

## notes

1. In the mid-1970s, shadows began to assume importance as compositional elements in their own right, as found in the series of Still Life drawings of 1975 and the Hammer and Sickie series of 1977 (also titled Still Life), where they take on an idiosyncratic, almost independent, existence. All were based on photographs made by Ronnie Curtone under Warhol's direction. In the former body of work, the inclusion of an eggbeater may be a sly nod to Man Ray and his infamous *Woman*. In the *Skulls* of 1977, the shadow assumes a more expressive, ever fanciful character. In a 1981 self-portrait Warhol adopted the persona of the Shadow, the ubiquitous hero of a popular radio serial and of pulp fiction and comics originating in the 1930s. He then canonized his phantom alter ego in *Myths* (1981), juxtaposing it in the guise of a filmstriplike bestiary alongside other fictional heroes, Superman, Mickey Mouse, Uncle Sam, et al.
2. Julian Schnabel, preface to *Andy Warhol: Shadow Paintings* (New York: Gagosian Gallery, 1989), p. 4.
3. Ronnie Cutrone, telephone conversation, 26 November 1998. Mark Francis cites a slightly different account by Cutrone, suggesting that these images were produced by small children's building blocks. (See Mark Francis, "No There There or Horror Vacui: Andy Warhol's Installations," *Andy Warhol: Paintings 1960-1986* [Lucerne: Kunstmuseum, 1995], p. 72.) Other proposals include the shape cast by an erect penis or by the Empire State Building.
4. The initial commission from Lone Star was for a cycle of 100 paintings. Warhol decided to make an additional eight paintings in this vein for his own purposes. In the end, Lone Star's acquisition was comprised of 102 paintings. By contrast, neither the Campbell's Soup Cans nor the Flowers, which Warhol later described as "one big painting that was cut up into small pieces," were initially conceived as a single entity. (See Phyllis Tuchman, "Pop-Interviews for George Segal, Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, James Rosenquist, and Robert Indiana," *Art News* 73, no. 5 [May 1974], p. 26.)
5. Andy Warhol, "Painter Hangs His Own Paintings," *New York Magazine*, 5 February 1979. Reprinted in *Warhol Shadows* (Houston: The Menil Collection, 1987), n. p.
6. Mark Francis, "No There There," p. 70. Francis argues persuasively that "Warhol attempted constantly to create a kind of 'social space,' an atmosphere which subverted the pristine vacuity of a conventional modern gallery space, and at the same time reconnected the museum with its repressed or forgotten siblings, the department store, the supermarket, the dance club, the discothèque, the attic, and the basement." (p. 66)
7. *Shadows* came into being at a moment when the artist was variously taking stock, summarizing, recapitulating, and reflecting on his prior work, as seen in the two series Reversals and Retrospectives, which followed soon after but which operate in somewhat different ways in that they plunder his previous repertoire of imagery rather than engage with a multiplicity of media and art forms.
8. A shadow is at once an image of nothing—a negative—and something in its own right. Made by silkscreening, Warhol's shadows are unequivocally real, not invented: literally the trace of something, they, like the photographs from which they are derived, necessarily are indexically linked to their sources. For a discussion of Warhol's *Shadows* as primarily informed by his ongoing meditation on death, refer to Trevor Fairbrother, "Skulls," in *The Work of Andy Warhol* (Seattle: Bay Press, in association with Dia Art Foundation, New York, 1989), pp. 95–114.
9. Commissioned by collector Katharine Dreier to fit above some bookshelves in her New York apartment, *Tu m'*, which measures 27 3/4 by 122 3/4 inches, is the largest painting in Duchamp's oeuvre. Describing it as "a kind of inventory of all my preceding works, rather than a painting in itself," Duchamp confessed that he "never liked it because it is too decorative." (Arturo Schwarz, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, vol. 2 [New York: Delano Greenridge Editions, 1996], p. 658.)
10. In addition to *Shadows* and the Rorschachs, these paintings included the Oxidation, Camouflage, Yarn, and Egg series, and were shown in a traveling exhibition, "Andy Warhol: Abstrakt," in 1993 through 1994 (Kunsthalle Basel, Basel/MAK, Vienna). Ironically, the only nonrepresentational abstractions in Warhol's oeuvre, a series of sixteen diminutive paintings executed circa 1982, were omitted from this exhibition. Although they directly reference other art, notably Action Painting, these are arguably the sole works among Warhol's so-called abstractions that have no direct relationship to everyday phenomena in the real world. (For a fuller discussion of this series, see James Hofmaier, "The Abstractly Abstract Paintings: Chevrons of Vanquished Humiliation," in *Andy Warhol: Fifteen Abstract Paintings* [New York: Anton Kern Gallery, 1998].)

## selected bibliography

Francis, Mark. "No There There or Horror Vacui: Andy Warhol's Installations." In *Andy Warhol: Paintings 1960-1986* (Lucerne: Kunstmuseum, 1995). Edited by Martin Schwander.

Stoichita, Victor. *A Short History of the Shadow* (London: Reaktion Books), 1997.

*Andy Warhol: Abstrakt*. Munich: Prestel, in association with Kunsthalle Basel and Österreichisches Museum für angewandte Kunst, Vienna, 1993. Essays by Thomas Kellein and Callie Angel, 1993.

*Andy Warhol: Shadow Paintings*. New York: Gagosian Gallery, 1989. Introduction by Julian Schnabel.

*Warhol Shadows*. Houston: The Menil Collection, 1987.

**Andy Warhol** was born in 1928 in Pittsburgh to immigrant parents of Czechoslovakian (Ruthenian) stock. From 1945 to 1949, he studied pictorial design at the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh. Relinquishing a successful and acclaimed career as a commercial illustrator in New York in the 1950s, he began exhibiting paintings with silkscreened Pop imagery in 1962. In 1963 he began making films. Thereafter his work was widely shown throughout the world. *Shadows* was first exhibited at the Heiner Friedrich Gallery (Lone Star Foundation) in New York in January 1979. Warhol died on February 22, 1987.

**Victor Stoichita** will lecture on Andy Warhol's *Shadows* on Thursday, June 3, 1999, at 6:30pm.

Funding for this exhibition has been provided by the members of the Dia Art Council.

## checklist

### *Shadows*, 1978

An installation of 60 of the 102 paintings comprising this multipartite work

Acrylic, variously silkscreened and handpainted on canvas

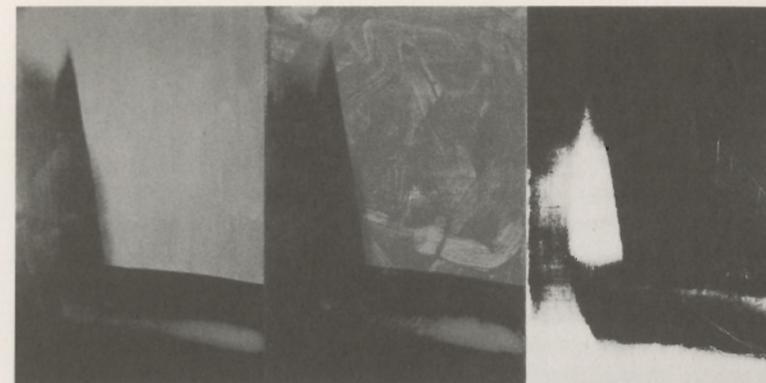
Overall length variable: each individual painting 76 x 52 inches (193 x 132 cm)

Collection Dia Center for the Arts

## Andy Warhol

### Shadows

December 4, 1998–June 13, 1999



## Andy Warhol Shadows

Shadows had long fascinated Andy Warhol before he devoted himself to them as a subject in their own right during a brief, if concentrated, foray in 1978.<sup>1</sup> The result was an exceptional series of paintings, which included one vast environmental work in 102 parts plus sundry others in different formats and with different motifs though still based on the theme of a negative reflection. "There is almost nothing on them. Yet they seem to be pictures of something," Julian Schnabel asserted in the preface to the catalogue marking their first comprehensive exhibition in 1989, adding in a telling afterthought that they are "as full of imagery as any of Andy's other paintings."<sup>2</sup> Both the precise sources for and the manifest references engendered by these enigmatic images remain, however, contested. For, notwithstanding the artist's own lapidary description of their genesis in "a photo of a shadow in my studio," alternate and even conflicting accounts of their origins have been offered, among which the most persuasive is that given by Warhol's studio assistant from that time, Ronnie Cutrone, who remembers Warhol asking him to take photographs of shadows generated by maquettes devised expressly to create abstract forms.<sup>3</sup>

Of the seven or eight different compositions in the series based on this subject, two were used extensively, the remainder very seldom. Only the preferred pair were employed in Dia's environmental work titled *Shadows*. With two silver exceptions, the tall, narrow form dubbed "the peak" always appears as a positive, in black, on a colored ground. These grounds, which range in hue from a Day-Glo acid green to a majestic purple, from a lurid turquoise to a sober brown, are mostly treated as a flat, matte surface. Occasionally, they are broadly handled so that bravura brushwork irregularly fills the canvas, creating a lively field onto which the motif was then silkscreened. Shorter and more organic in form, the second image, known as "the cap," always appears, paradoxically, as a negative in a black milieu: an "absent" shadow. Also monochromatic, these panels partake of the same palette as their counterparts.

Purchased as a single entity by the Lone Star Foundation (now Dia Center for the Arts), this cycle of 102 paintings was first exhibited in January 1979 at 393 West Broadway in Manhattan (a site that now houses Walter De Maria's *Broken Kilometer*).<sup>4</sup> Its current presentation at 545 West 22nd Street in New York City mimics that debut, for it, too, incorporates as many canvases, hung edge to edge and close to the floor, as will fit the space, and it adopts the same sequence—though here the panels have been ordered in a clockwise, as opposed to a counterclockwise, direction. Warhol left decisions regarding the initial order of the individual paintings to Ronnie Cutrone and Stephen Mueller, to whom he had entrusted the installation. Adhering to no system, they conformed to Warhol's own practice when he chose the colors for the grounds or selected prints from contact sheets to be made into screens. Yet, appearances to the contrary, such a method was far from completely arbitrary. Restricting the vocabulary of this group to two compositional formats, confining the total number of hues to seventeen, and limiting each canvas to a single color, Warhol filtered a controlled and circumscribed serendipity

through the proclivities of taste to create an environmental ensemble that pertains as much to décor as it does to high art.

In typically disarming fashion, Warhol referred to *Shadows* as not art but "disco décor."<sup>5</sup> Soon after, it was employed as a backdrop in a fashion shoot for the April 1979 edition of his magazine *Interview*. Its multiple roles and hence ambiguous status derive from the innovative and often provocative approach to installation the artist had developed over the course of his career. For his first European retrospective, which opened at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm early in 1968, he had covered the Neoclassical facade of the building with his Cow wallpaper. At the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1971, during the final stage in a second and more comprehensive retrospective that had toured the United States the previous year, he hung the paintings directly over the Cow wallpaper, which now covered the gallery interiors. (He had first proposed showing only the wallpaper in this last venue.) And when, in 1974, he presented his Mao series in Paris at the Musée Galliera in a landmark installation that superimposed paintings and prints featuring the Chinese leader over wallpaper depicting the same subject, the result was "a colorful, decorative salon" appropriate to this grandiose, sumptuous fin de siècle architecture, yet also "subtly subversive in political and aesthetic senses."<sup>6</sup> Finally, just before his death, he proposed installing his small camouflage paintings directly on their larger counterparts, which now differed only in the scale of the motif and the color combinations. In creating an environment with *Shadows* that could function equally as a social arena for collective activity and a contemplative museal space for solitary contemplation, Warhol synthesized aspects of painting, photography, décor, and film, all art forms central to his endeavor.<sup>7</sup> Its sequential repetition with variation recalls a filmstrip, while its grainy magnification of the motifs to vast scale evokes the aura and hyper-realization integral to cinematic closeup. Thematically, the shadow has a seminal role in the ordinary accounts of both painting and photography as art forms. In Warhol's variants, reduced to essentials, it assumes a paradigmatic identity: devoid of identifiable origin or source, detached from its maker or creator, it exists in and of itself, a purposefully made image of "nothing."<sup>8</sup>

If precedents in his own exhibition history may have directly impacted on the installation of *Shadows*, models for the notion of a single, monumental work in many parts were readily at hand, not least in Blinky Palermo's *To the People of New York City*, an abstract painting in fifteen parts but comprised of thirty-nine panels, which had been shown the previous January in the same space, also subsequent to acquisition by the Lone Star Foundation. In Minimal Art, too, and specifically in the oeuvres of Donald Judd and Carl Andre, related formal strategies may be found: large-scale works whose serially repeated units are installed contiguously along the gallery wall(s) close to the junction with the floor.

Ultimately, however, it was not the examples provided by his peers but those of the Abstract Expressionists that occasioned Warhol's abiding preoccupation with making

abstract art. In many circles this Pop painter's practice was routinely regarded as the nemesis of that movement, whose canonical expressions were considered the last refuge of spirituality and transcendence. Yet when embarking on this hallowed terrain, Warhol adopted a far from direct or reverential approach. Read as an homage to Pollock, his Oxidation series was as sardonic as it was celebratory: if allusion to Franz Kline may be discerned in *Shadows*, so may associations with apocalyptic wallpaper, a reference frequently applied to Action Painting by its detractors. Nonetheless, in its iconography and consequently in its metaphysics, this series is conceptually more akin to work by Marcel Duchamp, long-time exemplar for Warhol, than it is to that of any American artist.

In taking up this subject, Warhol cannot have been unaware of similar experiments made by Man Ray, such as found in *Interrogation of Shadows* of 1919 and his series of Rayographs from 1922, several of which exist mysteriously in both a positive and negative guise. Duchamp's cryptic *Tu m'*, made in the same year as his friend Man Ray's celebrated image of an eggbeater and its reflection, presages the work of Warhol in that it contains, *inter alia*, a color chart in the form of specimen lozenges juxtaposed with three shadows, two of which are derived from his readymades, while the third, the anamorphically elongated corkscrew, having no prototype in Duchamp's oeuvre, might be said to occupy a phantom or fictive place in that corpus.<sup>9</sup> In its complex and subtle play with issues of representation and with discourses of reality and illusion, presence and absence, *Tu m'* rehearses many of the subjects raised in Warhol's series. Grounded in the material, the literal, and the illusory, such metaphysics are far removed from the spiritual and transcendent.

Meditations on the *vanitas* and the afterlife had been invited in Warhol's series previous to *Shadows*: the Skulls were similarly based on photographs made in raking light by Cutrone at Warhol's behest. During the early 1980s, Warhol continued to make so-called abstract paintings that loosely focused on questions of representation, most notably the Rorschachs of 1984,<sup>10</sup> but only in 1986 did he embark on two series that again brought into direct opposition such larger concerns. As evidenced in the series of Last Supper paintings, issues relating to the spiritual and transcendent arise in Warhol's art in the context of figuration through the vehicles of the banal and the mass produced, that is, through clichéd reproductions of artisanal copies of an image that was both a masterpiece of Western art and a compelling religious icon. By contrast, in the concurrent series, the Camouflages, Warhol once more explored, as he had in *Shadows*, epistemological questions concerning representation and reality. That venture's recourse to a complexly oxymoronic notion of abstraction is typical of this archetypal contrarian's sophisticated and subtle response to what was considered the most profound art of the time.