence, document, and so forth, that can be the photographic purpose,
is erased. Instead they become treated as objects of uniqueness, as Liz Wells and Derrick
Price add (2000: 59). The purposes of the photograph when it becomes valued as art, returning to Crimp’s quote, are therefore reduced by the idea of the aesthetic. Everything has
an aesthetic dimension to it, but the Western aesthetic philosophy ‘is concerned to examine
taste and systems for the appreciation of that which is deemed beautiful’ (ibid: 41). The
judgement of taste and appreciation of the aesthetic therefore become the meanings that
embed the art photograph as its meaning is epitomized with aesthetic qualities. It should
perhaps be noted that the significance of the terms beautiful and aesthetic can indeed be
debated, in particular in the realm of contemporary art and art in the 20th Century as it
challenges the traditional idea of beauty which for instance circulated in Renaissance art. Nevertheless my aim here is not to challenge these concerns, but rather to discuss the consequences when a photograph is categorized as art.

One might argue that when a photograph is interpreted as art it is provided with certain promises. This is because it appears as the art photograph is indulged with new significances that allow it to represent objects differently. Graham Clarke writes that the art photography is as significant and powerful as other photographs (1997). Yet the art photographic image has further capabilities as it has the ability to transform everyday practices into ‘an image with a strange beauty’ (ibid: 174). In this sense one might note that art photographs are beautiful regardless if their signifiers are less beautiful or grotesque. For as soon as a photograph becomes recognized as art it is in this sense given aesthetic value regardless of the ugliness, boringness or brutalness of the image. One might take Clarke’s note further and suggest that images of death, photographs of people who are not categorized within the culture of the norm, pornographic images and so forth, somehow becomes beautiful and significant as soon as they become recognized as art. In this sense it is the context that affects ways of seeing and reading a photographic image.

This becomes explicit in Warhol’s ‘Death and Disaster’. One has already illustrated how Warhol reified the traumatic realism of the tabloid photographs via repetition and colouring. It might moreover be argued that the meaning of ‘Death and Disaster’ is also reified via its aesthetic value. The art works of the series are identified as art and have been exhibited in diverse art venues since the 1960s. The argument that I here wish to develop is that the works’ status as art transforms the realism and trauma of the photographs into beauty. In short, the work arguably makes death become beautiful. Because they no longer serve their original purposes to inform the viewer about the real traumatic car-crashes, deaths or riots, in their nature of denotations. Their aesthetic qualities transform the brutal and real tabloid photographs of ‘Death and Disaster’ into art objects, hence, unique objects. As they have become legitimated as art, they obtain aesthetic value. Warhol therefore transforms the horror of the real and the grotesqueness of death into aesthetic beauty. He does not do this by deleting reality and death. But, by framing the photograph and putting it in an art context rather than a newspaper context, it was given a new meaning. He therefore constructs an idea of the beauty of reality and the beauty of death by transferring the social context of the image. One will argue Warhol’s photographs emphasize this idea of the discourse of art photography throughout his photographic works. His philosophy was to capture ‘every real moment’ but this reality was not always beautiful in Warhol’s works as much of his work signifies
homosexual acts, genitalia, and everyday objects. Yet these images today have aesthetic value as they are within the realm of fine art - hence they are identified as art photographs.

Another art photographer who seems to explore the discourse of art photography in a similar way to Warhol is Peter Hujar. He is recognized for his black-and-white portraits from the 1970s. Representations of sexuality and nudity are central in his work. His works’ status as art photographs and his reference to the aesthetics of fine art arguably empowers him to aestheticize sexuality. *Bruce de Sainte Croix* for instance is a black-and-white portrait of a young man sitting on a chair in an empty room. He is naked. His gaze is on his erected penis, which he seems to masturbate with his right hand. The sexual appeal of the photograph makes it clandestine and perhaps outside the normative representations of the nude male body. It also situates itself outside normative representations of sexuality. Because of the sexual appearance of the image, and the visibility of the male subject’s penis and the masturbation act, one might consider it as pornographic. Nevertheless, as it has the status as art photography it arguably comes forth as beautiful with fine art aesthetics. The framing, the black-and-whiteness, and the serious appeal of the photograph are indeed things that Hujar presumably has considered.

*Figure 4 Bruce de Sainte Croix* by Peter Hujar (1978 ©Peter Hujar)
The mise-en-scène in others has been considered to frame the work as an art photograph. But the penis and the masturbation dispute the framing. This is arguably intentional by Hujar for his art comes forward as beautiful despite that it not conventional. In other words, although the photograph has pornographic denotations we read it as art rather than pornography. One might therefore say that in the same way as Warhol aestheticizes traumatic deaths and disasters, Hujar aestheticizes a unconventional nude and sexual male body as well as pornography. They both bring the aesthetic dimension and the realism of the photograph together. Concerns of mediating the body, sexuality in the photograph will be expanded in the following chapter.

This chapter has shed some light on how one can read and theorize the photographic work by Warhol. It has debated and illustrated that to expand an understanding of the textual and aesthetic meanings of the photographic work by Warhol as means of representations it is central to discuss the discourse of the photograph as an index of the real and the discourse of the photograph as art. Via Doane and an analysis of Warhol’s ‘Death and Disaster’ it has been illustrated that via the indexical level of a photograph and its desire to resemble the object captured the photographic image can be interpreted as a real representation of the world (2007a). This realism indeed underlines Warhol’s ambition to photograph ‘every real moment’ (and Hackett 1980: 138) as it allows him to generate images that in the sense of perception appear as real objects. Yet as my analysis of ‘Death and Disaster’ proceeded via Susan Sontag (1977) it was demonstrated that when exploring the photograph as a representation one cannot overemphasize the photography as an index of the real as it is embedded with meaning and ideology. Through ‘Death and Disaster’ as a place of development when entering the photographic work by Warhol it has been argued that the photograph empowered Warhol to numb and naturalize the shock and trauma of the photograph – hence ideologically change its mediated meanings and our ways of reading it. It also authorized Warhol to construct and determine social meaning as he with Red Race Riots represented and disputed the history of race in America and intentionally segregation between whites and black that the whites of Birmingham practiced. The chapter nevertheless further argued that the discourse of the photograph as art is as well central when analyzing Warhol’s photographic work as mediations. One has discussed how photographs within the discourse of art are aesthetized when entering the realm of fine art. Warhol arguably identified this means of representation and aesthetizes death as the real trauma of death is turned into objects with fine art aesthetic value. Similarly the unconventional visibility of both sexuality
and the male nude body in the work of Hujar are aestheticize when represented as art photography. These remarks underlines that there is tension between the discourse of photography as an index of the real and the discourse of the photograph as art as the art dimension of an image as its ideological meanings, as well as its indexical desire to resemblance the real are replaced with aesthetic values. With this tension and Warhol’s ‘Death and Disaster’ in mind the following chapter will enter a historical and philosophical analysis of gender and sexuality as objects of photographic representations.


2. Gender, Sexuality and the Photograph

The Photograph is a certain but fugitive testimony.


Introduction

The proceeding chapter discussed and theorized the discourses that the photographic work by Warhol engage with and argued that his work can be identified as indexes of the real as well as objects of arts. These discourses affect the meanings of the photograph and cannot be ignored when analyzing the photograph as a matter of representation. As this thesis fundamentally aims to examine how Warhol’s photographic work impact of concepts of gender and sexuality, the themes of gender and sexuality as a means of representations will become vital to consider. With this concern in mind the argument that this chapter will aim to develop is that Warhol’s photographs are not separated from concerns of gender and sexuality. With this contextualization my objective will here be to examine how the photographic medium has been used to express and mediate same-sex desires, as well as representing sexuality and rendering it meaningful and knowable through representation and mediation. The tradition that seems to become significant to discuss in this analysis is the interrelations between discourses of gender, sexuality, and power. Reading the history of gender and sexuality in the photograph the chapter will with the influence of Foucault (1978) and queer theory explore what it ideologically means to represent gender and sexuality. The historical framework that I will approach responds very much to an Anglo-American context, rather than European and is very specific to practices and histories that pertain to homosexuality in the US.

This chapter is divided into four parts. It will first outline the theoretical tradition by Michel Foucault on sexuality, discourse and power (1978) as this tradition is vital when
reading the history and politics of homosexuality in relation to the photograph. Intrinsically it will also advantage one to develop arguments of what it means to represent homosexuality and homoeroticism. The second part of the chapter is the largest part and will analyze and discuss how the photograph historically has been used to represent homosexuality, from the first appearance of homoerotic images until our contemporary time. As it will turn out, this history is related to the history of erotic images, pornography and mediations of same-sex desire as art. When reading this history the chapter will from a queer theory perspective chronologically analyze a number of photographic art work by Robert Mapplethorpe, Nan Goldin and Catherine Opie - work connoted with homosexual identities and desires, which dominated the years after Warhol. Many of these artists are arguably legacies of some of Warhol’s queer tactics in terms of presenting men and homosexuality and therefore central to discuss in relation to Warhol here. The chapter will then proceed to examine representations of gender, and sexuality in Warhol’s early work by looking at Thirteen Most Wanted Men (1964). Under the influence of Meyer (2002) and Reay (2010) I will discuss the work’s relation to homosexuality and masculinity. Finally, the chapter will discuss the discourses of gender, sexuality and power in relation to censorship. For the history of photography is also a history of censorship. Homosexual images, and homosexuality in itself have been both rejected and denied visibility. The chapter will discuss how this rejection has been practiced in the realm of contemporary art, in particular in Warhol’s own works.

The History of Sexuality

The tradition which homosexual photographic representations seems to intrude is the discourses of gender, sexuality and power. The person who most influentially and symbolically offers a theory of these discourses is Michel Foucault (1978). In his first volume of The History of Sexuality Foucault notes that the term homosexuality was a modern invention that appeared in the 1870s (ibid.). His writings aim to historically define the ‘regime of power-knowledge-pleasure that sustains the discourse of human sexuality’ in our Western society (1978: 11). Foucault writes that anyone whose body could not be defined within such sexual discourse was in the Bourgeoisie Victorian society categorized as deviant and ‘annexed to mental illness’ (ibid: 36). One may note that this was the beginning of homosexuality. Foucault views homosexuality as an identity that was discursively constructed by socio-cultural discourses, such as language, behaviours, and so forth, that powerful institutions such as medicine, law and education maintained as a mode of sexual
oppression. As discourse ‘transmits and produces power’ via for instance language, images and texts these dominant discourses produced knowledge and truths about sexuality and pleasure (ibid: 77). He thus argues that sexuality is not a biological entity but a social practice that is culturally and discursively constructed (Rubin 2011).

In the Victorian society Foucault writes that due this social construction the homosexual fell outside the norm of sexuality and became named and recognized as an abnormal person (1978). He was viewed as a deviant and ‘perverse’ character whose sexuality was ‘everywhere present to him’ (ibid: 59). The only thing that categorized one as a homosexual pervert was his or her preferences of sexual acts – how sexual pleasure was gathered. Consequently, this act determined and formed his or her (sexual) identity. In short, what one did became who he or she was. The part where Foucault makes this distinction explicit in History of Sexuality, Volume I, might have been quoted too many times, yet despite of the over quoting and the length of the quote, I feel that it is important to situate it here. Foucault writes:

As defined by the ancient civil or canonical codes, sodomy was a category of forbidden acts; their author was nothing more than the juridical subject of them. The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage – a past, a case history and a childhood, a character, a form of life; also a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology. Nothing in his total being escapes his sexuality. Everywhere in him it is present: underlying all his actions, because it is their insidious and indefinitely active principle; shamelessly inscribed on his face and on his body, because it is a secret that always gives itself away. It is consubstantial with him, less as a habitual sin than as a singular nature… Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyne, a hermaphroditism of the soul. The sodomite was a temporary aberration; the homosexual is now a species (ibid: 43).

What this quote clearly suggests is that sodomy (the sexual act) was a sinful act that became the fundamental basis of knowledge to determine sexuality. The quote further suggests that the homosexual (as an identity) had become a species and the other that dominant society not accepted. What determined this naming and categorizing was ones sexual desire. This sexual essentialism - which according to Gayle Rubin signifies ‘the idea that sex is a natural force
that exists prior to social life and shapes institutions’ - has stayed embedded within our Western society and still today structures the social framework of sexuality (2011: 146). Gayle Rubin is an influential person who has expanded and renewed Foucault’s arguments to explore the view of the homosexual individual in our modern society (ibid.). She argues that sodomy has been decriminalized to a certain extend but that homosexual people in the Western world still are repressed culturally, legally and politically due to their sexual preferences (ibid: 30-32). Rubin’s expand on Foucault illustrates that that his theories still are symbolically important and relevant the discussing the structure of sexuality in contemporary debates.

What makes Foucault central to discuss here is for his theories of sexuality and sodomy notably become useful when exploring the discourses of gender, sexuality and identity in the photograph. For the discursive relation Foucault identified between the sodomite and the homosexual – a relation that in academia (at least in gay, lesbian studies and queer theory) today is referred to as sexual acts and sexual identities (Bersani 1995) – can notably be expressed via the photographic image. For in the Foucauldian sense one might note that the photograph can represent both sexual acts and sexual identities. This is due to its indexical power to appear as a reference of the real. It can therefore capture real sexual acts practiced by real human bodies. If the sexual act determines someone’s identity- as Foucault noted - the photograph of the sodomy act mediates the subjects’ sexual identity - it signifies and determines the subject’s identity via his or her desires and acts. But what photographs are merely homosexual acts and what are homosexual identities? One may note that this is a tension that photographers have explored over time and arguably becomes evident in Warhol’s photographic work. The following rather large part will discuss this tension by reading the relation between homosexuality and the photograph from the appearance of the photographic device until our contemporary time. The argument that I eventually will aim to develop is that Warhol was ahead in representing homosexuality. Many of the artists discussed in this chapter are legacies of some of Warhol’s queer tactics in presenting men and homosexuality.

**The discourse of sexuality and photography**

One might argue that since the introduction of the camera device, gender and sexuality have been significantly represented in the photograph. Already in the 1850s Charles Baudelaire accused the realism of the photograph for the appearance of a new sense of obscenity of the
eroticized human body (Williams 1995: 3). The appearance of the photograph had the power to mediate sexuality. This is for it has the capability to deliver representations of gender, sexuality and intimacy. Solomon-Godeau writes that in the nineteenth-century this intimacy was identified as obscene because the photograph made the naked human bodily parts appear as ‘traces of the real’ (1991: 229). In line with Doane (2007a) she notes that this is because the photography is indexical. The indexical representation of the body was not an extension of the erotic images of painting or sculpture, but introduced a nineteenth-century genre of human representation that gave rise to a new sense of obscenity. Film scholar Linda Williams refers to this obscenity as the ‘frenzy of the visible’ which she notes means the actualization and documentation of ‘dirty acts’ in the nineteenth century (1999: 34). These obscene and fugitive images, homosexual as well as heterosexual, were the beginning of pornography (Williams 1995). They were also the beginning of the visibility of homosexuality.

In his extraordinary reading Hard to imagine: Gay Male Eroticism in Photography and Film from their Beginnings to Stonewall Thomas Waugh (1996) explores the appearance of homoerotic and gay pornographic images. With a rich collection of erotic images from as early as the 1880s, he writes that ‘Photography manages not only to resemble the living flesh of every sexual experience (iconic) but also to testify to the existence of that flesh (indexical), thereby unleashing many of the psychological mechanisms in the spectator around voyeurism and fetishism that are still hotly debated’ (ibid: 12). These photomechanical potentials, Waugh adds, is the reason why photography and film have had a privileged relation to gay cultures (ibid.). The photographic power to indexically testify homosexual bodies and desires was revolutionary and invented ideas of fetishism, voyeurism, and perhaps most importantly in the context of this thesis, the representation of same sex desires (ibid.). With this invention, images of sexual acts, desires and bodies could suddenly be mediated, circulated and looked at, both privately and publically (even though such images were illegal). As indexical images they became photomechanical objects with an ‘evidentiai aura’ (ibid: 12). The history of homosexual photographic representations therefore signifies ‘a history of real bodies’ (ibid: 12). It is arguably these ‘real bodies’ that become represented in the homoerotic and homosexual photographs analyzed in this thesis.

Before beginning my analysis of the visibility of same-sex desire, it might be fruitful to define homoeroticism. Homoeroticism is a respond or an appeal to the visual image of the man in an erotic sense - it is about a certain pleasure and desire men can have for each other that become expressed visually. A homoerotic image does however not necessarily need to neither denote sexual intercourse nor human nudity. One person who has explored
homoeroticism in relation to visibility, in particular to film, most detailed is Richard Dyer. Despite of the length his definition of homoeroticism is worth quoting here:

Homo-eroticism tends to stress libidinal attraction without sexual expression, sometimes even at the level of imagination and feeling. While in some usages homoeroticism can be a wider term that includes homosexuality, or can be an euphemism for homosexuality, it importantly indicates a sense of male pleasure in the physical presence of men, or even sometimes in their spiritually or ethically masculine qualities, which cannot be contained by (or, discourses of homo-eroticism would tend to say, reduced to) the idea of queerness (2002: 3).

By this definition we can note that homoeroticism and same sex desire is not exclusively expressed via a sexual act per se. Emotions and the feeling of desiring another of the same sex, is as well homoerotic. It is simply male pleasure and homosexuality as an expression rather than a sexual act.

Figure 1 Homoeroticism in Dancer (1974 ©Robert Mapplethorpe)
This ‘libidinal attraction without sexual expression’ becomes clear in the photograph *Dancer* by Robert Mapplethorpe. It is a black-and-white photograph of what appears as a torso of a naked young man. His face is seen on the image. As the title suggests, we might assume that the subject is a dancer. His upper torso and face is seen and his gaze is directed down on towards the floor. He appears as young and pale. There is no direct sexual expression within the image. Yet it seems to indicate to a ‘sense of male pleasure in the physical presence of men’ (Dyer 2002: 3). The subject’s body is to be looked at and desired, presumably by other men, as it arguably invites one to gaze at them while they are winningly passive. The features of his body and his face are enhanced in terms of innocence and beauty. In this sense the photograph creates a relation between the viewer and the subject of the image that is tensed with libidinal attraction between men. *Dancer* is therefore sexual pleasure and fascination of the male body *without* sexual intercourse. It is the young man’s presence and visibility that indicates male pleasure and same-sex desire, on the ‘level of imagination’ (ibid: 3). It must nevertheless be mentioned that this homoerotic imagination of course relies not only of the representation of this sense of eroticism but also on the viewer and the level of perception of the image as individuals read images differently depending on their social background, gender, sexuality, age, and so forth. As one will see further ahead homoeroticism becomes central in Warhol’s work. Yet to further explore photographs in relation to sexual acts, sexual identities and homoeroticism let me start at the beginning of the production of homosexual photographs.

*Figure 2* Partouze and illicit homosexuality (1890-1900 ©Alasdair Foster Collection, Scotland)
The beginning

The first generation of sodomy, perverse illicit homoerotic photographs started to appear in the 1880s (Waugh 1996). These photographs were illicitly produced in Europe 1880-1930 and have been referred to as the partouze photographs (‘orgy’ in verbal French) (ibid: 284). Heterosexual erotic images has however been identified even earlier in the pre-photographic medias stereoscopic and lithography (Williams 1995). Stereoscopic dirty pictures were for instance produced already in the 1860s as they represented single nude views of the female and male body. They gave rise to the visual eroticism and pornography but were dedicated for gentlemen only – ‘they were for men and about women’ as Williams writes (1995: 22).

Yet the partouze images were for men and about men. They appeared with the emergence of the photographic portrait studio within the European brothels in the nineteenth-century (Waugh 1996). The setting of the furniture, patterned carpet, the draperies, and so forth, viewed on the images, determines such studio. These photographs were illegal as the French State (as Foucault noted) viewed homosexuality as deviant and perverse. Returning to Foucault’s distinction tension between sexual act and sexual identity, I would argue that the images might in their time of production have been viewed as homosexual acts rather than expressions of an identity. The acts were sodomy and outlawed and were therefore generated in the private sphere of the brothel and secretly circulated within certain cultures (Waugh 1996). The sexual denotations of the partouze images and their early appearance arguably illustrate the beginning of the representation of both the homosexual body and homoeroticism. They therefore also demonstrate the beginning of the gay porno industry as well as homoeroticism in art.

From the 1930s onwards there was one has noted that there was an increase of illegal gay erotic photographs. Nevertheless homosexual images were still illegal and culturally not accepted (Waugh 1996: 322-324). It has been argued that an important reason for the increase of illegal images was the production of photographs outside the public sphere – personal photographs (Waugh 1996). Waugh writes that these photographs were a ‘stream of non-commercial, personal, image-making, rich in the sentiments and iconographies of newly crystallizing private lifestyles’ (ibid: 323). What Waugh here seems to suggest that stream of gay photographs were produced by amateurs in their private and hidden spheres. One might add that these images were produced to document sodomy and unaccepted pleasures and bodies. For another reason for the increase of such personal and private images was the appearance of the documentary as a form of photographic mediation (Waugh 1996). The thirties documentary movement, influenced by cinema, arguably allowed the photographic
image to record social problems and represent images which aimed to mediate real life. This is perhaps a reason why Samuel Scott has written that: ‘The heart of documentary is not form, style or medium, but always content’ (quoted in Wells 2000: 90). The indexical power of the camera to document the content of real people and real life encouraged certain people to photograph the bodies and lives of homosexuals – subjects viewed as clandestine. These images were however arguably not produced to be displayed or to become objects of art, but to document the desires, bodies and lives of the homosexual. One might thus note that it was a tension between the forbidding of homosexual acts and visibility and the documentation of it. Despite that same-sex desire was illegal, homosexuals produced documentation of their existence and their lives - almost like visible evidences of their desires and identities.

One matter that arguably endorsed the documentation of sexual privacy was the modern technical developments. In particular the invention of the Polaroid camera in the 1950s, made it possible to document sexually illicit pictures that developed instantly in the private home (Waugh 1996: 347-348). Waugh writes that a consequent of this was that photographs could ‘escape from censorship’ (ibid: 30). The reason of this escape was presumably that the Polaroid photograph could be kept secret from the state and public in general as the Polaroid photograph was developed via chemicals embedded in the camera itself or the imprint. There was therefore no need to hand the films to places that professionally development film some was forced to do with the traditional film. Analogue film would indeed yet be developed in private dark rooms. Many of the 1950s homoerotic photographs are taken with the Polaroid and reflect its possibilities to be a complete private matter.

The photographs of tattooist, pornographer and academic Samuel Steward seem to illustrate an early and interesting use of the Polaroid camera. His images represent a private gay subculture that behind closed doors where they privately posed erotic acts and naked bodies in front of the Polaroid camera. One might argue that his gay photographs are the most distinctive gay photographs of the 1950s due to their extreme sexual signifiers: they denote anuses, anal penetration, sucking and masturbating in a very intense way. And similarly to Warhol, thousands of gay pornographic photographs were found in his private archive after his death in 1993. These images all belonged to his private collection and were never distributed while he lived (Waugh 1996). In the 1950s when most of them were recorded, homosexual acts were still seen as deviant and the images of their acts where illicit and thus viewed as not only dirty but also outlawed (ibid.). As the partouze photographs the interest when producing these photographs was arguably in how the homosexual bodies and homoerotic deviant and unaccepted sexual acts became a visual representation.
I would claim that the photographs were rather rough and mimicked hegemonic ideas of homosexual pleasure as shameful and perverse. The sexual interaction, the causality and entertainment that Steward’s photographs signify illustrates this mimicking. These photographs were never recognized as art (which seems to never have been their purpose neither) and were at their time illegal. As one will see latterly this documenting nature of homosexuals and Steward’s use of the Polaroid camera was 40 years practiced by Warhol and many other contemporary photographers. Steward and his photographic work therefore signify an important beginning of the visibility of homosexual acts and identities.

Photography and homosexuality in the sixties
In the 1960s the relationship between photography and sexuality seems to change. This is the time when Warhol appeared as an artist and started to use the photograph as a part of his art. It can be argued that the visibility of the homosexual at this time excited the closeted private sphere and entered the public sphere. At least to a certain extend. This public representation was presumably a political progress that aimed to challenge the view of the homosexual deviant, which according to Foucault, had circulated in our part of the world since the late nineteenth-century (1978: 36). These images perhaps marks a shift from the earlier illicit perhaps pornographic photographic images, which focus was on the private sexual act,
towards the gay male erotic image with scholarly, social and political agendas. Minority sexualities were dissatisfied with being repressed and viewed as sexual outlaws and deviants. As we further ahead will see this more open visibility of homosexuality become explicit in Warhol’s work. Yet to expand the closet exiting it may be fruitful to explore the two most critical homosexual photographic moments of the 1960s that arguably reinforced the shift.

Perhaps one of the most important photographic moments of homosexual visibility in the 1960s was the magazine Physique Pictorial. Along with many other male magazines such as Vim, Adonis, Drum and Muscles, Physique Pictorial was produced throughout the 1950s and 1960s (Needham 2010). These were mass produced magazines with strong representations of the naked or almost naked male athlete body, with young men posing their strong bodies. Gary Needham writes that the men posed ‘under the guise of classical aesthetics, body building, fitness and health’ (2010: 72). Their bodies were often oiled and their genitalia could often be glanced. For instance, the photograph below is taken from a 1963 edition of Physique Pictorial. It denotes a young man posing in his nude. The first view of the image illustrates a sexual innocent subject. Yet, when reading the image more carefully one might note that it is explicit homosexual.

![Figure 4 Hidden gay identity in Physique Pictorial](Volume 12 Number 3 1963 ©Kinsey Institute)
His gaze is turned away but the spectator is invited to view almost his entire body, including his penis that is turned towards the camera. The image does not signify homosexuality in an explicit way, such as the Polaroids of Steward. One might still yet argue that way in which the man is posing, his nudity, his athlete body, and the notion of that he is posing his body for the gaze of a male reader, provides as sexual appeal to the image. Therefore the homosexual appeal of the magazine is hidden in the context of the magazine as a male magazine about athleticism (see Needham 2010). This is perhaps the reason why Christopher Nealson has referred to the magazine culture as a ‘public secret’. It was secret in the sense that there were no obvious gay denotations of the pictures as the men were represented as masculine, strong and rough, rather than as feminine or as ‘queens’. It was this embedded secret that presumably allowed its visibility of same-sex desire to become a public magazine. Consequently, one might look back and read it as one of the largest photographic moments in terms of representation of gay identity in the Anglo-American culture.

Another interesting mainstream photographic moment of the 1960s was when *Time Magazine* and *Life* in 1964 ran a feature of homosexuality in America with photographs. It was published in June 1964 and applied an in depth article about homosexuals and the history of homosexuality in America. The article was twelve pages long and mostly discussed the migration of homosexuals from smaller towns in America to San Francisco.

![Figure 5](image_url) First page of “Homosexuality in America” (1964 ©Times Magazine)
The ingress of the article says that ‘A secret world grows open and bolder. Society is forced to look at it – and try to understand it’ (2009: 2). What makes the article specifically interesting here is the photographic work that it includes. It introduces itself by posting a rather large image of gay people gathered around a leather gay bar in San Francisco. And the entire article represents photographs of homosexual couples around San Francisco. This was the first time in American history ‘real’, or what the public imagined to be real, homosexuality was represented publically. However, I would claim the intention of the article was rather homophobic as it represented homosexuals as the other which normative society was ‘forced’ to look at and ‘try to understand’ (ibid: 2). It referred the homosexual as ‘deviant’ and the gay world as a ‘sad world’ (ibid: 2). This language creates a distinction between the normative heterosexual and the abnormal homosexual. This is indeed related to Foucault’s writings about homosexuality as a perverse object (1978). Yet the article is although important as a photographic documentary evidence of an existence of homosexual individuals. This evidentiary document represented a gay identity that earlier had not been legitimated to represent publically. It also challenged the stereotype of gay men as queens. Homosexuals could look like ‘men’ in the sense that they were masculine and rough. These challenges were accomplished through the photograph, or more specifically, photojournalism. This is because ‘the photographic image has an existential bond with its object’ (Doane 2007b: 134). It provided a physical real appearance of the real bodies of the subjects portrayed.

The Sexual Revolution

One might note that in the 1970s the relation between photography and homosexuality became more intensified as homosexuality via the photograph became more visible. One of the fundamental reasons for this intensification was the sexual revolution that started with the Stonewall Riots. The Stonewall Riots refers to the year of 1969 when the gay club Stonewall Inn, in Greenwich Village, New York City, resisted to be arrested by the police which had been harassing the club because its gay audience for months. The event resulted in several days of a public riots which since have been recognized as the marker for the beginning of the gay liberation in the United States. Waugh refers to this specific year as ‘the symbolic inauguration of a new era of social and political visibility and of legal and political legitimacy’ (1996: 13). Warhol was not directly involved in the Stonewall Riots or active in

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2 See any writings on homosexuality and art in the 1960s, such as Meyer (2002), Waugh (1996) or Reed (2011).
the sexual revolution. Nevertheless, its inauguration of a new social and political visibility of homosexuality seems to have affected his way of mediating gender and sexuality.

For one might expand on Waugh’s claim and argue that this political and social visibility was expressed in the photographic art of its time. The photograph was in the 1970s given new potential meanings as lesbian and gay cultures started to express their sexuality, politics and culture via the photographic image. As we will see further ahead homosexual artists such as Peter Hujar, Robert Mapplethorpe and Andy Warhol, started to express male nudity and homosexuality explicitly through their photographic art at this time. This was as well the time when the gay and lesbian commercial porno-industry rapidly grew along with the appearance of magazines for gay audiences (Zita Jones 1989). A growing numbers of independent art galleries and venues in particular in San Francisco and New York City also started to appear (Meyer 2002). From being illicit private images, the visualization of homosexuality becomes public and even legal. The 1970s was in other words a time when the photographic representation of homosexuality became more intense and legitimate in realms where it until then had never been present or accepted.

The seventies, the photographic portrait and Robert Mapplethorpe
When discussing the visibility of homosexuality in the 1970s in relation to Warhol’s work the photographic work of Robert Mapplethorpe may be of interest. Mapplethorpe was an American photographer, active 1973 until his death from AIDS in 1989 (Reed 2011). He has become recognized for his controversial and outlawed homoerotic images of sexual acts and outlawed bodies (Meyer 2002) and arguably used the camera to mediate sexuality in a similar way as Warhol. Despite that Mapplethorpe not started to produce photographs before 1973 he had provided visualization to the 1960s gay movement by making magazine covers for certain gay magazine (ibid.). The interesting substance with Mapplethorpe’s photographs in comparison with the earlier images discussed in this chapter so far, is that they were produced and represented homosexuality as photographic works of art. For Mapplethorpe’s images were exhibited in alternative art scenes in San Francisco and New York (Meyer 2002) but were nevertheless not recognized as fine art. Richard Meyer has noted that Mapplethorpe’s photographic art encouraged confidence to make homosexuality and homoeroticism visible, and that most of his art challenged both the suppression of gay visibility and sexuality and censorship (2002: 182-184). With Meyer’s claim as a starting point it might be fruitful to explore Mapplethorpe’s black-and-white Polaroid photographs from the early 1970. In
particular his portraits and sadomasochistic photographs seem to be of interest in regards of Warhol’s photographs.

Mapplethorpe had consumed his first Polaroid camera in 1970. He therefore used his Polaroid in the same time as Warhol and his work appear to present homosexuality and man in a similar manner. Returning to Foucault’s (1978) notion about the view of the homosexual as a perverse individual, one might note that Mapplethorpe’s Polaroids arguably represented characteristics of the homosexual that the dominant and homophobic culture viewed as the deviant and outlawed other. This was accomplished through his way to portray his subjects, their bodies and their sexual desires. Many of his Polaroids were self-portraits and portraits of other (homosexual) men, which focus was on genitalia, anal penetration, masturbating and sucking. Homosexuality and homoeroticism became in other words highly visible and inseparable as the subject’s doing (the sexual act) become his being (his sexual identity). To discuss this claim – the relation between sexual act and sexual identity - lets have a closer look at some of Mapplethorpe’s sadomasochistic portraits.

One may note that Mapplethorpe’s most classic portrait is Brian Ridley and Lyle Heeter (1978). It is a portrait photograph of two sadomasochistic men posing in front of the camera. The subjects are photographed in what appears as a domestic and middle-class room. I would argue that their poses and the setting come into sight as a traditional portrait. For in the field of the portrait in fine art, which arguably becomes most relevant in this debate, the standard definition a portrait is a visual image, most commonly a painting or a photograph, organized around an individual or a group of people (Nancy 2006: 223). The face of the subject, or subjects, is the sole denotation of a portrait, but it can as well display the subject’s entire body (as long as the face is seen) (ibid: 223). Thus it is the face that becomes the fundamental reference of the subject even if the images illustrate the subjects’ entire bodies. Viewing Brian Ridley and Lyle Heeter one could argue that according to the standard portrait definition, Brian Ridley and Lyle Heeter is a traditional art portrait. It is organized around a group of two individuals, their faces are gazing the camera and become the sole denotations of the photograph. The domestic setting and the how the subjects are portrayed further make the portrait somehow identical with a conventional portrait, such as the family or wedding portrait photography. These kinds of portraits have in the realm of art historically been used in bourgeois Western society to provide certain uniqueness to the subjects portrayed by representing the middle-class subject in an ideal way. In regards of the middle-class portrait Tagg writes that the portrait is a ‘sign whose purpose is both the description of an individual and the inscription of social identity’ (1988: 37) (my emphasize).
Figure 6 Unconventional portrait *Brian Ridley and Lyle Heeter* (1979 ©Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation)

Figure 7 Homosexual outlaw by Mapplethorpe *Lou* (1978 ©Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation)
This aura of the portrait has historically been practiced confirm status such as royalty and bourgeois public figures in both the painting and photography (ibid: 37). This claim signify as split as the former emphasize the index of the photograph to resemblance the ‘nature’ of the subject portrayed while the latter urges how the portrait via the context and its significance as a sign ideologically can idealize the sitter and inscript his or her social identity.

Despite of the conventional setting of Brian Ridley and Lyle Heeter one might argue that provokes the traditional fine art portrait. The provocation is reinforced by the identity of the subjects themselves as they appear as a sadomasochistic gay couple. These subjects arguably dispute the conventional portrait by replacing ideal sitters, such as monarchs, with a sadomasochistic gay couple – subject that within the realm of culture are viewed as outlawed. Mapplethorpe arguably declares bourgeois culture and the conventional ideal portrait by replacing the ideal subject with such marginalized subjects. Meanwhile he idealizes the homosexual identity by borrowing a fine art aesthetic and framing his subjects within it. Via the power of the portrait to inscript social identity Mapplethorpe provides Brian and Lyle a social status that they culturally are not provided. One might therefore argue that Mapplethorpe constructed an opposition of the traditional art portrait while he challenges what such portrait culturally means. This disputing way of portraying becomes even more explicit in Mapplethorpe’s Lou (1978).

Lou is a Polaroid photograph by Mapplethorpe of a man penetrating his own anus with a plastic dildo. It is printed in black-and-white and denotes what appears as a black man bending over. He is portrayed from the side and his bottom and anus penetration become the centre of the image. In spite of the sexual act it becomes similar to Peter Hujar’s Bruce de Sainte Croix. The sexual act – the dildo penetrated in the anus- is the fundamental representation of the photograph. However, in comparison with Hujar’s portrait, Mapplethorpe has framed the image so the face is not to be seen. Because of the exclusion of the face Lou is according to the standard definition Lou not a portrait. Nevertheless, I wish to argue that Lou is a portrait and indeed a portrait of a homosexuality. For it insists of the conventions of the portrait but rather than being a portrait of a specific individual, Lou is a portrait of homosexual and a portrait of same-sex desire. It portrays a body whose is recognized as perverse and outlawed rather than normative (see Foucault 1978). Via the photograph and its indexicality, the portrait resembles a sexual experience while it also testimonies the existence of a real homosexual individual. The name of the portrait – Lou -
reinforces this as it arguably insists on that the image references to an identity without revealing their face. In short, as Nancy puts it, an image can via its name reference identity without ‘pictorial identity’ (2006: 224). The name of the portrait reminds us that it is a person and an identity behind the image. Mapplethorpe has replaced the traditional portrait face, with a homosexual act therefore again rewrites the portrait along a homosexual line. *Lou* portrays a body that is not recognized as normative as the sexual norm still signifies heterosexuality. This was arguably to underline the myths of both the traditional portrait and the sexual norms. It was arguably also to allow homosexuality and homosexual identity to become more visible.

Furthermore Mapplethorpe’s portrait of *Lou* notable takes Foucault’s (1978) notion of the sexual act as the determining performance to incline someone’s sexual identity and deviance to its very point. What distinguishes *Lou* from other heterosexual and ‘normal’ men is how he gathers sexual pleasure – the way in which the dildo penetrates his anus. The photograph is beyond homoeroticism. It is the sexual act and the sexual behaviour that becomes the fundamental signifier of the image. In turns one might argue that it becomes the essential signifier for the subject as well. This is because the penetration and the anus is the only information provided. The subject’s face is in other words not seen. This becomes problematic as the face most often becomes the resource that reveals the individual in the discourse of photographic representation (Nancy 2006: 223). What reveal the subject in *Lou* are in this sense the anus and the sexual intercourse. This intercourse – the sodomy act- is what Foucault argued determines ones identity (1978: 42). An identity viewed as forbidden and perverse (ibid: 43). In short, that the homosexual oral or anal act, names and inscribe an individual as a sexual outlaw. Borrowing Foucault’s claims I would argue that what Mapplethorpe here ironically aims to state how the anus of the homosexual male body culturally has become the speaker of his entire identity. *Lou’s* whole persona and character, him as a human subject, is reduced to a (sexual) bodily part. The anal intercourse reinforces this reduction as such penetration is a sodomy act. The camera in this case, as Mapplethorpe ingeniously has identified, documents both what Foucault termed the homosexual act and homosexual identity. For the portrait of *Lou* explores Foucault’s tension – homosexuality in *Lou* is an act, not an identity. Yet the homosexual act often becomes the speaker for one’s entire identity (Foucault 1978). Exploring such concern is indeed Mapplethorpe’s intention. Portraying homosexuality in this manner illustrates the relation between sexual politics and art that was a new phenomenon in the 1970s, and presumably a result of the gay liberation. The photographic works by Mapplethorpe do therefore not only become interesting due to its
connotations in regards of homosexuality and eroticism, but also because it stands as an important example of homosexual visibility in art history as well as the history of homosexuality and liberation.

The eighties, AIDS and Nan Goldin

It seems that the 1980s suggested to new forms of photographic practices. It was indeed an extraordinary time in America as two dramatic events emerged: the political right-wing agenda as well as the AIDS epidemic. Richard Meyer notes that the 1980s conservative ideology affected the photographic visibilities of gender and sexuality (2002). In particular homosexuality, which now had become a more accepted and common theme in art photography and cultural in general, since Stonewall, again experienced difficulties of visibility. The rising right-wing stream attacked gays, lesbians as well as people with colour. This was an ideological attack (not physical) that politically and culturally reflected the entire American society (Meyer 2002). At the very same time the AIDS epidemic arrived. AIDS, which became strong associated with sexuality, in particular homosexuality arose as a moral panic. The liberation against discrimination based on sexuality and race, which the American culture had fought for experienced a backlash. Ideas that sexual intercourse belonged in the private sphere, ideas of patriarchy and racial ideologies against in particular Afro-Americans, seemed to circulate within culture. Certain bodies and cultural groups were in other words suffering (Reed 2011).

Yet it seems that these conservative and discriminating ideas were culturally criticized and disputed. Sex wars of pornography, censorship, gay and lesbian civil right movements, and the AIDS epidemic made the appearance of a new political strategy, which resisted the right-wing agenda (Reed 2011). A strategy today recognized as queer theory. In this sense queer theory arose as an oppression and dispute against normativity and hegemonic ideas about gender and sexuality within Western society. We perhaps most commonly recognize the notion of queer and queer theory from academic fields such as gay and lesbian studies, post-structuralism, culture studies, and so forth. The however fundamental aim of queer theory is to understand the relations between, gender, sex, and sexuality, in relation to identity, and claims that these categorizes to a certain extent are discursive rather than biological (see Sedgwick 1990). This theory was (is) influenced by Michel Foucault’s theories of sexuality, discourse and power (1978). And as Foucault, queer theory aims to challenge the naming of identities and individuals via personal activities, such as sexual interaction with same sex bodies and cross-dressing. Certain American photographic works
that mediated gender and sexuality in the 1980s and 1990s arguably appear as expression of the ambitions and aims of queer theory. These works also seem to have legacies in Warhol’s early queer tactics and the history of sexuality in photography. The work of Nan Goldin seems to be of interest in relation to these concerns.

Nan Goldin is an American photographer who between 1972 and 1992 photographed the lives of the post Stonewall gay culture in New York - a culture that she herself was a part of (Goldin 2000). In 2000 the rich collection of black-and-white and coloured photographs was published in her photo-book *On the Other Side* that notably embraces Goldin’s most interesting works when discussing the subject matters of gender and sexuality. The photographs of the book mediate an intimate reading of the lives of these individuals who have allowed the camera of the photographer to enter their personal lives. Liz Kotz writes this mediation of the real life of the subjects within the photograph can be identified within the genre of ‘personal photography’ (1998). Personal photography has been termed as ‘insider documentary’ or ‘subcultural photography’, which Kotz notes to be the definition of the photographs of Nan Goldin (ibid: 204). These photographic terms indicate to a certain photographic method where the photographer enters a group, surveillances it and almost characters her- or himself as an insider of such group (ibid.). This group is often outside the mainstream. In this sense the photographer can gather a certain relation to the subjects to perhaps capture the real intimate view of his or her life. Reading *On the Other Side* as insider documentary certainly allows us to view and interpret the real lives of the gay culture that Goldin entered. Following the documented subjects provides a history of a subcultural group which through the photographs ‘tells us’ the truth of their life story: the story of their gay culture, the story of suffering from AIDS, the story of gay emotions, and so forth. Goldin thus provides us a representation of gay identities that are viewed as outsiders of the dominant culture. I would add that what makes her story telling extra ordinary, and perhaps more truthfully, is that the culture that Goldin mediates is her own. Her photographs can in this be interpreted as a self-representation.

In regards of representations of marginal gay cultures, Goldin’s perhaps most interesting photographs is *Taboo in the Bathroom* (1991). *Taboo in the Bathroom* signifies two men standing in a bathroom. One of the men is standing with the back towards the camera and his face is not to be seen. The second man is starring straight into the camera while holding one of his hands on the other man’s shoulder. He is wearing make-up – the strong colour of his lipstick and the sold line of make-up around his eyes indicates that these men are cross-dressers.
They are men dressing out as women - they are queer men. *Taboo in the Bathroom* as a representation of homosexuality is not based on outlawed eroticism and sexual scenes, but of sexual identity, hence gay identity. I would note that this identity becomes expressed via emotions and the relation between the two men. In contrary to the homosexual denotations in Mapplethorpe’s *Lou* the men in *Taboo in the Bathroom* illustrates their same-sex desire via emotional intimacy rather than anal penetration. Their sexuality is therefore not defined solely by their sexual acts but their identity. *Taboo in the Bathroom* thus challenges the dominant idea that sodomy, the homosexual act, determines the identity of the homosexual subject. Meanwhile it merges the ideas of queer theory into the realm of art.

**Contemporary outlaws as fine art photography**

In our contemporary Western culture it seems that art photography concerned with representations of gender and sexuality outside the realm of normativity has come a longer way. Thomas Waugh writes that it is not until recent times, the last decade, that art that represents gender and sexuality in a way which falls outside the norm have gathered within ‘the sanctuary of high cultural aesthetics’ (1996: 59). This means that bodies of struggle that might not be categorized within the social norm, such as homosexuals or gender outlaws, are more commonly represented and legitimated in the realm of fine art and has gathered a larger...
position in art criticism. In this regard Waugh therefore notes that ‘a canon has been created’ (ibid: 59). This is a canon of photographic arts that signifies bodies and sexualities which dominant culture view as clandestine. One contemporary photographer who explicitly demonstrates what this canon signifies is Catherine Opie as her photographs notably challenge dominant discourses of gender identity and sexuality in a similar matter as earlier work discussed here and seem to have legacies to Warhol’s queer tactics in presenting homosexuality. Despite the challenging nature of her work it has nevertheless entered the realm of fine art. In 2008-2009, for example, her collections Beeing and Having (1991), Portraits (1993-97), and so forth, were exhibited and the Guggenheim Gallery in New York (Guggenheim 2012), and in 2011 her photographic art was exhibited at the Istanbul Biennale (Stephen Friedman 2012). Yet to explore her work and her representation of gender and sexuality in the context of this thesis her self-portrait Pervert (1994) might be of interest.

*Pervert* denotes a mediation of what appears as a portrait of a sadomasochistic woman. The photograph is a self-portrait and denotes Opie sitting on a chair half-naked posing in front of the camera. Her face is covered with a sadomasochistic black mask and she is wearing black-leather trousers. Opie’s arms are covered with piercings and the word *pervert* is scarred into the skin of her upper chest. Her upper body and breast are naked and visible, she is over weighted, sadomasochistic. These denotations in combination with the rather physical pain of the image reinforced by the sadomasochistic equipment and the title *pervert* itself make *Pervert* appears as a sadomasochistic pervert and gender outlaw. As the portraits by Mapplethorpe it therefore seems that Opie challenges the conventional and ideal portrait of the body. Similar to *Lou* the pervert’s face is not seen. The s/m body and the clothing have become the only signifiers for the subject’s body. They therefore have been the denotations that inscribes the social identity of the subject.

With the outlawed and sadomasochistic representations of the female body one might note that *Pervert* disputes normativity and sexual oppression. For the way in which the female body and sexuality is represented is a threat to conventional ideas of the body and sexuality - the image illustrates a sexuality which dominant culture view as abnormal. This is essentially arranged via the photograph’s reference to sadomasochism - which notably is an intentional reference to the photographic homosexual art discourse of the seventies and the portrait by Mapplethorpe. Despite that the photograph do not denote sexual acts the reference embeds eroticism into the image. And as anal penetration, s/m has been grouped in the very bottom in the sexual hierarchy.
Expanding Foucault and his earlier writings on sexuality and sodomy Rubin writes ‘virtually all erotic behaviour is considered bad unless a specific reason to exempt it has been established’ (2011:148). And ‘the most despised sexual castes currently include transsexuals, transvestites, fetishist, sadomasochists, sex workers such as prostitutes and porn models (…)’ whereas ‘natural’ sexual behaviour should be heterosexual, marital, reproductive, coupled and should occur at home (ibid: 149-151). Individuals involved with behaviours that are not viewed as ‘natural’ or ‘normal’ are subjected to a ‘presumption of mental illness, disreputability, criminality, and so forth (ibid: 149). Their sexuality is in other words viewed as abnormal and even disordered. Pervert is indeed a sexual sinner and challenges the normative ideas of the female body and sexuality as reproductive, heterosexual, feminine. The body of Pervert appears as lesbian and sadomasochistic and it has been argued that in dominant culture sadomasochism is viewed as a sexual crime that is not committed by normal people (ibid: 169). Pervert is therefore a body of what culture identifies as a fugitive and abnormal female body. Opie’s body has fallen outside the norm of sexuality as well as the
norm of the female body. This challenging representation of *Pervert* confirms that the photographic portraying of the body, gender and sexuality refers back to earlier tactics of presenting sexual struggles while it underlines that sexuality is still under oppression. The female body of *Pervert* is yet not viewed as culturally normative but its entrance and existence in an fine art sphere which such bodies historically not very often has been viewed, illustrates that that norms of gender and sexuality are intertwined and challenged within the contemporary art photograph.

*Figure 10* Warhol’s *Thirteen Most Wanted Men* (1964 ©Andy Warhol Foundation)
**Warhol’s *Most Wanted Men* (1964)**

Whereas the preceding part has aimed to discuss the representation of gender and sexuality in the photograph historically this part will finally enter the debate about Warhol’s notably early queer tactics in terms of presenting men and homosexuality. For it appears as many of the artists discussed above are legacies of some of these particular tactics. This tactics are based on my assumption that Warhol saw something he desired in the photographs – that he had recognized the political and social capabilities of the photograph to both resemble and testify the existence of homosexual bodies and identities. In order to debate this concern I will explore Warhol’s rather early work *Thirteen Most Wanted Men* (1964). It seems to be of significance as it has gathered very little attention in the realm of art history and art criticism. How it seems to mediate homosexuality, men and intended queer statements further makes it an interesting work to debate.

*Thirteen Most Wanted Men*, henceforth referred to as *Most Wanted Men*, is a silkscreen of a larger mural of mug shots of thirteen men who were wanted by the police. The silkscreen was made in 1964 when Warhol was invited by the architect Philip Johnson to take a part of the World’s Fair in New York City, and to decorate the façade of the New York State Pavilion (Meyer 2002). Warhol had taken the shots from an outdated New York City Police Department brochure titled ‘The Thirteen Most Wanted Men’ which he had stolen from New York’s public library (Angell 2006: 13). Warhol in other words used the photographs as well as the title from the brochure. As the police brochure, the photographs of the silkscreen *Most Wanted Men* represent standardized portraits of thirteen men. Yet some of the portraits are less standardized. As one might except from the typical mug shot the thirteen men appear as rough, masculine and perhaps even dangerous. One of the men has bruises on his face and many of the men look serious, tough and upset. The choice of black and white reinforces this appearance. And the fact that the thirteen men are ‘wanted by the police’ strengthens the emergence of the men as outlawed and troubling for society. But what is the relation between the work and gender and sexuality.

When exploring *Most Wanted Men* in relation to gender and sexuality one may argue that the work signifies an intended queer statement. Richard Meyer has noted that there is a relation between homosexuality and *Most Wanted Men* (2002). In his important work *Outlaw Representations* Meyer argues that Warhol’s work did as early as in the 1950s typify his art as a way to express desire for the same-sex bodies, and stresses that all of Warhol’s work ideologically empowered the then repressed gay culture and made homosexuality enter the
realm of dominant culture by entering the realm of Art (with a capital A) (ibid.). This entering is accomplished by hiding and smuggling the homoerotic connotations into images that were not suggesting an intent reading of same-sex desire in themselves (ibid.) This smuggling is arguably achieved by relating homosexuality to criminality. For as Meyer claims that the idea of representing passé photographs from the FBI police archive refers to a double entendre of wanted men (2002: 136). The first and obvious meaning of the mural is that the men are ‘wanted’ by the police (which is the intended statement of the original FBI pictures). The second and smuggled meaning is notably that the men are ‘wanted’ by other men. As Meyer puts it: ‘it is not only that these men are wanted by the police but that the very act of “wanting men” may constitute a form of criminality if the wanter is also male, if, say, the wanter is Warhol’ (2002: 137). This latter meaning is to say that Most Wanted Men and its representation of wanted discloses homosexual desire – men wanting men. In this sense one might argue that Warhol has the ability to transform the mundane FBI pictures into queer statements of reading and desire.

Furthermore one may argue that the Most Wanted Men’s reference to criminality addresses the discourse of the homosexual as an outlaw. We have already seen how Foucault underlined the cultural construction of the homosexual as a perverse and sodomite subject (1978). One may indicate that it is this particular discursive view of the homosexual as the outlaw that Warhol expresses in Most Wanted Men. In particular I would argue that the work can be related to the figure of the outlaw homosexual that Leo Bersani has named the anti-communitarien and the anti-normative (1995). With these terms Bersani expands on Foucault’s arguments and writes that the idea of the homosexual as an outlaw is because his erotic behaviour is viewed as a threat toward normative values of family, masculinity, reproduction, and so forth (Bersani 1995). For being gay and being physically involved in sexual gay acts is ‘politically unacceptable and politically indispensable’ (ibid: 76). Individuals involved in such practices or identifies him - or herself as a gay subject is culturally viewed as a person with an outlaw existence and outside the normative society. Most Wanted Men notably challenges the cultural view of the homosexual as an outlaw. How culture has regulated the homosexual as threatening, perverse and the other is underlined by re-presenting same-sex desire as criminal and politically unacceptable. Most Wanted Men in this sense mimics and reveals how dominant culture regulates the gay subject as a sexual outlaw. Again the work therefore illustrates Warhol’s early queer tactics.
Figure 11 Most Wanted Men No. 11 John Joseph H Jr. (1964 ©Andy Warhol foundation for the visual arts)

Figure 12 Rough trade in Blow Job (1964 ©Andy Warhol)
What furthermore is of interest in *Most Wanted Men* is how it mediates sexuality in relation to gender identity. For the way in which the work represents men arguably invites to a discussion of gay men and masculinity. When interpreting the work as a queer statement and the men as homosexuals, the work represents the gay man as masculine. This reading challenges the perhaps most dominant representation and view of the gay subject as feminine, queer, and camp (Waugh 1999). In this sense sexuality culturally determines gender identity and make the social categorizes gender and sexuality interrelated. What arguably makes the men in *Most Wanted Men* appear as homosexuals as well as masculine is how they reference to what has become known as the sixties ‘trade’ and ‘hustler’. Barry Reay explains trades as straight men engaged in homosexual acts, and hustlers as homosexual men who were paid for doing it (Reay 2010). He writes these types belonged to social milieus that represented their own styles and clothing. These styles has changed over time, but in the 1960s there were two codes that dominated: the ‘rough’ or the ‘smooth’ hustler or trade (2010: 207). The clothing of the rough trade of the Sixties was primarily leather boots, belts, blue jeans, caps short sleeve polo shirts and leather jackets (ibid.). The bike boy, the cowboy, the muscle boy, and the surfer were a few of the subtypes the dominated rough trade and hustler subjects (Waugh 1996). The hustler and trade were at this time expressed in the literature and visual arts – and expression that Reay refers to as ‘trade aesthetics’ which in short can be interpreted as the visibility of certain gay styles and milieu of the 1960s (ibid: 188). One may note that the ‘trade aesthetics’ was expressed in Warhol’s work. The rough trade is par excellence expressed in his films *My Hustler* (1965), *Blow Job* (1964), *Bike Boy* (1967), and *Flesh* (1968). While the titles of the films strongly indicates to common trade types – the bike boy and the cowboy – the men and their styles denote the trade and hustler of their time. The leather jacket and hairstyle of the subject, who appears pleasuring from a blowjob, in the film *Blow Job* for instance seem to be a direct reference to the homosexual subject of the sixties.

One might furthermore argue that the rough ‘trade aesthetics’ of the sixties becomes expressed in *Most Wanted Men*. Their roughness, haircuts, clothing and outlaw status as criminals, notably illustrate rough and dangerous gangster masculinity. This dangerous masculine character was among with the bike boys and cowboys an expressed subtype among hustlers and gay men in the American sixties (Reay 2010: 198). The most wanted man number eleven for instance – John Joseph H Jr – illustrates this gangster ‘trade aesthetics’. Despite that the image is a standardized police portrait Joseph H Jr. appears as a groomed and attractive young man. He arguably has a sexual appeal – a sexual trade. His sexual trade is
arguably his roughness as a criminal outlaw – hence a dangerous gangster. His hairstyle and the collar of this jacket further emphasize the trade style of the Sixties (see Reay 2010). Therefore regardless if the men in Blow Job or Thirteen Most Wanted Men were real hustlers or trades or not, the works illustrate that Warhol visualized and represented the gay subject of the sixties par excellence in his film as well as photographic works. In this sense we can note that that the homosexual imaginary was not a hidden or smuggled homoerotic connotations, as Meyer argued (2002). Rather homoeroticism and the gay subject are explicitly exhibited in the body of Warhol’s work – they signify the sixties trades and hustlers. For the leather, the dangerous gangster appearance, the roughness, and so forth, were all publically known gay characteristics and gay styles of the American sixties (Reay 2010). The choice of representing the police portrait is in this sense two folded – it challenges how dominant culture regulates the gay subject as the outlawed other, and disputes how the gay man culturally is viewed as feminine.

**Censorship**

The history of photography is arguably also the history of censorship. It was when the photograph was invented questions of censorship were intensified. One may therefore argue that it was the medium of photography that gave rise to the idea of censorship. Gender and sexuality, indeed, became themes that already in the nineteenth century were tabooed, and questions when photographically represented visually. Nakedness and eroticism had of course already existed within the art world for centuries in the traditional oil painting (Berger 1972) but the indexical appearance of the ‘real’, which the photographic print offered, made the viewer look right at the acts and bodies of real people (Williams 1995). This was one of the fundamental qualities of the mechanical invention of both photography and film. Waugh argues that what makes these mediums particularly interesting for censors are how they visualize ‘the actual victim, criminal, and pervert’ (1996: 12). Through this visualization ‘you may have legal proof of the crime’ (ibid: 12). The indexicality of the image, in other words, functions as a testimony of both the existence of the victim, criminal and pervert, as the photograph became legal evidence according to Waugh (1996). This indexical photographic discourse to function as a legal proof of criminality and to censor perverts, has arguably been used against visualization of gender and sexuality, in particular homosexuality. The art world illustrates one realm where this is exercised. Perhaps the most recent example of censorship and sexuality, in particular homosexuality, in the realm of art
was the exhibition *Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire* at Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery in 2010 (Katz 2010). The exhibition looked at art history from a homosexual perspective and illustrated images – in particular portraits – of bodies and subjects that arguably are not often represented in the realm of fine art. Nevertheless, much of the work was never exhibited as it was censored due to its sexual denotations (ibid.). This illustrates that sexuality is still regulated and oppressed in the realm of art as works with homosexual denotations is neglected in our contemporary culture. *Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire* was too queer for art criticism.

Censorship is yet not a new phenomenon in the realm of art, in particular not when discussing the history of gender and sexuality as photographic mediations. Meyer notes that homosexual connotations have often been censored in the art world (2002). With censoring he does not only refer to covering certain part of an image or cropping photographs to give it different meanings, but also the act of ignoring certain art works by neither discussing them nor publically exhibit them: ‘censorship of visual art functions not simply to erase but also to enable representation; it generated limits but also reactions to those limits; it imposes silence even as it provokes responses to that silence’ (ibid: 15). One might therefore claim that censoring of this kind was, and arguably still is, an attempt to regulate homosexuality. Meyer debates Warhol’s *Most Wanted Men* in relation to censorship, and writes that despite that Warhol was asked to create art for the World’s Fair in New York City in 1964, his *Most Wanted Men* was never displayed. 48 hours due to the opening of the large fair, *Most Wanted Men* was covered with aluminium house paint (Meyer 2002). The covering was (obviously) not carried out by Warhol himself but by a work crew. The wanted men stayed covered with silver during the whole World’s Fair and ‘for several months thereafter’ (Meyer 2002: 130). *Most Wanted Men* was in other words never exhibited. This covering of the work illustrates an act of censorship. Rather than viewing the thirteen men who Warhol once had situated on the building, the spectator could see nothing else but a surface of silver paint. This covering signals censorship: the largest censorship of Warhol’s work (Meyer 2002).

Moreover, the censoring of Warhol arguably illustrates how the homosexual politics of Warhol’s fine art (painting and photography) have been ignored and hidden. The matter that *Most Wanted Men* secretly signifies wanting and desiring ‘rough’ men means that Warhol closeted himself (and his art) in the realm of fine art in order to make it enter. Caroline A. Jones further refers to this censorship of Warhol’s work as an aesthetic of silence that functioned as a closet (1996). Jones reading draws on the work of Eve Sedgwick Kosofsky and her influential theory of epistemology of the closet (1990). Kosofsky defines the closet
and ‘closetedness’ in relation to sexuality as a ‘performance initiated as such by the speech act of a silence … a silence that accrues particularity by fits and starts, in relation to the discourse that surrounds and differentially constitutes it’ (ibid: 3). Jones argues that the homosexual connotations of Warhol’s work have since he became a celebrated Pop Artist in the 1960s, experiencing this constituting of silence, and writes:

The vibrating secret in Warhol’s closet, the unmentioned crime (SILENCE) that linked him imaginatively with both “beautiful boys” and “wanted men” (in their unlucky collections of thirteen), was both homosexuality and homosociality – the “love that dare not say its name” in homophobic America (1996: 260).

With these words Jones notes that that the silencing of the sexual discourse of Warhol’s art forces him into a closet where homosexuality is quietened and hidden. Jones is however not concerned with who made the closeting but rather to examine the aesthetic of silence in regards of Warhol’s work, which she claims to be an obvious act to hide any homosexual iconographies. This secretly hiding was accomplished by closeting any signs of sexuality, such as Warhol’s wanted men as they ‘draw on homophobic energies’ (ibid: 256). The censoring and silencing of Warhol’s photographic work in the 1960s, is in other words tied to social discourse of sexuality where homosexuality were situated outside the norm and seen as sodomy. In this sense, the silencing of such art was a homophobic act carried out by a dominant culture that strived to keep sodomy acts and gay identities outside the world of fine art, and society in whole.

Nevertheless in contrast to the silencing of the homosexual politics of his earlier photographs and paintings, Warhol’s films were not censored. From the 1963 and until his death Warhol produced manifold of ‘underground’ films, many with explicit homoerotic connotations and the significance of homosexual politics (Grundmann 2003). His films such as Morrissey, Flesh, My Hustler and Blow Job all explicitly represent homoeroticism, same-sex desire and sexual acts. In ‘Cockteaser’ Waugh writes that the ‘elaboration of homoeroticism was a primary discourse of his films’ in the 1960s (Waugh 1996: 51). As a filmmaker he explains Warhol as a ‘cockteaser’ and as a ‘true pornographer’ (ibid: 51). Despite the distinct homosexual expressions within his films, they were neither silenced nor closeted in the way as his Thirteen Most Wanted Man. In this sense one can note that the censorship of homosexuality operated differently in his fine art objects compared to his films. Without starting an analysis of Warhol’s filmmaking, it might be worth noting that the reason
for this is that his films were directly aimed for an underground gay audience. It was in this underground world they to a certain extent circulated. The teases and pornographies of the films however never entered the realm of fine art: it stayed hidden and closeted in the New York underground. It did nevertheless not stay there forever. In Chapter 5 I will discuss how explicit iconographies of pornography and ‘cockteasing’ is expressed in Warhol’s photographs. Photographs today viewed as art: fine art.

This chapter has illustrated how intense the relationship between gender, sexuality, and the photographs has been since the appearance of the photographic device. It has been discussed how the photographic representations of gender and sexuality have been practiced political as well as social. Via a Foucauldian tradition as place of development it has been illustrated how these representations challenge the cultural discursive interrelation between the homosexual act and the homosexual identity (see Bersani 1995). As the photograph is indexical as well as ideological it has the power to mediate gender, sexuality and intimacy. It has therefore throughout history been used to mediate and express same-sex desire and homosexual subjects to dispute cultural constructed ideas of the gay subject. Because the gay subject has not until recent times have been neither culturally nor legally accepted – but rather viewed as perverse and outlawed. Viewing the photographic work by Goldin, Mapplethorpe, Opie, and so forth, one can affirm that representing homoeroticism, gay cultures and gender outlaws has through history embodied struggles of visibility and struggles of being accepted within the societal norms. Warhol’s early photographic art indeed identified the capabilities of the photographic image and challenged such notion through his mediations of same sex desire. As it will turn out this illustrates the beginning of the significance and politics of Warhol’s photographs. Yet before entering the analysis of his work more in depth I will in the following chapter aim to write the history of Warhol’s recording practices. For it appears that his investment and use of the recording device correspond to a broader context of his investment in queerness and sexuality. Warhol’s own identity and practices therefore seems to become important to examine his late photographic work impact of concepts of gender and sexuality.
3. Warhol, Recording and Sexuality

For me, the most confusing period of the sixties was the last sixteen month. I was taping and Polaroiding everything in sight, but I didn’t know what to make of all of it.

-Andy Warhol (and Hackett 1980: 365)

Introduction

The previous chapter aimed to explore representations of gender and sexuality in the history of photography, and debated how the photograph over time has been used ideologically to mediate homosexual identities, gay bodies, and same-sex desire. Whereas the preceding chapters has aimed to theorize and discuss the contexts and discourses which will become vital when analyzing the photographic work by Warhol this chapter enters the analysis of Warhol himself and his investment in recording. As a place of development of this analysis this chapter will aim to explore the acts of recordings across Warhol’s work. It appears that Warhol was obsessed with recording from the early 1960s until his death in 1987 – regardless what medium he used, and it seems that this obsession is of significance when exploring how Warhol’s photographs affect concepts of gender and sexuality, as well as how his photographs correspond to Warhol’s investment in recording, mediation and queerness. The focus in this chapter will therefore not be on the meanings of Warhol’s photographs as matters of representations. Rather I will examine his role as a photographer and the relationship between his and his film, photography and audiotape devices. The first part of the chapter will define Warhol’s acts of recordings and question the meanings of his use of these devices. It will be argued that one of the politics of obsessively use of the recording apparatuses is that it empowered him to remove himself from authorship. It will further

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discuss that these politics are interrelated to the themes of gender and sexuality and that Warhol via his devices could document and collect visual evidences of sexuality, for via his recording apparatuses Warhol could document sexuality and sexual acts.

**Warhol behind his camera**

Warhol was obsessed with recording. It has been noted that he throughout his career he was involved with manifolds of recording devices he had left a large collection of films, thousands of photographs, and endless hours of recorded tapes (Petersen 2011). Michelle Bogre writes that ‘By the late ‘70s it had become a second nature to him and he would rarely leave the house without a few rolls of film, his camera, and his tape recorder’ (1985: 312). Yet this second nature started already in 1962. Warhol’s first use of to the photographic recorder was the automated and public photo-booth. During the spring of 1962 he started to bring his subjects to the automated machines in New York City penny arcades, and told them to pose in front of the mirror in which the automated camera was hidden behind. The subject could therefore view herself when posing for the photographs. Many of these photo-booth strips were used as a template for his silkscreen canvases including the well-known ones of Ethel Scull and Holly Solomon, who were two of his first subjects portrayed with the photo-booth. Holly Solomon has explained her experience in the photo-booth with the following words:

Andy took me to 42nd Street. I had 20 dollars worth of quarters. We went to all the photo-booths in the arcade and we picked out a machine, and I started taking the pictures. He was terrible aware that the photo booth allowed a person to be personal and unrestricted. You closed the curtain and you could kind of play-act. He told me to do what I wanted and when I was finished he’d meet me at the Factory’ (Solomon quoted in Alexander 1995: 101).

This illustrates the process behind Warhol’s photo-booth images - a process that seems to have been both casual and personal. For the subject was allowed to what they wanted in front of the camera. And the photo-booth per se is rather intimate and private as the subject is alone and hidden behind the curtains. This is perhaps a reason why Solomon found the process personal and unrestricted. Meanwhile the photographs were also un-authentic as Warhol neither controlled the subject nor the photographic device himself. He left the subject in the
photo-booth and informed them to later bring the photographs to the Factory. Nevertheless, they were still viewed as photographic work by Warhol. Photographs that he used to create some of his most celebrated silkscreen canvas works. The photo-booth portraits of Holly Solomon, for instance, became the template for the famous silkscreen canvas *Holly Solomon* (1964). Warhol as well often positioned himself alone or with friends in the booth and allowed the automatic camera to capture a rich collection of self-portraits.

*Figure 1* Photo-booth strip of Ethel Scull (1964 ©Andy Warhol)
Warhol took an enormous collection of photo-booth photographs. Most of them were never displayed but stayed in his private collection until his death (Peterson 2001: 111). Yet the photo-booth allowed him to take instant photographs without any professional knowledge of the camera apparatuses - it was fast and easy. It was automatic and effective as it gave him a large selection of portraits of his subject in a matter of a few minutes without even owning or managing a photo camera. Therefore these photographs ‘mark the first instance of Warhol making multiples using a medium that is completely photographic’ (Ganis 2004: 11). As it will turn out, they also mark the beginning for two decades of Warhol’s portrait work.

In 1971 Warhol bought his first Polaroid camera. It was a Polaroid Big Shoot portrait camera that was introduced on the market the same year (Peterson 2011). It appeared as an affordable and convenient camera that everyone could use and perhaps therefore became the camera for amateur photographers. Warhol was yet not the only artist who was working with the Polaroid in the 1970s. Helmut Newton, Robert Mapplethorpe and Factory member Brigid Berlin, to name a few, as well worked with the Polaroid as a form of art photography at this time. After consuming his first Polaroid Warhol took it with him almost wherever he went and used it to photograph many moments of his daily life. It seems as it stayed this way until his death in 1987. From 1971 to 1987 Warhol had taken close to 40,000 Polaroid photographs (Petersen 2011: v).

The Polaroid Big Shot became the most important camera for Warhol to portrait his subjects. He photographed most of his subjects in his Factory studio, but many were as well portrayed people on the streets, in hotel rooms and private residences. These portraits became the source for most of his silkscreen paintings. When transforming the images into silkscreen he made them larger and transformed them into a photo silkscreen, which he situated on a canvas (40-by-40 inch). He then situated a flat colour layer onto it and sometimes finished it with some colour paint, using a brush or his fingers (Petersen 2011: vi). The very same camera was, furthermore, indeed also used to photograph people on parties, sexual acts, celebrities, material objects, and of course, himself. In the years 1971 until 1987 Petersen writes that ‘Warhol photographed as many as many as thousand sitters, producing tens of thousands of Polaroids all in the same format, virtually all made with the Big Shot’ (2011: vii). Despite that Warhol used many diverse Polaroid cameras he enjoyed his Big Shot camera as much that he kept consuming and using it long after it went out of production from the Polaroid Corporation. In the late 1970s Warhol as well started to use other amateur cameras. The German 35 mm cameras seemed to have interested him the most and
throughout the 1970s and 1980s he had consumed and actively used both a Minox EL, Konica C35 AF and a Chinon 35F-MA (Peterson 2010: ix-x). As these cameras were of miniature style Warhol referred to them as his spy cameras and the first time he used them he reported them to be ‘so great’ (quoted in Colacello 1990: 16). With photographs taken with his 35 mm cameras Warhol released three books of his: Exposures (1979), America (1985) and Party Book (1988). These images were therefore shared publically before his death. This was a contrast to his Polaroids that were kept for his own privacy until recent times (Petersen 2011).

Nevertheless, the camera device was yet not the only recording device Warhol obsessively maintained. In 1965 Warhol consumed his first tape recorder. Using the recording apparatuses Warhol could leave his art unedited and raw – something it seems that he found significant. The most implicit tape recordings by Warhol, was his telephone conversations with the lesbian Factory member Brigid Berlin. Until his death Warhol had recorded more than fourteen hundred hours of their telephone conversations (O’Pray 1989). In his writings in POPism Warhol himself has referred to his tape practices with these words: ‘Since I wasn’t going out much and was home a lot in the mornings and evenings, I put in a lot of time on the phone gossiping and making trouble and getting ideas from people and trying to figure out what was happening – and taping it all’ (and Hackett 1980: 367). This indicated to Warhol’s interest in the gossip, the social and happenings and making trouble - activities that it seems like the recording device empowered him to practice. He also emphasized his perhaps intimate relationship with his tape-recorder when he in the sixties referred to it as his wife (Jones 1996) that arguably illustrates that the relationship had become so intense as he identified it with a marriage.

Warhol found the recorded tape material so significant that he transcribed some of his recorded tapes in the late 1960s. This was however only a limited amount. One of the results of such transcribing was his less discussed book A: a novel (1968). The novel is 451 pages of unedited conversations and random sounds tape recorded in the 1960s Factory. A: a novel therefore appears a transcript rather than a novel. It was however not Warhol’s tape recordings although that the novel was entitled his name, it was recordings by Factory member Ondine. In Popism Warhol explains: ‘Those Ondine tapes were collected to make a book, a, which Grove Press brought out in at the end of ’68. We called it a “novel by Andy Warhol” but it was actually just transcriptions of all the Ondine tapes’ (and Hackett 1980: 362). Yet the novel illustrates that Warhol and his realm used his tape recorder to observe and mediate the world around him. And by transferring the recordings into a novel as well
emphasizes that Warhol indeed found significances in the un-edited a raw material. The photo apparatuses and the tape recorder seems however not to have been enough for Warhol.

During the summer in 1963 Warhol started to make films. He continued making films until 1968, by then he had produced over 650 films (ibid: 4). 500 of those films were his three minutes long portrait films. It seems as he used his film camera with the same purposes as the photographic and tape recording devices. For as his other recorded works Warhol produced an extreme amount of films. In POPism he emphasized this: ‘We were shooting so many, we never even bothered to give titles to a lot of them. Friends would stop by and they’d wind up in front of the camera the star of the afternoon’s reel’ (and Hackett 1980: 112). Warhol’s emphasize is presumably a reason why his filmography contains over 230 hours of recording, which consist of hundreds of three minute individual film portraits, individual reels, silent films, unreleased features, and more than sixty released titles. Some of his most famous titles are Chelsea Girls (1966), Sleep (1963), and My Hustler (1965). Most of his films ‘casually intimidate portraits and “home movies” of friends’ and illustrate ‘lack of action and increased duration’ (Angell 2006: 13). When Warhol made films he turned his 16mm Bolex camera on, and allowed the film reel until it was finished. Some of the recordings lasted for longer than 20 hours (Sleep and Empire), and most commonly the un-edited material would become the final product. The un-editing seems to have become a part of the Warholian aesthetic that as one will see have traces in his photographs as well as his tape recordings. Via his diverse devices he could record and mediate life as it occurred in reality. With an overview of Warhol’s recording practices this part has illustrated that Warhol obsessively recorded his social world around him for almost three decades. His devices became a central part of his persona and an important part of his art works. With and awareness of his recording obsessions and his use of the recording devices, the following part will debate the relationship between Warhol and his acts of recordings film, photographs and audiotapes.

**Warhol the machine**

One may note that Warhol’s eccentric acts of recordings and obsessions are of significance. When exploring his acts I prefer to his own performance as an operator. This may confuse with the common definition of performativity in queer and gender theory that indicates to the performativity of gender and sexual identity (Butler 1990). One of the leading scholars who debates such theories is Judith Butler who writes that ‘gender reality is created through sustained social performances’, and that femaleness and maleness are ‘performative in the
sense that the essence of identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means’ (ibid: 136, 141). When debating Warhol acts of recording I however refer to the idea of performance as a ‘public presentation or exhibition’ (Waugh 2000: 252). I will in other words examine Warhol’s recording practices in relation to his public presentation and social exhibition.

Reading Warhol’s obsessive recording acts one may inquire the politics of recording for three decades. Why did Warhol constantly record and photograph people and the world around him? With this question in mind, one may recall Warhol’s own acknowledgement ‘I Want to become a machine’ (quoted in Grundmann 2003: 27). His constant use of the diverse technologies and mediums in his mode of recordings illustrate his machinery emphasizes. Becoming a machine – a recording machine – Warhol could constantly record his social realm. Warhol was of course not less human than anyone else, but by viewing himself as the ‘machine perfected’ he could identify himself with technologies. The idea of Warhol as the ‘machine perfected’ comes from Thierry de Duve who underlines how Warhol replaced the traditional painter by a machine, which Baudelaire has expressed as a fear with the appearance of the photographic device (1989: 10). De Duve writes that while the machine threatened artists in the 1960s and 1970s, as it challenged art as ‘handcrafts’, Warhol allowed it to supplement his art productions (ibid.). Via his use of technologies, the duplicating of images, and so forth, Warhol did not only become empowered by the machine – ‘he was a machine’ (ibid: 10). De Duve sure adds that being a machine was Warhol’s psychological desire (ibid.).

Becoming a recording machine it may be argued that Warhol could remove himself from authorship. For via his diverse technologies he seems to decline his responsibilities for the works that he created. He also declines himself as a traditional artist who he replaces with a machine. In photo-booth photographs, for instance, has lost the credibility of Warhol as the author as Warhol himself did not take the photograph nor controlled the photographic process – the photo-booth per se and the subject portrayed produced the image. Indeed his recorded works - the films, the tapes and the photographs - are all produced by technologies and not by an artist. And via technologies he could produce enormous amounts of works – 40,000 Polaroid images certainly as well illustrates this. These dramatic amounts indicate a mass production of recorded material and in turns mass production of art. In this sense one may note that Warhol challenges art and ‘handcraft’ and replaces the notion of traditional art with repetitions, seriality, hours of un-edited sound recordings, films without narration, and endless of photographs of everyday life. With Warhol as the ‘machine perfected’ in mind the
following part will discuss the politics of recording, documenting the real and sexuality. For becoming a machine appears to be of significance.

**Documenting sexuality**

Besides removing him from authorship one could argue that Warhol obsessively recorded to document and collect visual evidences of sexuality. In his recent writings on Warhol’s photographs Peterson argues that ‘Warhol sidesteps the question of art, emphasizes instead the documentary recording nature of the medium (2011: x). Petersen’s notion appears to be of interest when exploring the politics of Warhol’s acts of recordings. This is for he underlines that Warhol’s photographs are documents rather than objects of art. He therefore underlines that there is a distinction between the photography as a document and the photography as art. One may note that Warhol’s acts of recording – from the photo-booth until the Polaroids in the 1970s - emphasize the documentary nature of Warhol’s work. His personal ambitions indicate a similar statement as he in *Popism* himself has written that one of purposes for constantly carrying a recording device was because it allowed him to record ‘every real moment’ (Warhol and Hackett 1980: 138). It therefore comes into sight that he carried his camera to document reality – he had recognized the indexicality of the photograph to appear as truthful mediation of the real world. Consequently one may argue that most of Warhol’s films and works emphasizes the nature of document film and photography.

In photograph criticism the document photography is its own genre that differ from the art photography as it rather than claiming aesthetic value urges to come into sight as a truthful mediation of the real world (Nichols 1991). Analyzing documentary film and photography, Bill Nichols has explored the relationship between documentary and the real and has underlined that the ‘documentary uses the *indexical* relation to the historical world. It grounds itself in evidence that cannot be witnessed as it happens, on a first-hand basis, more than once’ (ibid: 116). This illustrates arguments already discussed in chapter one as well as chapter two that the photograph *minics* the world of vision mechanically and directs us to interpret reality faithfully by re-presenting it. Documentaries in other words desire to provide an image of reality - as a visible evidence of real events and real people. Interpreting the denotations of Warhol’s recording materials one may argue that one of the politics of Warhol’s acts of recording was to document and collect visual evidences of *sexuality*. Homosexuality, sex, transvestites, fag-hags, butches, and so forth are central in Warhol’s recorded works, and in his tape recordings, films and photographs the homosexual subject is.
always present. The visual evidentiary of sexuality among Warhol’s recordings becomes explicit in his Polaroid series *Sex Parts*. The series belonged to Warhol’s private photographic collection and illustrate homosexual acts between nude male actors - oral sex and anal penetrations is the fundamental denotations of the entire images of the collection.\(^3\) For instance the photograph of the blowjob (Figure 2) represents a view of a man ‘sucking’ another man’s penis. Similar to Mapplethorpe’s *Lou* the sexual act becomes the only denotation of the image and it appears as the photograph has photographed and documented that particular act. While the first appearance of the image might come into sight as perhaps pornographic *Sex Parts* arguably has a political dimension to it.

![Figure 2 Blowjob in Sex Parts (1977 ©Andy Warhol Foundation)](image)

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\(^3\) The size of *Sex Parts*, as many of the other Polaroid series by Warhol is still unknown. Even the Andy Warhol Foundation of Visual Arts is unaware of the exact size of the collection. The only images from *Sex Parts* I have managed to find due to my research are the Polaroids exhibited at Rod Bianco in 2010.
When documenting a gay culture Warhol documented and collected visual evidences of gay sex acts and homosexual bodies. For *Sex Parts* have testimonial value as a photograph, it evidences a new imaginary of the male body and sexuality. What arguably would have influenced this nature of documentation are the 1953 Kinsey reports that was a 1948 study of sexual behaviour of human males (Grundmann 2003). Grundmann writes that the aim of the study was to depathologize homosexuality as well as generate ‘a host of statistical data about sex practices of American of all sexual persuasions’ (ibid: 29). The publications of these reports generated a public discourse of sexuality outside the heterosexual marriage and norm that sexual acts were for the sake of reproduction rather than pleasure and intimacy. They challenged these norms of sex as well as challenged certain stereotypes of the homosexual in the postwar American society. In this light, one may suggest that Warhol’s enormous amount of photographic documentations, in particular of sexuality and homosexual acts between men, became a collection with similar functions as the Kinsey reports. For *Sex Parts* did not only allow marginal subcultures enter the discourse of documentation and photography, but also caused the viewing audience to view what kind of subjects who engage in public fellatio. The Polaroid of Figure 2 for instance can perhaps be interpreted as pornographic but its significance arguably lies in how it imaginary demonstrates the bodies and identities behind the homosexual intercourse. Studying the face of the subject viewed illustrates pleasure and desire – same-sex desire. *Sex Parts* in this sense, among many of Warhol’s other photographs and films, aptly refuses the stigmatization of homosexual acts as clandestine and as an act of sodomy. For as the Kinsey reports the images are capable of demonstrating homosexual intercourse and gay subjects in a way that challenges the myth that nonreproductive sex is normative. And through the indexicality of the photograph they can provide a notion of proof of existence of such intercourses. *Sex Parts* indeed also empower the viewer to read the history of sexuality in Warhol’s works. Warhol has in this sense generated a collection of documented visual evidences of homosexuality in the American Seventies.

**Viewing sex**

One might argue that by obsessively record and becoming the ‘machine perfected’ Warhol could hide behind his camera by replacing his human gaze with the mechanical photographic gaze. This gaze can notably be associated with the discourse of the *voyeur*. The term voyeurism was first introduced by Sigmund Freud but has been developed in theories of photography, psychoanalysis, and cinema over time (Wells 2000). In psychoanalysis
voyeurism refers to ‘sexual stimulation obtained through looking’ while the ‘object of the gaze is being unaware’ (ibid: 353, 227). The photograph as a medium appears to invite to this mode of looking. In On Photography Susan Sontag writes that the gaze of the operator of the camera device can perform voyeuristic by photographing sexual and erotic scenes and bodies without being noticed by the subjects of his/her gaze (1977). The camera is a ‘form of participation’ that can be used due to the operator’s interest and desire to experience something (ibid.) This desire may at times be related to eroticism and sexual acts, which Sontag refers to as ‘sexual voyeurism’ (ibid: 12-13). The sexual voyeur is the photographer who secretly and hidden behind the camera participates eroticism through the recording lens:

The camera doesn’t rape, or even possess, though it may presume, intrude, trespass, distort, exploit, and at the farthest reach of metaphor, assassinate-all activities that, unlike the sexual push and shove, can be conducted from a distance, and with some detachment (Sontag 1977: 13).

Sontag’s claim proposes the camera as a tool to exploit and even intrude sexual activities from a distance without practicing any immoral acts such as raping and possessing. The sexual voyeur therefore observes and takes a part of the ongoing acts without making any harm. This is accomplished as he is hidden in his private realm behind the camera gaze. His presence is unknown and his view is secret and private. In her psychoanalytical theories on film and visual pleasure Laura Mulvey has written that the pleasure of looking at another person ‘can become fixated into a perversion, producing obsessive voyeurs … whose only satisfaction can come from watching, a controlling sense, an objectified other’ (1975: 9). She argues that this mode of looking objectifies the subject observed and constructs a split – a dichotomy – between the active viewer and the passive viewed object (ibid: 11). Despite that Mulvey comes from cinema studies, and that her theories are discussed in relation to the representation of the female body, her arguments seem fruitful to discuss in relation to Warhol and his Sex Parts.

One might argue that Warhol’s act of recordings can be associated with voyeurism. Warhol himself once said that he claimed that there were two things one could do with a camera – ‘make the best pornography and spy on people’ (Warhol quoted in Joseph 2002: 12). His performance as a photographer and the mechanical gaze provided by the photo device empowered him to fulfil these two ambitions. Via his use of the Polaroid camera he could secretly observe erotic acts while recording them, hence producing pornography. It
seems here useful to return to *Sex Parts*. In particular the sexual representation of an untitled image from the series responds to my argument. The photograph denotes a man providing another man a blowjob. The focus is on the sexual act itself and only the man who carries the sexual activity is seen. The only bodily part that is seen of the second subject is his penis and upper thighs. The image is certainly not only homoerotic, but explicitly pornographic; it denotes a gay blowjob. It has been noted that Warhol himself captured his entire Polaroid photographs (Petersen 2011). We can therefore assume that Warhol himself photographed the sex scenes of *Sex Parts*. This leads to my assumption that Warhol, once secretly observed as well as recorded the naked subjects, and sexual acts in *Sex Parts*. He observed it through his Polaroid camera lens. To one extend he therefore became an invisible voyeur who presumed, intruded and distorted the gay blowjob. Thus, he objectified the subjects into passive objects and constructed a distinction between him, as the passive voyeur, and *them*.

Nevertheless the relation between the subjects and Warhol challenge the discourse of Warhol as the voyeur. For despite that Warhol has taken advantage of the mechanical gaze and the pleasure of looking, he is not hidden in a private realm, rather he and his Polaroid are present in the sense that the subjects are aware of the recording process. For the blowjob in the Polaroid photograph represents do arguably not only mediate a documentation of a sexual act, but also an intimate relationship between Warhol and the subjects. This is based on the notion that the Polaroid camera has no zoom or any other possible technical actions except but to capturing what the photographer is seeing in real distance. We can thus not only assume, but also determine that Warhol was indeed close to his subjects. The blowjobs, masturbating and homoerotic anal interaction of *Sex Parts*, all take place only a few centimetres in front of camera lens. The subjects in other words know that their bodies and erotic acts are being watched, pleasured and photographed. They are in other words acting and posing their bodies explicitly in front of the Polaroid camera. The awareness of the subjects neglects the claim of Warhol as the voyeur. What I rather wish to argue is that Warhol’s role behind the camera can be associated with the discourse of *exhibitionism*.

Exhibitionism provides a diverse regime of looking and being looked at than voyeurism. In his theories of psychoanalysis and the cinema Christian Metz has argued that film and photography touch on concerns of both voyeurism and exhibitionism (1982: 91). Exhibitionism in film is the voyeuristic alternation of active/passive, object/subject and seeing/being seen (ibid: 94). Voyeurism, Metz adds, ‘rests on a kind of fiction, more or less justified in the order of the real, sometimes institutionalized as in the theatre or strip-tease, a fiction that stipulates that the object ‘agrees’, that it is therefore exhibitionist’(ibid: 62).
Sex Parts the exhibition is the sex scenes and the subjects acting in front of the camera. The viewed subject knows ‘that he is being looked at, wants this to happen, and identifies with the voyeur whose object he is (but who also constitutes him as subject’ (ibid: 94). The entire scene is therefore fictional. This challenges the argument of Warhol as a voyeur as well as the idea of the men viewed and photographed as passive sex objects. The men and their bodies are being viewed and sexually desired by Warhol and his camera gaze. Yet as they agree being gazed and desires being looked at, their sexual bodies are exhibited active subjects who are as active as the voyeur himself. As Sex Parts today are identified as objects of art one might argue that Warhol does not only transform sex and sexuality into art, but also the acts of performing, in this case sexually, being looked at and looking, into art.

This chapter has examined Warhol’s use of the camera apparatuses in relation to his investment in recordings and illustrated that he obsessively recorded the world around him for almost three decades with diverse recording apparatuses. This obsession combined with his utopia to become a machine illustrates another political dimension to his work. By becoming a machine Warhol became a producer who removed himself from authorship. Consequently his mass produced and reproduced work challenged the idea of traditional fine art as a means of ‘handcraft’. The chapter argued that Warhol became the productive ‘machine perfected’ who desired to document and collect ‘visual evidences’ not only of ‘every real moment’ but also of homosexuality and a minority gay culture. The chapter further illustrated that viewing the world through the mechanical camera lens Warhol indeed transformed himself into a homoerotic voyeur who secretly and sexually pleasured and intruded the sexual acts and spied on people. Analyzing his acts of recording in relation to the Polaroid series Sex Parts however illustrates that his photographs can be debates as exhibitionism. The subjects of Sex Parts were aware of the camera and Warhol, and cooperate with the camera by agreeing that it will transform their fictional acts into a visual picture – via his photographic gaze Warhol in other words established a relationship with the subject. This relationship seems nevertheless to be mechanical as well as social – the recording device became the tool to Warhol to enter and intrude sexual and perhaps even social scenes. Interpreting his recording practices today finally illustrates how Warhol transformed un-edited hours of random tape recordings, hours of film reels, sex, and sexuality into art. Exploring Warhol’s photograph performances and his photographic work identifies another central theme of Warhol’s photographic work, a theme that seems to follow
throughout his three decades of photographing - the portrait – that the following chapter will aim to explore in relation to Warhol’s investments in recording, mediation and queerness.
4. Reinventing the Portrait

I only wanted to find great people and let them be themselves...and I’d film them for a certain length of time and that would be the movie.

-Andy Warhol (and Hackett 1980: 138)

Introduction
The preceding chapter explored Warhol’s acts of recordings – his documenting and collecting obsessions – and argued that via his recording practices Warhol could capture ‘every real moment’ as well transforming sex, performing and observing into evidentiary documents and objects of art. Yet to further expand my analysis of Warhol’s photographic work this chapter wish to explore his photographic take on portraiture. Warhol indeed developed his own aesthetics of the portrait – and as one might have noted the portrait becomes central in his photographic work. *The Thirteen Most Wanted Men*, the photo-booth images, ‘Death and Disaster’ all seem to respond to the portrait yet in diverse ways. As a way to further explore the portrait in Warhol’s photographic work further, the chapter will analyze Warhol’s film still portraits *Screen Tests*. Yet as *Screen Tests* are a part of Warhol’s film works, this chapter shifts medium specifically from photography to film. A reason for this shift is that the *Screen Tests* have similar aesthetics and significance to his photographs. It might as well be worth mentioning that the *Screen Tests* are Warhol’s largest work of portraits and has been claimed to be one of his canonical works (Angell 2006). The argument that his chapter will aim to develop is that Warhol reinvents the portrait into the medium of film. In order to examine this reinvention I will analyze of the *Screen Tests* of Ann Buchanan, Lou Reed as they uniquely respond to the portrait in photography. The discourse of the portrait that these tests, and the
"Screen Tests" in general seem to relate to is the discourse of identification portraits. For the film portraits seem to relate to this particular portrait in how they resemblance social identity and the body. While the "Screen Tests" appears to be fruitful to discuss in relation to the portrait, they also seem to respond to previous discussions of homoeroticism among Warhol’s photographic works. The final part of the chapter will therefore aim to expand on previous arguments on homoeroticism by taking a closer look at the film portrait of Paul America.

The Screen Tests

Andy Warhol’s "Screen Tests" is a series of short, black-and-white and silent still film portraits that Warhol produced between 1964 and 1966 (Angell 2006: 12). By 1964 Warhol had produced ‘Death and Disaster’ images, created many silkscreen portraits of celebrities and icons, and collected endless of photo-booth portraits. The screen test is a series containing 472 individual ‘test’ portrait which runs for 32 hours as well as a few film series such as Thirteen Most Beautiful Boys, The Thirteen Most Beautiful Women, Six Months, Fifty Fantasies and Fifty Personalities (ibid: 12). A Screen Test is an individual film still portrait recorded by Warhol’s 16mm Bolex movie camera. The subject is situated in front of the camera, the background is in most of the films white, and a bright light is used to light the face of the subject up. Its conditions were fixed; each test was filmed at the same length: exactly three minutes shot at 24 frames per second (16fps). Yet Warhol slowed their motion down and lengthened their running to approximately four minutes (18fps) (Merck 2012). The subject stays still in front of the camera for the lasting three minutes. Yet in some of the tests, such as the one of Velvet Underground singer Nico, the subjects are smoking, brushing her/his teeth, talking, and so forth, but the body of the subject sits still on chair. Originally The Screen Tests were inspired by the mug shot photographs that Warhol found in a New York City Police Department brochure – the same mug shots were also the source for Warhol’s Thirteen Most Wanted Men (Angell 2006).

All the films are entirely silent. Many of the sitters were artists, painters, dancers, musicians, filmmakers, writers, and people such as Bob Dylan, Susan Sontag, Marcel Duchamp and Salvador Dali are a part of the catalogue. Warhol’s own Factory members and superstars such as Gerald Malanga, Billy Name, Nico, Baby Jane Holzer, Edie Sedgwick, Ingrid Superstar, Brigid Berlin, among many others, were also filmed for tests. "Screen Tests" do in other words signify portraits of rather famous and well-known people from the New York art scene in the 1960s. Yet some of the sitters were also anonymous – speed freaks, fag
hags and other people who simply happened to be in the Factory between 1964 and 1966. The *Screen Tests* were however not the only of Warhol’s films that signified a ‘single isolated figure before the camera’ (James 1989: 68). His films *Eat* (1964), *Blow Job* (1966) and many other film titles of Warhol have the similar aesthetics. Despite of the name *Screen Tests* which refers to the Hollywood term ‘screen test’ these films were never tests reels for Warhol’s films or tests rolls for anything else neither: they were seen as films per se. When Warhol first started to record these films they were referred to as ‘stillies’ or ‘film portraits’ although they were in no technical sense still.

**The Screen Tests as portraits**

In 1964, when Warhol started to produce his *Screen Tests*, he had already produced a large number of photographic silkscreen portraits and an extensive collection of photo-booth photographs. One year earlier, in 1963, he had started to make films of with one star subjects such as *Sleep* (1963) and *Empire* (1964). These films were as the *Screen Tests* still and had no traditional narrative. The take on the portrait Warhol had developed in his earlier works is arguably continued in the *Screen Tests*. In particular the photo-booth portraits, which are some of Warhol’s earliest photographic portraits, as their mechanism and aesthetics appear to be identified in the tests. Angell has written that the photo-booth machine inspired Warhol in regards of the setting of the *Screen Tests*: ‘The photo-booth mechanism - a small room or booth in which a seated poser faces the camera for a predetermined length of time – is remarkable similar to the *Screen Test* set up’ (2006: 13). It appears as this setup, the plain background, the bright light, the camera, the still subject and the silence, become the basic rules for Warhol’s photographic portraits in general – regardless what medium he used. The photo-booth portrait per se and its history of being the photographic mechanism par excellence to produce portraits for identification and passports, may be of interest when discussing Warhol’s portraits here (see Mortensen 2012). It may therefore be fruitful to discuss the portrait here, in particular the discourse of photography and identity in order to examine Warhol’s *Screen Tests*.

The photographic portrait has since the appearance of the camera device been closely related to social identity. In an analysis of Mapplethorpe’s take on the portraiture the argument of the portrait as a sign that idealizes the portrayed subject has already been introduced earlier in this thesis. To further explore such argument in relation to the *Screen Tests* this chapter will benefit from Allan Sekula’s remarkably writings on the field. In his
canonical essay ‘The Body and the Archive’ he argues that the photographic portrait, in particular the identification photograph, is a powerful representation of identity, which the state has invested in since the appearance of the photographic device (1986). He writes that the portrait photography consists of two diverse representative functions as it can be honorifically as well as repressively (ibid: 345). The honorifically function underlines how the portrait for centuries has idealized and acclaimed social status of bourgeois subjects. This is in line with Tagg’s (1988) argument discussed in the second chapter. The repressive function of the portrait in photography however illustrates how the portrait has been used to repress subjects whom have been identified as outside the normative culture. The state has since the appearance of the photography practiced the identification photography as a tool to regulate society as it has used by institutions such as medicine and anatomy to ‘establish and delimit the terrain of the other’ (ibid: 345). This has arguably as well been practiced by the police as the law that has regulated the criminal by photographing and archiving the potential characteristics of the identification of the criminal. The state in the nineteenth century, for instance, constructed the social identities such as the criminal and the deviant via the photographic representation (1986). In the establishing of the other one may add Foucault’s argument that the identity of the homosexual as a perverse individual was as well reinforced by institutional uses of the photographic image (1978). The photograph portrait has in other words been used as a tool to invent social bodies and identities. Portraits are in this sense ideological and can implicitly be ‘placed within and social and moral hierarchies’ (ibid: 347). One might therefore argue that one of the reasons why the photograph has been maintained is to create social differences and distinguish the white, heterosexual, and normative bourgeois subject from the other. The reason why theories of portrait photography as a form of societal identification is defined here, is because the Screen Tests arguably can be interpreted with its potential meanings.

For it may be argued that Warhol reinvents the portrait in his Screen Tests. Most of the Screen Tests appear as exceptional identification portraits. Their faces are centred in the film stills and they are gazing at the camera. There are no other objects of the image except the portrayed face. They therefore radically contrast the unconventional portraits of Mapplethorpe and Hujar. In particular Mapplethorpe’s Lou as it has replaced the face with the subject’s anus and a sexual penetration. For the Screen Tests are manifestly portraits. Among majority of the tests, the test of Lou Reed (1966) emphasizes the traditional portrait appearance.
**Figure 1** Screen Test of Lou Reed (1966 ©Andy Warhol Foundation)

**Figure 2** Screen Test of Ann Buchanan (1964 ©Andy Warhol Foundation)
Nothing but his face and a glance of his shoulder is seen on the screen. As a traditional portrait (according to the standard definition) his faces become ‘a resource on which the look can draw’ (Nancy 2006: 223). His face is centred and he is staring straight into the camera. As the entire film portrait tests, Lou’s is also black-and-white and silent. It arguably becomes a mirror of him as it signatures a real image of him. It testifies his presence in front of Warhol’s Bolex camera in 1966. The test of Lou also reminds us of the id-photographs and perhaps even the mug shot. This might not be a coincidence as a brochure of mug shots was the original source of the tests. The Screen Tests however challenge the bureaucratic identification portrait, and they indeed challenge the police portrait of the criminal. The subject is willing, unlike the forced mug shot, to be portrayed and are therefore not portrayed against their will. For rather than inventing social bodies (such as the criminal) Warhol puts aspects of the social and private life and allows his sitters to be their selves rather than the criminal or homosexual other. In other words, by reinventing the portrait he transforms documentation and regulation of individuals and social identities into art.

The reinvention of the portrait becomes further explicit in the Screen Test of Ann Buchanan. Ann Buchanan was ‘screen tested’ in 1964. The test of her is perhaps one of the most still and intimate tests, it is black-and-white and the background is white. She is framed from the neck up. Her facial impression is neutral and her hair is dark and slightly messy. She still appears as beautiful and rather serious. There is a strong light spotted in Buchanan’s face that becomes pale and perhaps even innocent. What is peculiar with the test is that Buchanan stays entire still throughout the filming; her eyes do not blink one single time and changes in her facial impression are difficult to note. The screen test appears long and when viewing it one is waiting for something to occur. The speed of the Screen Tests also reinforces the portrait appearance. As the films are lengthened they slow down the (rare) movements of the films that make them come into sight as still in the speed of real time. In this sense one might note that the Screen Tests is filmed with a movie camera but appears as photographic portraits. The subject is sitting in front of the camera holding the same pose for three minutes – as a long lasting portrait process. In fact most of the subjects were announced by Warhol to stay still without any movements throughout the film (Merck 2012). He instructed the sitter not to blink, smile, talk, or to make any abundant movements (ibid.). Yet at times some of the subjects started to weep. This was the case for Buchanan. During the filming one can see she starting to shed tears. But why does she cry? It is the tension of holding her eyes open? Or is the emotional patience of being forced to hold a portrait pose in front of the camera lens for the certain amount of time? Regardless of the tears Buchanan yet continues her fixed duration
to stay still, and holds the still pose until the shot is finished. However, the tears rolling down her cheek, have destroy the stillness of the film. The tension combined with the stillness of Buchanan’s test, is imaginably a reason why this was one of Warhol’s favourite tests (Angell 2006).

What moreover becomes interesting when exploring the Screen Tests is the subjects’ self-presentation when being portrayed. The relationship between subject and photography is an important dimension of the portrait that Sekula dismissed in his historical critique of the photograph, as he arguably overemphasizes portrait in relation to ideology and how it has been used to objectify and repress individuals. Criticizing this dimension of Sekula, Mortensen writes that while the portrait photograph indeed has objectified the other it has also via self-representation been used as ‘manifestation of the modern life’ (2012: 17). In this sense one might argue that self-representation cannot be ignored when analyzing the social identity and the portrait, and self-representation is certainly what the Screen Tests is about. To discuss this I will move beyond the photographic image per se and discuss the process of being portrayed and what a portrait can say about the relationship between the subject and the camera device.

In regards of self-representation David James has written that the ‘camera is a presence in whose regard and against whose silence must construct himself. As it makes performance inevitable, it constitutes being as performance’ (1989: 69). What David here seems to propose is that that the process of being photographed – the silence, the facing camera, perhaps the pressure to appear in a certain way on the photograph which is about to be taken – forces the subject to perform and construct the identity which one wishes to represent. This arguably emphasizes the powerful aspect of the photograph portrait, which Mortensen (2012) underlined, as well as the power of the photograph to construct social identities as the subject is empowered to fabricate his or her identity via performance. Screen Tests arguably not only illustrate this fabrication and self-presentation but also reinforce it. For in comparison with the photograph portrait the Screen Tests are portraits that last for three minutes rather than a few seconds. Mandy Merck adds ‘holding one’s pose is meaningful as the camera can investigate the subject’s self-presentation over time’ (2012: 6). This investigation and the forces self-construction appear as becoming the narrative of the Screen Tests. For viewing the tests is like being a spectator of an intimate theatre. Mortensen adds that the photo-booth portrait is like an intimate theatre where subject and ‘behave their identity’ (2012: 205). The behaviour of the tests arguably emphasizes the same operation. Perhaps to no surprise as Screen Tests genuinely referenced to the photo-booth portraying process. Nevertheless, the
theatrical behaviour arguably became more intensified in the Screen Tests as the shooting lasted for three minutes. In comparison with a photo-booth session the Screen Tests therefore also portrays the subjects over time and captures what perhaps happened in between, before and after the four photo-booth shots. Time henceforth becomes meaningful when exploring the tests. By reinventing the portrait into the medium of film, Warhol reinvents time into the photograph portrait.

Time becomes interesting when exploring the performances of the subjects. When viewing the performances there is a radical diversity in how the subjects performed in front of the camera. Marcel Duchamp who sat for three tests gazes around and smoking a cigar. Dennis Hopper performs an emotional test. Bob Dylan who sat for two tests rejects the presence of the camera, ignores gazing it and eventually walks out of the frame to walk back into again. He is still neglecting the camera presence by talking to people behind the camera (not Warhol though). Velvet Underground star Nico creates a beautiful self and seduces the camera with her glamorous look. Susan Sontag, who sat for five tests, is one of tests gazing the camera absolutely still and silent whereas in another test smokes, laughs and keep taking her sunglasses on and off. As there were 472 tests made the examples of performances are endless. Nevertheless these examples arguably demonstrate that although all the sitters were instructed to perform the test similar, they all created their own personal intimate theatres when during their three minutes. The diversity of the performances indeed illustrates that they were forced to construct themselves a self-presentation – a presentation whose meaning was reinforced by the time. Viewing the performances one might argue that there were a relation established between the activity of the subject and his or her awareness. The Screen Test became a public theatre where the private self was constructed and performed. Consequently Warhol’s Screen Tests arguably renews the traditional identification portrait, and its social function to invent and distinguish social identities and bodies, such as the criminal or the homosexual. During the three minutes the subjects could become whatever could perform and construct social identities regardless of who they were.

Meanwhile one might argue that the reinvention of the portrait disputes the distinguishing and construction of social bodies that the repressive portrait generates. Warhol’s sitters do not represent the bourgeois subject. Many of them were a part of the cultural elite of the American Sixties but many of the sitters were also fag hags, drug addicts and homosexuals – subjects that the bourgeois culture for centuries has viewed as the other. I would however argue that Warhol made his less glamorous sitters appear as beautiful and bourgeois subjects. The bright light, the silence and the black-and-whiteness provides a
certain makes the subjects appear as traditional art portraits of photographic portraits that has been used to idealize subjects, rather than identification portraits which has been used to against certain people. This is despite that the set up of the tests refers to the photo-booth that historically has been used to regulate and identify people as it was invented so people easily could take portraits for their passports and identification cards (Mortensen 2012). The contextualizing of the Screen Tests as objects of art is indeed another reason for the glamorizing of the subjects. As works of art they are provided aesthetic value and are no longer considered as evidences or documentation (Crimp 1995). The glamorizing of the portrayed subjects via aesthetic techniques and the discourse of art arguably illustrates how Screen Tests transfers the repressively portrait into a honorifically portrait. What culture views as the other is transformed into a representation of an unrepressed and beautiful subject. This transformation illustrates how the work challenges how dominant culture practices the photographic portrait to discursively construct social identities. Warhol’s marginalized sitters become aesteticized as well as authorized.

The Screen Tests and Homoeroticism

What is further remarkable with the Screen Tests is how they respond to the homoeroticism of Warhol’s works. As it already has been argued via Most Wanted Men, men and homoeroticism are disclosed and expressed in the photographic work by Warhol. Homoeroticism has already in an analysis of Mapplethorpe’s Dancer been debated and defined as ‘the libidinal attraction without sexual expression sometimes even at the level of imagination and feeling’ (Dyer 2002: 3). The desire and sexual pleasure without sexual intercourse seem to be further expressed in the Screen Test series Thirteen Most Beautiful Men. The series was produced during the same year as Thirteen Most Wanted Men as well as Warhol’s explicit homoerotic films Blow Job (1964) and has formerly been claimed to be have been ‘created within an intended for the semiprivate, often explicitly homoerotic world of the underground film’ (Angell 2006: 244). What seems to reinforce the homoeroticism appeal of the films is that it contains seventeen ‘screen tests’ of thirteen men - thirteen beautiful men. Many of these men were perhaps by no coincidence openly homosexuals. For instance Gerald Malanga, Warhol’s then lover Philip Fagan, Dennis Degan, Billy Lynch, were examples of gay men included in the film series. Perhaps to no surprise Peter Hujar, who photographed nude and homoerotic photographs in the 1970s, was one among the
selected. To discuss the homoeroticism of the *Screen Tests* further it seems fruitful to examine the test of Paul America.

In 1965 Andy Warhol filmed a ‘stillie’ of Paul America. America was also the main actor in Warhol’s homoerotic film *My Hustler* and has in recent times been recognized as an American gay icon (Grundmann 2003). Warhol himself has described America as ‘unbelievably good looking, clean-cut, handsome and very symmetrical’ (quoted in Angell 2006: 26). Like all of the tests America’s test is black-and-white and silent. The film used in this test is 16mm black-and-white reversal original and it lasts for 4.1 minutes (©18fps) (ibid: 26). The test of America signifies a portrait of the young man. He appears as blonde, groomed and handsome. His face is centred and closed-up but the film meanwhile gives a small glance of his shoulders and collar-shirt. A strong light is lit from the right, which shades the left side of his face as the deep darkness makes it difficult to see. The background is as well black. In contrast to Buchanan America himself is lively during the shot. He is chewing a gum, gazes into the camera as well as towards people off the screen. His smile is amusing and his glances seductive. Almost like he is flirting is a rather sexual way. It becomes obvious that he is highly aware of the camera and that he is concerned to appeal certain ways during the recording process. He is indeed beautiful and his beauty is inviting and engages the spectator. His amusing and flirting performance is ongoing throughout the film portrait. Yet what makes the test homoerotic?

![Figure 3 Screen Test of Paul America (1965 ©Andy Warhol Foundation)](image-url)
One may argue that America’s performance provides certain intimacy to the film portrait and that this particular intimacy epitomizes homoeroticism. For one might note that America appears as a sexual and beautiful young male subject who presumably aims to invite the gaze of the male viewer through his way of flirting and sexually teasing. This is nevertheless a sexual tease without sexual intercourse. In this sense similar to the Physique Pictorial images of the 1960s and Mapplethorpe’s Dancer Paul America stresses ‘libidinal attraction without sexual expression’ (Dyer 2002: 3). There is neither a sexual act involved in the film nor an explicit direct relation to a sexual expression in general. Yet America still comes into sight as a hustler trading his sexual body for attention. One might argue that this is accomplished through how he constructs himself - his social identity - via his performance and style. Hence, his homosexual identity. For one may note that the features of his face is enhanced in terms of beauty and he is willingly inviting us to gaze this beauty passive. His face is innocent, beautiful, young and his is there to be looked at as his gaze is rarely meeting the eyes of the viewer (the lens). He in this sense becomes a sex object whose appearance is to be looked at by the male viewer.

What further reinforce the appeal of homosexual desire of the Screen Tests are the hairstyles and clothes of the thirteen men. America for instance can be identified with the imagery of the trade, the hustler and their specific styles at the time when the test was shot. Reay has argued that a part of the hustler’s sexual appeal was rough masculinity that was presented inter alia clothes (2011). The predominantly codes of homosexual clothing was in the sixties the seaman, the cowboy, the soldier, the laborer, and so forth, and the jeans, booth, collar shirt and leather jacket became strong codes of clothing (ibid: 207). As in Warhol’s Most Wanted Men and Blow Job this hustler style and rough rather than queen style masculinity arguably become expressed by Paul America. His clothes collar shirt and the way in which he chews his gum, glancing around, and plays with his confident and almost arrogant masculinity make him appear as a hustler. His particular hairstyle – the way it is combed back – is as well a style that seems to have been a part of the trade aesthetic in the American Sixties. The matter that many of Warhol’s films were produced for a male gay audience, and that America one year later played the hustler role in Warhol’s film My Hustler furthermore indicates that Thirteen Most Beautiful Boys was homoerotic film material. Thirteen Most Beautiful Boys in this sense illustrates that Warhol was already in the early 1960s – ahead many of the other works discussed in this chapter - represented homosexuality
and same-sex desire and that such themes cannot be ignored when discussing the *Screen Tests* and the work of Warhol.

The portrait is always present in Warhol’s art. To assemble an understanding of the meanings of the portrait among Warhol’s photographic work this chapter has examined his film still portraits of his *Screen Tests*. It has been debated how Warhol reinvents the portrait and the possibility of its meanings into the moving film. Through an analysis of the *Screen Tests* this has discussed how Warhol reinvented the photography portrait into the medium of film. It has been argued that the tests can be associated with identification portrait that Warhol arguably exercised as well as challenged through his tests. Self-representation in relation to the identification photography further turned out to be of significance when interpreting Warhol’s enormous collection of tests. The subjects performed in front of the camera and constructed their own social identities almost like in a theatre. Today we can however view the *Screen Tests* not only as a collection of subject’s performances but also as a photographic archive of the Factory visitors between 1964-1966. As Warhol was obsessed with documenting and collecting, this might have been his intentional aim – to create his own body of archive. The chapter finally illustrated that representations of homoeroticism and homosexuality becomes as explicit in Warhol’s *13 Most Beautiful Men* as in *Most Wanted Men* and many of his films – the trade and hustler are always present. Viewing the test of Paul America illustrates not only how America performs his test in a homoerotic manner but also Warhol’s interest to portray homosexual, beautiful and masculine men. As we will see in the following and final chapter, the portrait stays present in Warhol’s photographic work throughout the Seventies. Portraying of homosexuality and homoeroticism is also continued and perhaps exaggerated in the seventies photographs. To discuss this further the proceeding chapter will explore Warhol’s Polaroid photographs in relation to his recording obsessions, the portrait and sex.
5. Warhol, Polaroid and Sex

Whenever somebody came up to the Factory, no matter how straight-looking he was, I’d ask him to take his pants off so I could photograph his cock and balls. It was surprising who’d let me and who wouldn’t.


Introduction
When Warhol died in 1987 he left a body of 40,000 private Polaroid images (Ganis 2004: 16-18). This excessive amount of photographs emphasizes the importance of the Polaroid that appear to shed some light on my preceding debates of the vital significances and politics of Warhol’s photographs and his artistic role as a photographer. Due to the length of the chapter it is divided into two parts. The first part will explore Warhol’s use of the Polaroid camera and his private Polaroid collection ‘Red Books’ and how he took advantage of its technical and social mechanisms in relation to privacy and his desire for ‘every real moment’ (Warhol and Hackett 1980: 138). The chapter will then proceed into an analysis of Sex Parts and Torsos. Returning to the beginning of the thesis and my analysis of ‘Death and Disasters’ Sex Parts and its pornographic mediations it will be discussed in relation to the indexical power of the photography and queer theory by exploring the significance of representing real sex and sexual intercourse photographically. The argument I will aim to develop is that the series expand on Warhol’s investment in the recording apparatuses and his ambition to document sexuality. Meanwhile, as well as being mediations of same-sex desire Warhol’s Polaroids seem to be an extension of his take on the portraiture. To expand on earlier discussions of the portrait in relation to social identity and sexuality the discussion will then proceed into an
analysis of *Torsos* as the series arguably responds to Warhol’s preceding reinventions and use of the identity portrait as well as his photographic representation of same-sex desire.

**The History of the Polaroid**

The Polaroid camera appeared in 1948. It was Edwin Land who had invented and founded the new ‘one-step’ camera that straightaway became viewed as a technological innovation (Buse 2007: 30). The first camera was the Model 95. The Model 95 required the user to ‘pull the exposed film from the machine, wait approximately a minute, and then peel the unusable negative away from the final print’ (Buse 2009: 6). The new Polaroid was neither as affordable as its following types. However, in 1971 Land invented the SX-70 (ibid: 7). It was affordable, easy to comprehend and instant - it automatically ejected the photograph from the camera and developed in a matter of a minute in the light. These are perhaps the fundamental reasons why it became used primarily by amateurs. Land himself yet rejected the notion of the Polaroid as a pure amateur camera and stressed its aesthetic value: ‘The aesthetic purpose of the new camera is to make available a new medium of expression to those who have an artistic interest in the world around them […]’ (quoted in Hitchcock 2011: 13). The instant camera was nevertheless viewed with scepticism and criticism as it assumable it was viewed as a ‘photographic threat as a photographer’s style – developed over more than a century – could be copied by amateurs’ (ibid 2011: 13). Peter Bunell for instance in 1972 claimed that the Polaroid never could ‘increase the awareness of photography as a creative medium because his cameras are designed for the amateur’ (quoted in Buse 2009: 354). Nevertheless one may argue that this was however not the case.

For soon after its appearance The Polaroid arguably became a question to its mere artistic merits and possibilities. In 1949 Edward Land hired Ansel Adam as a consult. Adam was a defender of photography as fine art and identified the aesthetic and technological creativity of the instant medium (Hitchcook 2011). Adams assured land that the Polaroid photograph ‘should be exhibited with the finest aesthetic and technical examples of photographs taken by American Masters’ (ibid: 13). A result of Adams’ idea was a growing relationship between artists and the Polaroid Corporation that in the late 1950s and early 1960s was named the Artist Support Program (ibid.). The programme involved fine artists as well as new emerging artists who wished to explore new technologies. The program meant that the corporation provided the artists films and cameras in trade of selected photographs – a relation between the corporation and individual artists had been established (ibid.). The
program established a relation with many celebrated artists such as Minor White and Chuck Close. Indeed Andy Warhol was a part of the program. Yet many fine artists outside the program as well practiced their art photographs with diverse Polaroids. David Hockney, Robert Mapplethorpe and Walker Evans are examples of celebrated fine artist who have illustrated the aesthetics of the instant medium. It therefore appears as that Bunell’s 1972 belief of the Polaroid as a non-creative medium was rather improper as the camera already then had been used by a plural of fine art photographers.

In our contemporary culture the Polaroid has again been empowered with status within the art world. Many new fine art photographers have started to use the Polaroid to create objects of art. A reason for that might be that the Polaroid photographs taken by the artists in the 1970s and 1980s have accumulated a larger status as objects of fine art than they were accredited at their time. For instance, Polaroid works Andy Warhol and other post-war photographers such as Robert Mapplethorpe are commonly exhibited on famous art venues. The Polaroid work by Factory member Brigid Berlin from the late 1960s and early 1970s has as well been accredited in recent time. The contemporary Polaroids seem to aim to aesthetically look alike the 1960 and 1970s images – almost like nostalgic references: ‘Polaroid film itself is now quaint, archaic, and object of nostalgia’ (Buse 2007: 35). And the contemporary dominant discourse of photographic criticism is currently exploring Polaroid works. In 2011 Heine, Reuter, and Willingmann released From Polaroid to Impossible – a book of essays and Polaroid images from the legendary Polaroid collection (2011). The collection is a celebration of the Polaroid and represents both canonical and less recognized works. The book itself underscores the value of the Polaroid as a form of fine art and the cultural and historic significance of instant camera (Heine et al. 2011). The recentness of From Polaroid to Impossible, the intelligent analysis of the instant medium, and the beautiful images represented in it, illustrate that the Polaroid is unique and is embedded with different aesthetic as well as cultural values. Yet in order to discuss this further, one fundamental question still remains: what makes the Polaroid different from other forms of photography? This question appears to be important when exploring Warhol’s take on the Polaroid.

The aesthetics of the Polaroid

It has been noted that the appearance of the Polaroid camera and photography challenged many ideas about photography – aesthetically as well as technically. According to Buse the major challenge was the technical development of the photograph, as well as the process of
taking a picture (2010). This was because the Polaroid declined the standardized developing process of the traditional camera film. It developed the photographed moment instantly. And it developed itself automatically – there was no need for darkrooms or other professional equipment. This is because the camera had a chemical developing process positioned within the physical photographic paper, which was thread within the camera before use (Buse 2010). This gave the camera certain unique capabilities. Buse has identified these and suggests that as a consequence of them the Polaroid photography distinguishes itself from the traditional still photography by four key features: instantness, development and individuality, and the decline of the reproduction possibilities (ibid: 221-222). He explains it this way:

Speed: the image appears an ‘instant’. The image develops itself: there is no need to have resource to a private darkroom of professional developing company.

Uniqueness of the print: the process provides no negative, and therefore is not easily subject to the normal photographic process of multiple reproductions (ibid: 220-221).

The photograph appears only a short moment after the shutter of the camera is pushed and there is therefore no need for any equipment or professional knowledge as the photograph chemically develops itself. And there is only one duplicate of the image. In spite of the technical development of the Polaroid the camera does not contain a negative. Therefore the Polaroid image cannot be reproduced – neither analogically nor digitally – as other forms of photography. Yet you can digitalize it through scanning, but intrinsically it is unique.

One can argue that these features of the Polaroid provide a photographic uniqueness. This uniqueness appears through the instantaneity of the Polaroid that arguably offers a sense of intimacy. This process is because the mediation of the moment that is photographed seems to become more intense and perhaps even expanded in the process of the instant developing. For with the Polaroid there is no waiting for technical developing – it is instant. This notion of the instantaneity of the Polaroid seems to reinforce Warhol’s idea of the photograph as real as the instantaneity arguably reinforces the ‘nowness’ as the photographic image appears while the moment it has mediates is ongoing. In respect of this ‘nowness’ and intimacy of the Polaroid Trotman writes:

[...] over the course of a minute, a photograph does not concern remembering or forgetting. Rather, it plays between the lived moment and its reification as an
object with its own physical presence. The party Polaroid is not so much about an evocation of a past event as an instant fossilization of the present (2002: 10).

This means that the Polaroid photograph does not signify a mediation of a historical moment, but an ongoing moment – it is an instant substance of the present space and time. Rather than representing a slice of time it in other words represents a slice of the time – the ongoing time. In this sense one may argue the Polaroid photograph reinforces the idea of the photograph as a capture of ‘every real moment’ because of its ongoing presence and generates a sense of intimacy between the subjects photographed and the image per se as the subject can view him or herself an object while the event is still ongoing. In turns the Polaroid challenges the distinction between a photograph as a real lived moment and the photography as an object that as a mediation physically reference to realism. In this sense we can expand preceding debates on Warhol’s investment in the recording apparatuses as the instantaneous of the Polaroid camera reinforced Warhol’s obsession to capture every real moment, to document his world and produce visual evidences. Yet via the Polaroid he could play with the lived ongoing moment and the moment when the photograph turns the moment into mediation.

One might argue that what furthermore makes the Polaroid image unique is its originality. This is because it has no negative as the traditional photograph and can therefore not be mechanically reproduced. In this sense, as Buse already has suggested, the Polaroid photograph offers certain uniquenesses as the idea of the existence of one single photograph that cannot be multiplied, makes the instant image rather unique. One may argue this uniqueness can be identified in the entire Polaroid photographs of Warhol - only one unique original copy exists of each image. Warhol Polaroid image are in this sense embraced with a ‘aura’ of originality. Benjamin explains the ‘aura’ as a singular work of art that in the mode of perception signifies an experience of presence and distance at the same time (2005 [1936]: 2-3). This singularity experiences provides a work of art with originality and uniqueness. However, in mass-production the originality is not longer existence (ibid: 3). Thus the ‘aura’ is lost. The Polaroid however maintains it; only one original image exists. The ‘aura’ of the Polaroid contrasts the aesthetics of many of Warhol’s other works. For the repetition and seriality that became a common theme in his silkscreen canvases, as well as some of his other photographic works, could not function in the same way. But there were many of Warhol’s Polaroids that make a serial image, and he did use some of the Polaroids as draft for his canvases by photocopying the Polaroid image (Petersen 2011). Yet each Polaroid is original and therefore has a certain ‘aura’.

When exploring Warhol’s Polaroids it seems that his work offers another interesting view of his investment in documenting, and collecting real moments. For between 1970 and 1975 Warhol started to collect private Polaroids (Banier 2004). By then, as I formerly have illustrated, he had already produced 500 still film portraits for his private collection. After photographic sessions Warhol would take the Polaroids home, edit them and sequence them into individual red Holson Polaroid albums. When the album was full he then positioned into a red cardboard box he named the ‘Red Books’. The ‘Red Books’ contain eleven Holson albums and 203 Polaroid snap-shots. The entire photographs are type 107 black and whites or Polacolar 108’s and each of the albums the ‘Red Books’ illustrates a theme that Warhol himself themed and organized (ibid: 1). The themes include Mick Jagger, David Bowie, John and Yoko and a study of Paloma Picasso, and so forth - famous icons of their time. Regardless what their theme was, all images appear as intimate portraits taken with either the Type 107 or Type 108 films. Therefore each theme illustrates a certain personality or event. The ‘Red Books’ have remained undamaged and complete – the Polaroids are still ordered and themed the way in which Warhol intended (ibid.)

One might note that Warhol’s collecting idea of ‘Red Books’ suggests that the purpose with his Polaroids where not to create objects of art but to document every real moment. For in our contemporary time we can arguably view the images as beautiful, unique in sense of their aura, and certainly as an insight into the social life of Warhol. This is because they were originally generated as Warhol’s private Polaroids that he wanted thematically store in his private sphere. ‘Red Books’ in other words illustrate Warhol’s organising strategy to not only document sexuality, which I have argued elsewhere, but also to document and archive his social realm and icons of his Factory. The Polaroid photographs of ‘Red Books’ therefore indicates that he invested in the Polaroid photography in a similar, perhaps even identical, manner that he between 1964-1966 had invested in the film recorder to portrait Factory hangers, American icons, gay subjects, and so forth for his Screen Tests. His take on the portrait is in this sense continued in his investment in the Polaroid photographs in the 1970s.

Moreover, the private matter of the Polaroid seems to be related to censorship. For the instantaneous of the Polaroid empowered it to be a complete private. As there was no need to hand the films to a film developer one could take images, which they knew no one came to view. Waugh writes that the appearance of the Polaroid in the 1950s therefore ‘brought an end to the censorship role of the photo’ (1996: 348). The Polaroid photograph could maintain
in the private realm of the photographer and his subjects. This is assumable a reason why the medium often was practiced for private purposes. And with the rise of the pornographic age it became a private matter for amateurs to take pictures of erotic acts (Waugh 1996). Waugh writes that the Polaroid became used for ‘erotic self-representation’ and a ‘communal plaything’ (ibid: 348). As already illustrated with the photographs of Sam Stewards from the 1950s, the privacy of the Polaroid was used to photograph illicit homosexual acts. Because of its technical development capabilities and its private matters the Polaroid image could escape censorship and therefore escape the closeting of homosexuality.

**Polaroid and sex**

In 1977 Warhol started to photograph sexual acts and nude male bodies with his Polaroid camera. The result of these photographs was *Sex Parts* and *Torsos*. He had already produced films with pornographic content but such denotations were new in his photographic works. During this time it seems that male body and sexual intercourse became a part of Warhol’s photographic aesthetic, and that it reflected his obsession with pornography. In *Popism* he exemplifies the obsession by writing: ‘Personally, I loved porno and had bought lots of it all the time – the real dirty, exciting stuff’ (Warhol and Hackett 1980: 294). This became explicit in *Sex Parts* and *Torsos* which are Polaroid photographs taken by Warhol in the Factory of friends and visitors during 1977 and 1978. He explains the process of the photographs with these words:

> ‘Whenever somebody came up to the Factory, no matter how straight–looking he was, I’d ask him to take his pants off so I could photograph his cock and balls. It was surprising who’d let me and who wouldn’t’ (Warhol and Hackett 1980: 294).

This demonstrates the male genitalia had become a photograph target for Warhol. It arguably inasmuch illustrates that this nude and sexual photographing notably had become his new *Screen Tests* as *Sex Parts* and *Torsos* seem to serve the same functions as the tests Warhol obsessively recorded more than one decade earlier. All three series – *Screen Tests, Sex Parts* and *Torsos* document and collect footage of visitors of the Factory, yet the medium, the performing and the portraying of the subjects were radically diverse. For the Polaroids replaces the faces of the *Screen Tests* with male genitalia, homosexual acts and torsos.
Due to the photographic sessions Warhol visited gay clubs and The Continental Bath, in New York where he and the gay artists Victor Hugo recruited ‘call boys and hustlers’ for photo shoots at the Factory (Colacello 1990: 337-338). At this time he was still obsessively Polaroiding and he would encourage the hustlers to engage in sex acts and orgies in front of his Polaroid camera (ibid.). They were asked to relax, pose and try different sexual positions why Warhol would walk around them and snap his photographs with his Big Shot Polaroid camera (Angell 2006). A result of these pornographic mise-en-scène ‘cock photographs’ and captures of ‘gay orgies’ was *Sex Parts* and *Torso*. Warhol’s then manager Bob Colacello explains his experience with the dirty Polaroids this way:

> It was eleven thirty on a spring morning in 1977 when I arrived at the office, horrendously hung over from the previous night’s blitz of vodka, coke and Quaaludes, but I wasn’t seeing things. That was a hairy arm stuffed up a hairy anus in the Polaroids neatly arranged across the top of my desk. My shelves were lined with other Big Shots of more predictable penetrations: oral-genital, anal-genital – all on male, and in extreme close-ups. Andy had been at it again: photographing sexual acts between street hustlers and callboys arranged by Victor Hugo, Halston’s friend. It was all for arts sake, of course: the Torsos series, as the paintings made from these photographs came to be called… (Collacello 1990: 337-338).

After the photographic sessions Warhol would place the Polaroids in a box named ‘Sex Parts’. The photograph, as none of the Polaroid photographs by Warhol, is titled. It is neither a text surrounding it with information of the content. This is identical with the collecting process of the *Screen Tests* and many of Warhol’s other works. *Sex Parts* were as well as many of Warhol’s other Polaroids, printed on silkscreen canvases and the canvases has at time been more exhibited and discussed than the photographs. One might therefore note that the *Sex Parts* photographs were at their time never viewed as art in themselves – they were drafts for his silkscreen canvases or complete private matters. *Sex Parts* were according to Colacello Warhol’s attempt to capture ‘what was going on’ (1990: 341). Warhol did however not view the extreme sex denotations of the sex photographs differently from his other works. Collacello writes that despite of the erotic content Warhol referred to them as fine art objects (ibid.). He explains that when he turned up in the Factory, where he had his office, he would find photographs of gay sexual acts, genitalia, and ‘hairy anusies’ laying to dry all over his...
desk (ibid: 336). They were results of the photographic sessions of the night before parties. When he questioned Warhol about the sexual explicitly of the images, Warhol nonplussed Warhol replied: ‘Just tell them it’s art, Bob. They are landscapes’ (ibid: 337). Warhol therefore seems to not have viewed the Polaroids as dirty or clandestine but rather as aesthetic objects of art.

However, the sexual explicit nature of Sex Parts is rather distinct. Genitalia and anuses are centred on the entire images and become highly visible. These bodily parts are as well photographed in extreme close-ups. Sexual intercourses between the men is as centred., and appears as brute and unromantic. This brutalness arguably becomes expressed in the Sex Parts photography of what appears as a gay pornographic scene (Figure 1). It represents two men casually situated in a bed together. One of the men is standing on his knees and it appears as he is penetrating the anus of the other man who is laying down. Yet, when taking a closer look the penis is not penetrated but hidden. The image therefore signifies a sexual tease. Figure 2 moreover illustrates the same sexual explicitly. The men come into sight as identical with the men in Figure 1. The same man is lying down in bed and the other men is on his knees. His penis is semi-erected and the photograph appears as an image taken before or after the act. This reinforces the idea of the tease as the image neither illustrates the real sexual intercourse.

The teasing fake penetration and semi-erected genitalia become the only denotations of the photographs. Nothing else is seen on the image – their faces and the rest of their bodies have been excluded. One may therefore argue that their bodies have been reduced (yet not repressed) to their genitalia and the sexual act, as these are the only parts to be seen of the subject portrayed. This reduction is notably the style of the entire photographs in the Sex Parts series. Consequently it avoids the intimacy of the sex and the intimacy of the moment. Or perhaps the brutalness becomes the intimacy of the images. This sexual appeal reverses us to my earlier discussion of Mapplethorpe’s Lou. The works seem to embed similar politics in regards of sexuality. The gay intimacy, the sexual pleasuring and the extreme emphasize of the male genitalia and sex, can be identified in both works. This focus of the explicit sex acts and genitalia illustrates a shift in Warhol’s photographic representation of same-sex desire. In contrast to the smuggled connotation of desiring men in Warhol’s Most Wanted Men, Sex Parts is not hiding the homoeroticism but explicitly displays sex in a rather extreme way. The extreme sexual appeal of Sex Parts might reinforce an appearance of the photographs as pornographic.
Figure 1: Anal penetration in *Sex Parts* Polacolor Type 108 (1977 ©Andy Warhol)

Figure 2: Homoeroticism in *Sex Parts* Polacolor Type 108 (1977 ©Andy Warhol)


**Mediating real sex**

In the discourse of photography as an index of the real one might argue that *Sex Parts* are true mediations of acts that once in reality took place in front of Warhol’s Polaroid. For *Sex Parts* comes into sight as images of real sexual intercourses between real bodies as it is difficult to question their truthful emergence. The blowjobs and the anal penetration were in 1977 performed and photographed by Warhol’s Polaroid camera and therefore illustrate a testimony of the sex acts once practiced. What I here wish to suggest is that *Sex Parts* discursively takes us back to the beginning of this thesis, to Warhol’s ‘Death and Disaster’ images. For *Sex Parts* represents ‘every real moment’ in the same sense as ‘Death and Disaster’ yet the denotations have been replaced with gay pornography. *Sex Parts* are not photographs of suicides, traumatic deaths or race riots, but images of real fucking and real sucking.

In *Screening Sex* Linda Williams writes that mediated sexual acts are in one sense real – ‘something that really happened’ (ibid: 297). This is due to the indexicality of the medium of photography that arguably is emphasized when viewing *Sex Parts*. The erected penises, blowjobs, anal penetrations and the casual intimacy of the Polaroids once took place in front of the camera and the bodies involved in the intercourse appear as real bodies of real people. In this sense the Polaroids have a realist imagination embedded – they are real documentations of sexuality and sexual intercourse captured by Warhol. This indexical argument of mediated sex is however problematic as filmic or photographic mediated real sex cannot entirely be considered as real. For mediated sex is also faked as the acts are staged in front of the camera. Therefore, as Williams adds, ‘every sex act that might be placed before a camera is also a documentation of a performance’ (2006: 297). In this sense, while being documents of real gay sex acts, the sexual acts of *Sex Parts* are at the same time faked and performed acts and cannot entirely represent what ‘people do alone, in private’ (ibid: 297). In this sense *Sex Parts* indeed illustrate real sexual acts but it is not exclusively real as the photographs as mediations represent the men performing and staging their bodies in front of the camera.

Nevertheless the nature of realism empowers *Sex Parts* to disclose certain politics. Doane expands the indexical discourse of the photograph formerly discussed and argues that the indexicality of the photograph – its evidentiary traces to the ‘real’- can be aligned with what she names ‘politics of the index’ (2007: 4). Politics of the index signifies the use of the index of the visual image to remembering and imagining the unrepresented and historical
events that have been viewed as useless, ignored, and so forth. The politics of such objective photographic activity is embedded with politics as it can be used as a resistance: ‘the index is sutured to its object by a physical cause, a material connection, it is often invoked in resistance (…)’ (ibid: 4). This suggests that the aiming of the camera is a political resistant. In this sense Sex Parts can be interpreted as a resistance against the underrepresentation of sexuality. It can also be viewed as a resistance against hegemonic view of homosexuality as the outlawed ‘other’. This returns us to the Foucauldian tradition and the discourses of sexuality and power (Foucault 1978).

Since the rise of the gay liberation in the 1960s artists have via art expressed homosexual acts to challenge the view of the sexual as a perverse and homosexual act as sodomy. Following Foucault we have throughout this thesis seen this dispute within multiple of photographs. The works by Mapplethorpe, Hujar, Goldin, Opie, and indeed Warhol, illustrate opposing representations of how dominant culture discursively has named the homosexual acts and identity as perverse and abnormal. Discourse is means of power that can advance social control yet Foucault writes that we do not live in a society of exclusive dominant discourses. For while ‘discourse transmits and produces power’ it also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it’ (1978: 101). There can exist ‘different or even contradictory discourses’ which can operate tactical to run counter to the ones, and ‘wherever there is power, there is resistance’. Foucault names this resistant and thwarting discourse ‘reverse discourse’ (ibid: 101). One may note that this resistance circulate in on contemporary culture. Terminology, for instance, is often used to accomplish this. The term queer, for example, can be a term of abuse. But by resisting and oppressing it has been reversed via minority culture to signify celebratory (Williams 2006: 143).

I would argue that the entire images of Sex Parts can be identified as a ‘reverse discourse’. Rather then staying closeted and within the private realm, Warhol aims to empower sodomy to become celebratory and normative by representing it visually. And by categorizing them as ‘art’ and ‘landscapes’ rather than gay pornography or sodomy he neglects how dominant culture discriminates homosexuality by reversing the power within discourse. And by photographically represent the sexual act per se, the dominant view of heterosexual sex as normative is arguably challenged. The heterosexual and private sexual intercourse, which in the realm of dominant culture has become the norm, is replaced by gay anal intercourse and gay blowjobs. Consequently, the normative view of sex is ideologically repressed. Sex Parts do therefore not only signify the sexual politics of Warhol’s work, but
also the discursive and indexical power of the photograph as a mediation of sexuality. This resistance furthermore notably expressed in *Torsos* and their references to traditional portrait.

**Polaroid, *Torsos* and the portrait**

*Torsos* are the nude torso photographs Warhol captured with his Big Shot Polaroid camera during the same occasions as *Sex Parts*. *Torsos* are Polaroid photographs of nude male torsos that emphasize the male genitalia, and the male buttocks. For the entire series illustrates cocks, balls and buttocks - captured in close-up. The faces of the subjects are therefore never seen in the images. Figure 3, for instance, is a Polaroid of a young coloured man’s torso. His penis and balls becomes the explicitly centred in the image. The penis is erected and decorated with a leather ribbon. This representation notably makes the Polaroid come into sight as pornographic and sexual. Yet all the images of *Torsos* are not as explicit. Rather than pornographic, some of the images appear as more erotically innocent and less sexually exposed. Figure 4 for example illustrates a nude male torso that Warhol has photographed from the side. His entire torso is viewed except his genitalia. His hands are seen on the photograph and they are holding on to each other in a rather decorated way. The image appears as beautiful and perhaps represents a reference to the more classical fine art representation of the male nude. Both the images as well appear as light and elegant and perhaps very present – they appear as real. The extreme denotations of the male bodies assert *Torsos* a homosexual appeal, despite that the photographs do not represent sexual acts as *Sex Parts*. This is partly because we know that the photographs were captured during the same sessions, and that the subjects were hustlers, who Warhol had invited from New York’s gay bars (Colacello 1990). The emphasis of the male nude body and the erected decorated penises arguably symbolize playfulness and same-sex desire. It is men posing for other men, and men being sexually aroused by other men – hence men desiring men.

Despite that the faces of the subject not are seen one may argue that *Torsos* can be interpreted as identification portraits. Yet this is however problematic according to the definition of the traditional portrait. For similarly to Mapplethorpe’s *Lou* discussed in preceding chapters, the *Torsos* are however not photographs which would be categorized as portraits. The traditional portrait is organized around an individual or a group of people whose faces become the most important denotation (Freeland 2007). But what if the individuals’ faces cannot be seen? And what if the subjects in addition are nude? Jean-Luc Lucy writes that portraits often give a small glimpse of the subject’s clothes to illustrate that
the individual’s body not is bare (2006: 223). Yet she adds that ‘there is nothing to prevent from showing the rest of the body so long as its sole function is to carry the face’ (ibid: 223). For the portrait is about revealing an individual, but without seeing the subject’s face what is there to be revealed? Torsos are indeed organized around the body of an individual or a group of individuals. Yet their faces are not seen. One might although argue that Torsos can be considered as portraits.

In this respect, Petersen has argued that Torsos provide an ‘anonymous “portrait” of the pelvic region’ (2011: 3). His idea is interesting as Torsos arguably are anonymous portraits. Who are the men of Torsos? Viewing their nude bodies without being able to see their faces, we cannot know. This anonymous yet is of significance when returning to earlier discussions about how Warhol challenged the identification portrait in his Screen Tests. For rather similarly to the film portraits Torsos arguably challenges the repressively identification portrait which has according to Sekula been used by dominant groups to construct for instance the social identity of the homosexual which has been portrayed as the other (1986). However as their faces are not to be seen the subjects’ social identity is not constructed via photographing their faces but rather via their genitalia, buttocks and torsos, as these bodily parts have become the only resource on which our look can draw. One might argue that Warhol deliberately has replaced the face of the repressively portrait with ‘cocks’ and ‘balls’ to further challenge how dominant culture has named and categorized homosexual acts and homosexual identities via the id portrait. Meanwhile it in the same way as Screen Tests transforms the repressively portrait into the idealizing honorifically portrait (see Sekula 1986) by referring to its aesthetics. Torsos and their references to the portrait can in other words be interpreted as a ‘resistant discourse’ in the same way as Sex Parts. While dominant culture via the photograph has discursively constructed the homosexual as the sodomy other, Torsos reveals this construction by thwarting the discriminated gay identity.

This resistance is notably reinforced by the photographs’ close-up of the bodies. One might argue that the close-up of the nude male in Torsos as well as Lou is of significance in relation to representations of sexuality and the body. Mary Ann Doane writes that the close-up is a privileged discourse in film and photography as it for instance ‘perspectives realism’ (2003: 90-91). She writes that the close-up ‘more than other types of shots, demonstrates the deictic nature of the image, its inevitable indexicality’ (ibid: 93). This is because the close-up of a face ‘transforms the face into an instance of the gigantic, the monstrous: it overwhelms … and is truly bigger than life’ (ibid: 94).
Figure 3 *Torsos* Polacolor 2 (1977 ©Andy Warhol)

Figure 4 *Torsos* Polacolor 2 (1980 ©Andy Warhol)
Consequently, as Deleuze writes it is ‘producing an intense phenomenological experience of presence’ (quoted in Doane 2003: 94). It seems as both the notions of Doane and Deleuze are expressed in Torsos. However, while Doane writes about the close-up of a face, this analysis interprets close-ups of genitalia, torsos and buttocks. Pursuant with Doane I would yet argue that the close-ups of the bodily parts transform the genitalia and overwhelms as they arguably create an intense experience of the presence – they appear as close to the viewer in both time and space. Therefore a more intense relation between the subject and the viewer is consequently established. What however become most overwhelming and monstrous with the Torsos is that the relation and experiences signified is sexual. The sexual denotations –the penises, balls and buttocks – are straight in your face and impossible to ignore. The use of photographic close-ups and the way in which the body is portrayed perhaps make the Polaroids of Torsos some of Warhol’s most sexually outlawed and challenging photographic works. Nevertheless, it also make them the most interesting works in relation to the phenomenological experiences as they intensify the presence of the real, in this case real homosexual bodies.

It must finally be added that this portraying of the erotic male body is not a new phenomenon in Warhol’s work. Already in the 1950s he had made drawings of nude males that explicitly illustrated ‘cocks’ and ‘balls’ (Meyer 2002). This was more than one decade before his photo-booth photos and Screen Tests, and almost three decades before his Torsos and Sex Parts. Many of the nude drawings represent men kissing and penises that Warhol has decorated with hearts, flowers, shells, and so forth. They were in other words pretty and innocent despite of their phallic denotations. Fairbrother writes that these images were ‘explicit homoerotic works’ for ‘his private sphere in the fifties’ (quoted in Meyer 2002: 123). This indicates the private matter of Warhol’s drawings. Perhaps the same private matters as his pornographic Polaroids. But the Polaroids made the bodies real, the came into being. Viewing the nude drawings however illustrate that the idea of portraying naked men and homoeroticism was interpreted by Warhol thirty years before the Torsos and ten years before he became a celebrated pop artists. Yet the photographic image intensified such representations and indeed made them testimonial and therefore more real. In comparison with the drawings, the images of Torsos consequently appear as more clandestine and outlawed.

Sex Parts and Torsos are two collections of Polaroids that emphasize many of Warhol’s obsessions, personal interests and artistic aesthetics. Warhol’s interest in the nude male body,
his aesthetic take on the portraiture, his recording obsession and his desire to become the photograph voyeur, are all identified in the Polaroid series. They also underlines his fundamental use of the camera device – to capture ‘every real moment (Warhol and Hackett 1980: 370). Under the influence of Williams and by returning to the beginning of this thesis, it has been illustrated how Warhol through *Sex Parts* became empowered to capture and mediate ‘real’ homosexual acts. Yet as the Polaroids as well are recorded under sessions which are set up by Warhol they can however not be read as entirely truthful or private sex acts – they are staged in front of Warhol’s camera. This chapter has as well illustrated that Warhol did not only emphasize the aesthetics of the traditional portrait with his diverse cameras. He also challenged it. By replacing the face with male buttocks and genitalia, he mediated homosexual identity by using the powerful meanings of the traditional portrait.

Finally, and perhaps most significant, exploring *Sex Parts* and *Torsos* has demonstrated how Warhol mimicked fine art. By referring to his homosexual acts and extreme close-ups to art and landscape paintings he erases (or at least to a certain extent) the distinctions between art and life, and fine art and popular art. Indeed the Polaroids as well challenge the distinction between heterosexual- and homosexual bodies and identities. Yet when comparing it to Warhol’s earlier homoerotic art, it does this in explicit and extreme ways. The same-sex desire can impossible be overseen.
Conclusion

This thesis has explored the photographic work by Andy Warhol. It has examined it in relation to Warhol’s investment in and exploration of recording, mediation and queerness. It has as well examined how the photographs articulate and challenge concepts of gender and sexuality. Despite that we may recognize Warhol as one of the most celebrated pop artists of the 1960s, he was also a photographer and a filmmaker in addition to the public perception of him as simply a fine artist. The life and persona of Warhol himself as a post-war American artist has therefore as well been analyzed and debated in this thesis. Starting with an analysis of ‘Death and Disaster’ and ending with Warhol’s homoerotic and sexual Polaroid photographs in the series Sex Parts and Torsos, the thesis has aimed to gather an understanding of the politics of Warhol’s photographs and the way his work allow us to make sense of shifting ideas of gender and sexuality as ‘recorded images’. One of the aims of my thesis was to argue that photography was the root of all his work. The sources of most his work was a photograph - the silkscreen in particular - was printed from a photograph which either Warhol himself had taken, or collected from magazines or tabloid newspapers, or in an ‘outlaw’ gesture stolen from New York’s public libraries. Interpreting the photo-booth portraits, the Screen Tests, Sex Parts, Torsos, 13 Most Wanted Men and ‘Death and Disaster’, and so forth, this thesis has arguably expanded understandings of Warhol’s photographs and his fine art in general. Before exposing my essential conclusions in regards of my research aims, I find it necessary to outline the findings and developed arguments of this thesis.

Making it real

In respect of his photographs and films Warhol once wrote that ‘what I liked was chunks of time all together, every real moment’ (and Hackett 1980: 138). His desire for ‘chunks of time together’ and ‘every real moment’ have been an influential notion throughout this thesis and relationship between realism and the photography became impossible to ignore in my
analysis of Warhol’s photographs as means of representations. This was discussed in the first chapter that theorized the photograph and argued that Warhol’s work approaches the discourse of the photograph as an index of the real and the discourse of the photograph as art. On the basis of an analysis of ‘Death and Disaster’ it was argued that Warhol’s work approaches both these discourses as they express aesthetic as well as real dimensions. These discourses however affect ways of seeing and the meanings of the photograph yet in diverse ways. They modify how we interpret a photographic image, as well as the cultural affect it may have a visual representation.

Nevertheless it did turn out that reading the photographic image as a mimic of the real is problematic as the photograph is a powerful sign embedded with ideological meaning (Doane 2007a). These meanings empowered Warhol to mediate real trauma and enlarge critical truths of the American political system as well as produce art with aesthetic value. Nevertheless ‘Death and Disaster’ further illustrates the tension charged between the discourses and how Warhol challenged it. For when a photograph becomes identified as an object of art it looses its documenting and evidentiary aura (see Crimp 1995). Therefore Warhol could aestheticize shock in the same way as Hujar could aestheticize the unconventional sexual body by erasing realism. When shock was erased their unconventional photographs became legitimated to enter the realm of fine art. The way in which the work of Warhol and Hujar transform death and the sexually charged photography into art objects of beauty, is a notion that stayed in the thesis throughout.

The second chapter discussed the history and significance of photographic visualization of gender and sexuality. The discussion entered the discourses of gender, sexuality, and power by engaging with Michel Foucault and his influential argument that the homosexual identity is a discourse that regimes of power has constructed on the basis on an individual’s sexual preferences and desires (1978). In this sense the homosexual identity is social construction rather than biological given. The photograph has historically been used as a means to reinforce this construction and the naming of bodies (Sekula 1986). Foucault underlined that the homosexual has been viewed as a perverse and abnormal other as his or her sexual desires has not fallen inside the norm of sexuality. This is for the homosexual act has been viewed as sodomy and perverse (ibid.). Following this Foucauldian approach the chapter debated how the photograph historically has underlined and challenged this social construction of the homosexual as the other. By approaching his theories when examining ideas of the homosexual in our contemporary art and culture one has underlined the relevance and importance of his theories as the homosexual still is viewed as the other.
As the indexicality of the photograph has the power to represent real bodies and real homosexuality, sodomy acts and homosexual identities were captured with the camera device already in the 1890s. By taking a closer look at private and public photographs from 1890 until our contemporary culture chapter two further illustrated that this tension and the social construction of sexuality has been expressed and challenged by photographers since the appearance of the photographic device. Nevertheless via the photographs of queer artists who follow in Warhol’s legacy, for example Opie, the thesis also argued that the visibility of gender outlaws and sodomy has of today become more accepted in the realm of fine art. However, representing homosexuality is still not a complete accepted subject and always raises questions of the legitimacy of art and the limits of representations. The recent exhibition *Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire* was censored due to its explicit representations of homosexual bodies and acts particularly as they related to religion and religious iconography (Katz 2010). The ironic thing is that *Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire* was an exhibition about censorship. This censoring of certain bodies and acts illustrates that heterosexuality is viewed as normative still within our Western contemporary culture. It also illustrates that homosexuality is neglected visibility and as it is silenced and ignored. One may argue that this silencing is as homophobic as the silencing as Warhol’s *Most Wanted Men* in 1964. It also illustrates the realism of the photographic image, as what seems to have caused the silencing is the visualization of real homosexual bodies – bodies that are to queer for art criticism and dominant culture in general. The view of homosexuality as sodomy has therefore not completely disappeared.

The debate about the discourses of gender, sexuality and power was expanded in *chapter three* in an analysis on Andy Warhol’s investment in the recording device. By defining and analyzing Warhol’s recording practices in respect of his desire for ‘every real moment’ (and Hackett 1980: 138) and becoming the machine perfected, it was identified that he had an obsession with recording and that this obsession was interrelated to his own sexuality as well as the significance of recording and as mediating sexuality. One argued that Warhol was not fundamentally concerned with producing objects of art when obsessively photographed and recorded his social realm for three decades. Rather his ambition was to document and collect visual evidences of homosexuality. For the homosexual body and homosexual intercourse are common subjects in his entire photographic work – in particular *Sex Parts* demonstrates such denotations. Viewing *Sex Parts* in relation to Warhol’s acts of recording the chapter argued that his work should be interpreted as a photo archive of homosexuality in the American sixties and seventies – the realism of the images is difficult to
decline. The photographic device further empowered Warhol to create a certain distance between him and the real world. This distance indeed allowed him to spy on people and make the best pornography – as he himself has noted (Warhol and Hackett 1980). The Polaroid camera – in particular - allowed him to at a close distance *voyeur* as well as document homosexual acts. Yet reading his acts of recording of his *Sex Parts* the chapter further argued that his photographing emphasized *exhibitionism* rather than *voyeurism*. The men of *Sex Parts* are aware of Warhol’s presence and desires how their homosexuality and bodies are gazed. They are therefore not transferred into passive sex objects, as they are active subjects desiring being looked at.

Exploring Warhol’s recording obsession identified perhaps an unacceptable theme that became impossible to ignore – Warhol’s take on the portraiture. The *forth chapter* expanded on this debate that to a certain extent had been conducted in an analysis of Robert Mapplethorpe’s portrait from the 1970s. I have argued that among Mapplethorpe and other post-war American art photographers such as Catherine Opie, Peter Hujar, and indeed Andy Warhol, the power of the portrait has been explored in respect of social identity and challenges how the identification portrait historically has been maintained to construct the criminal, the outlaw, and the homosexual – hence the *other* (see Sekula 1986). Via an analysis of Warhol’s *Screen Tests* the chapter discussed how Warhol’s work reinvents these capabilities of the portrait on photography into the medium of film. Through this reinventions *Screen Tests* challenge the naming and categorizing of social groups and identities that dominant culture has exercised since the beginning of the photograph by portraying homoeroticism and same-sex desires. Meanwhile they shed light on the meaning of self-presentation and how individuals via performance can fabricate their own social identity in the process of being photographed. Today we can nevertheless not only read the tests as a dispute about the construction of the homosexual *other*, but also as visual documentation of the inner circle of the Factory.

The final and *fifth chapter* of the thesis linked the reader back to the beginning of the thesis and my analysis of ‘Death and Disaster’. In my analysis of *Sex Parts* I argued that Warhol replaces the death and trauma with pornography. In the same way as ‘Death and Disasters’ turn photographs of trauma and real dead bodies into art, *Sex Parts* turns pornography and homosexual acts into mediations of art. Through this mediation they are positioned within the context of art photography and therefore accredit with a diverse aura – they are aestheticized. Consequently their realist dimension – their indexical appearance as real – is demolished. For today we are viewing the sexually explicit and outlawed
photographs on art exhibitions and consider them as fine art rather than images of a ‘dirty’ underground gay culture. Chapter five finally argued that *Sex Parts* and *Torsos* do not only return us to Warhol’s disaster series but also his *Screen Tests*. Fourteen years after the enormous collection of tests people who entered the Factory were still asked to pose in front of Warhol’s camera. Yet this time they were told to get undressed. Returning to the powerful means of the portrait debated in the fourth chapter I argued that *Torsos* have references to the traditional portrait despite that the faces are not seen. The extreme close-ups and the focus of male genitalia and nudity, *Torsos* as portraits disputes the notion of the homosexual act and identity as sodomy. Making same-sex desire explicit both *Sex Parts* and *Torsos* reverse the dominant discourse and regulations of sexuality.

**Photography and sexual politics**

We have seen that sex, sexuality and gender are blatantly revealed in his photographs as well as in his acts of recording. We have also seen that the history of sexual representation since the appearance of the recording apparatus has been a process that has been viewed as obscene and clandestine. For reading Warhol’s photographs via the discourses of gender, sexuality and power we have seen that the iconography of gender and sexuality became impossible to ignore as they (explicitly or hidden) are expressed in Warhol’s work. When conducting this research topic I wanted to go beyond Warhol’s pop art and his famous silkscreen canvases to see what I could find behind the surface. Focusing on theories on his films rather than his paintings and silkscreen canvases I entered an interpretation of Warhol that might not be common in the realm of art criticism. For Warhol’s own homosexuality and the significance in his art and representations of gay cultures and homosexual intercourse is a history that seems to have been ‘forgotten’ in the history of art. Yet this thesis has argued and underlined that this reading of his photographs, and art in general, is impossible to neglect.

By analyzing the photographic work by Andy Warhol in the light of queer theory and post-structuralism I have envisaged that it is an impressive body of aesthetic art. Nevertheless, it has also been emphasized that it is a complex body of work in respect of gender and sexual politics. Viewing his art we must therefore understand that we are not only viewing profound photographs, silkscreen canvases, tape-recordings, and films, produced by one of the most famous pop artists of our time, but also the real lives, bodies, desires and societal struggles of a specific gay culture. Via his diverse recordings and mediums Warhol constructed an opposition against dominant culture and its view of the homosexual subject. In
his approach to the portrait, pornography, document photography, tape-recording and film, this opposition was always present. In his art homosexuality as sodomy and the homosexual as an outlaw figure is not only challenged but to also thwarted – the binary oppositions between the homosexual and the heterosexual, private and public, the subject and the object and masculinity and femininity, are defeated and at least in the realm of the Factory erased. I therefore wish to conclude this thesis with Foucault’s remarkably words: ‘Where ever there is power, there is resistance’ (1978: 101). This resistance against power is certainly disclosed in Warhol’s entire photographic art – hence his *queer* art.


Doane, Mary Ann, ‘The Indexical and the Concept of Medium Specificity’, *Differences*, 2007b (18) 1, pp. 128-152.


Petersen, Stephen (2011), Andy Warhol: Behind the Camera. Delaware: University of Delaware


**Filmography**


*Empire*, 1964, US, Directed by Andy Warhol.


