



*Left: Andy Warhol. Coca-Cola (2). 1961.
Right: Andy Warhol. Coca-Cola (3). 1962.
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I lived a few blocks away & after dinner would walk up Park Avenue & over to his house. Next door was the National Fertility Institute. Andy was a super intelligent white rabbit, observing, pouring Scotch whiskey, not drinking. New paintings appeared, Dick Tracy with Abstract Expressionist brush strokes & hand painted, of course. However one night, two large paintings were put up, one against the other. Both were Coke bottles, both were black & white, both were identical size. However one was a Coke bottle & nothing else, spare of line. The other was surrounded with A[b]. E[x]. brushstrokes & East Tenth Street failure.

Andy's silence is always a question. The others explain, confess, comment. "But Andy you've already answered[:] this one's great; the other should be thrown out."

Some months later I brought Eleanor Ward who owned the Stable Gallery. Andy had no gallery. We drank Scotch whisky in large white cups. Lots of it. Eleanor agreed to give him his first show.¹

Culled from the archives of the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, Emile de Antonio's recollection of the moment in 1962 when he confronted two of Andy Warhol's paintings has become well-known in different versions. The most notable, perhaps, is found in Warhol and Pat Hackett's *POPism*, in which the artist recalled, "That afternoon was an important one for me . . . I still wasn't sure if you could completely remove all the hand gesture from art and become noncommittal, anonymous. I knew that I definitely wanted to take away the commentary of the gestures . . . The works I was most satisfied with were the cold 'no comment' paintings."²

1. Emile de Antonio, "Marx and Warhol," unpublished draft (alternately titled, "POP POP: Warhol & Marx, Dialogues and Comments"), Emile de Antonio Papers, Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, box 12, file 8.

2. Andy Warhol and Pat Hackett, *POPism: The Warhol Sixties* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), pp. 5–7. For just a few of de Antonio's other recollections of this event, see Lil Picard, "Inter/view

Within art history, de Antonio's recollection of Warhol's two paintings is treated interchangeably with others such as that by Ivan Karp.³ De Antonio, however, holds an important and somewhat unique position within Warhol's career. Partner at the time of Tina Fredericks, who gave Warhol his first advertising job, de Antonio had worked with Warhol since the latter was a commercial artist. Later, de Antonio would appear in an infamous and still unreleased Warhol film, *Drunk*, shot January 19, 1965, wherein he downed a quart of J&B scotch and lay helpless in a state of semi-consciousness on the Factory floor. Warhol overtly acknowledged de Antonio's role in his artistic development. Asked in de Antonio's film *Painters Painting* (1972) about the origin of his fine art practice, Warhol initiated the following exchange:

Warhol: Well, you made me a painter.

De Antonio: Let's have the truth.

Warhol: That is the truth, isn't it? You used to gossip about the art people and that's how I found out about art.⁴

Certainly, de Antonio should no more be considered a hidden key to Warhol's practice than any other would-be claimant. Nevertheless, he doubtlessly served as one of Warhol's most important conduits to the aesthetic of John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Robert Rauschenberg, and Jasper Johns, the gay male artistic vanguard with whom the heterosexual de Antonio had been close for many years.⁵

When he first met Warhol in 1958, de Antonio was not yet a filmmaker. In 1960, partially inspired by Robert Frank and Alfred Leslie's film *Pull My Daisy* (1959), which de Antonio would arrange to distribute, de Antonio co-founded the New American Cinema Group, along with Shirley Clarke, Sheldon Rochlin, Jonas and Adolphus Mekas, and others.⁶ Shortly thereafter, de Antonio commenced work on his first movie, *Point of Order* (1963), which focused on the televised Army-

with Emile de Antonio" (1969), in *Emile de Antonio: A Reader*, ed. Douglas Kellner and Dan Streible (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 213; Emile de Antonio, "Pontus Hultén and Some '60s Memories in New York" (1973), in *Emile de Antonio: A Reader*, p. 356; and Patrick S. Smith, *Warhol: Conversations about the Artist* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1988), pp. 187–88.

3. Warhol and Hackett, *POPism*, p. 7.

4. Emile de Antonio and Mitch Tuchman, *Painters Painting: A Candid History of the Modern Art Scene, 1940–1970* (New York: Abbeville, 1984), p. 119. Note that, according to the original interview transcript, the remainder of Warhol's answer as published in *Painters Painting* is not continuous but is prompted by an interjection by Polk. See handwritten transcript of Emile de Antonio's interview with Andy Warhol and Brigid Polk for *Painters Painting*, 1970, Emile de Antonio Papers, box 52, file 12, p. 156.

5. De Antonio lived close to John Cage from the early 1950s and, with Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, produced Cage's "25 Year Retrospective Concert" in 1958. De Antonio frequently cited Cage's importance for his own artistic development.

6. On de Antonio's life, see Douglas Kellner and Dan Streible, "Emile de Antonio: Documenting the Life of a Radical Filmmaker," introduction to *Emile de Antonio: A Reader* (for de Antonio's involvement with the New American Cinema Group, see pp. 11–12); and Randolph Lewis, *Emile de Antonio: Radical Filmmaker in Cold War America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2000).



Emile de Antonio.
Point of Order. 1963.

McCarthy hearings of 1954. De Antonio worked intensely on the film from 1961 until the fall of 1963—precisely, that is, over the same period in which Warhol’s mature painting style evolved and turned to the Death and Disasters series.⁷ Shown in September, 1963, at the New York Museum of Modern Art, *Point of Order* opened theatrically in January, 1964, the same month as the premiere of Warhol’s film *Sleep* (1963). (Warhol, incidentally, also credited de Antonio with taking him to his “first movie.”)⁸

De Antonio described his film work as being opposed to the conventions, production values, professional apparatus, and ideological perspective of Hollywood cinema. “From the very beginning,” he contended,

my films were not only political; they also contested the main assumptions of Hollywood as film. To me, Hollywood produces industrial products. Like Twinkies. High production values were usually empty screens. I wanted to make a political filmic art with the barest of means.⁹

An early proponent of the view that Warhol’s films systematically reinvented cinema from the time of Edison onward, de Antonio rightly ascribed to Warhol a similar position. “Again,” he explained,

it was the necessary and proper rebellion against the million-handed Hollywood monster. How else could you begin except the way

7. The initial idea for *Point of Order* was shared with Daniel Talbot, who is credited with Emile de Antonio as co-producer of the film. After a first version, which neither Talbot nor de Antonio found to their liking (put together by Paul Falkenberg with narration by Mike Wallace), de Antonio undertook direction of the film, the physical editing work conducted by an aspiring filmmaker, Robert Duncan. See Kellner and Streible, “Emile de Antonio,” in *Emile de Antonio: A Reader*, pp. 16–17.

8. Handwritten transcript of Emile de Antonio’s interview with Andy Warhol and Bridget Polk for *Painters Painting*, 1970, Emile de Antonio Papers, box 52, file 12, p. 169. Warhol’s contention brings to mind the role played in Diane Arbus’ career by de Antonio, who took her to see Todd Browning’s film *Freaks* for the first time. See Patricia Bosworth, *Diane Arbus: A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1984), p. 162.

9. Peter Wintonick, “Quotations from Chairman De” (1984), in *Emile de Antonio: A Reader*, p. 390.

Andy began or the way I began, if you were going to make serious films? He didn't cut anything. His films were just rolls of film spliced together. It was like he invented cutting as Porter and Griffith did.¹⁰

While de Antonio's later cinematic work, from *Rush to Judgment* (1966) to *Mr. Hoover and I* (1989), contains allusions to Warhol's films, *Point of Order*, which largely predated Warhol's cinema, is most comparable to Warhol's painting.¹¹ This, I would contend, is more than mere happenstance, since their aesthetic developed in tandem. "Later, when I was trying to learn the history of film by making one," de Antonio recalled, "Andy and I met often. In his house, at parties, in my apartment."¹² Although de Antonio was in many ways Warhol's opposite—garrulous where Warhol kept silent, engaged where Warhol seemed indifferent, professorial where Warhol feigned naiveté—I am intrigued to examine the coincidence of their aesthetics around 1962 for what light it may shed on both of their practices. What were the stakes of their aesthetics at that time? And what might be the significance, on more than a merely anecdotal level, of what could be called the generative "event" that took place before those two paintings of Coke bottles in that year—an event which, if it did not influence de Antonio, nonetheless haunted him for the rest of his career?

In the winter of 1959 I lived a few blocks away & after dinner would walk up Park Ave and over to his house to look at his first paintings. Next door was the National Fertility Institute. Andy was always grave, always looking, silent[,] observant, pouring Scotch whiskey, not drinking. One night he put up two paintings. Each was a Coke bottle. Rectangles, black & white. One was a Coke bottle, & nothing else, the other was a painting of a Coke bottle, the shape outlined in the brushy strokes of abstract expressionism.

Andy was always silent & his silences were always questions: Andy's silence is always a question. Others explain, confess, comment. I said, "But Andy, you've already answered this. The first is great; the second is like lance-bearing on East Tenth Street, not new not old not good."

Some months later I brought Eleanor Ward. We drank Scotch whiskey in

10. Tanya Neufeld, "An Interview with Emile de Antonio" (1973), in *Emile de Antonio: A Reader*, p. 112.

11. De Antonio's *Rush to Judgment* contains lengthy interviews filmed with an entirely static camera, reminiscent of Warhol's Screen Tests, albeit with sound. In the first such interview, which evidently took place in de Antonio's office, a Warhol *Dollar Bill* painting can be seen carefully framed in the top right corner. In de Antonio's last film, the autobiographical *Mr. Hoover and I*, de Antonio has himself filmed getting a haircut, which is reminiscent of Warhol's film *Haircut No. 1* (1963).

12. Emile de Antonio, "Point of Order (Hic)" (1980), in *Emile de Antonio: A Reader*, p. 374.

*large white cups. Lots of it. Andy showed his work & she agreed to give him a show in the Stable Gallery.*¹³

When de Antonio advised Warhol of his preference for the “cold ‘no comment’” version of his painting, *Coca-Cola*, he affirmed what would become the central aesthetic tenet of *Point of Order*. Composed entirely of appropriated kinescope footage of the Army-McCarthy hearings found languishing in an old CBS warehouse, *Point of Order* proved to be revolutionary for doing away with any form of commentary, most particularly the voice-over narration of traditional documentaries.¹⁴ After a brief intro, spoken over black leader—in which de Antonio calls the hearings “the greatest political spectacle” in US democratic history—the viewer sees and hears only what was available to television audiences in 1954.

De Antonio attributed his aesthetic, in part, to the neo-avant-garde legacy of the Cage circle. “My long history with John Cage and Bob Rauschenberg,” he explained, “enlightened me about the uses of junk, the detritus of modern industrial society as a source for the materials of art, of political art in film.”¹⁵ Once having obtained the forgotten Army-McCarthy footage, de Antonio affirmed, “I saw the film I wanted to make: made of junk like Cage musical pieces or Rauschenberg’s work, stripped of the phony and dubious aestheticism of the Hollywood film.”¹⁶ “I loved the idea that *Point of Order* was essentially kinescope,” he added, “which means it was very tacky-looking film.”¹⁷ Yet, if *Point of Order* derived from neo-Dada strategies of appropriation and collage, it ultimately proved to be unlike Cage’s indeterminate compositions, Rauschenberg’s heterogeneous Combines, or cinematic analogues like Bruce Conner’s *A Movie* (1959). In *Point of Order*, de Antonio relied upon a more homogeneous and starkly detached appropriation that, for all intents and purposes, proved identical to Warhol’s. Embracing continuity, even uniformity, over heterogeneous juxtaposition, *Point of Order* presents blown-up, grainy television footage without evident transformation. “I don’t trust [history] as it’s written,” said de Antonio

13. De Antonio, “Marx and Warhol”; variant draft. In the manuscript, the words “always grave, always looking, silent” in the first paragraph are crossed out and substituted by the phrase “an intelligent white rabbit.” In original manuscript, the word “was” at the beginning of the second paragraph is also crossed out.

14. Kellner and Streible, *Emile de Antonio: A Reader*, p. 17; Lewis, *Emile de Antonio: Radical Filmmaker*, p. 41. De Antonio claims that his film was the “first feature documentary without narration”; see Jay Murphy, “Red Bass Interview: Emile de Antonio” (1983), in *Emile de Antonio: A Reader*, p. 125. Although precedents can indeed be found, there is, in the literature, a lack of certainty or consensus as to the cinematic roots of *Point of Order*, which lead me to suggest that the strategy it deployed derived, in part, from the dialogue with Warhol (as both were working through the neo-Dada legacy of John Cage, Robert Rauschenberg, Merce Cunningham, and Jasper Johns). Although the Army-McCarthy Hearings footage was lying unused in a warehouse, CBS charged de Antonio \$50,000 for its use.

15. Emile de Antonio, “Letter to Hubert Bals and Wendy Lidell” (197? [*sic*]), in *Emile de Antonio: A Reader*, p. 156.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 158.

17. Jean W. Ross, “Emile de Antonio” (1986), in *Emile de Antonio: A Reader*, p. 137.

in 1972, “but I do trust the raw television tapes of events that have taken place over the last fifteen years.”¹⁸

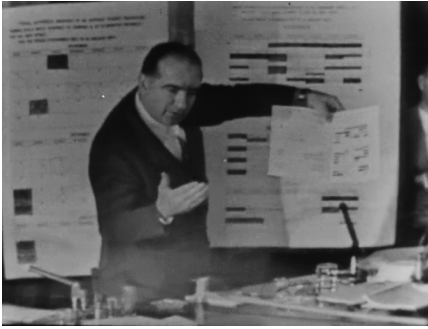
As in Warhol’s silkscreens, however, *Point of Order’s* initial impression proves somewhat deceptive—not merely because de Antonio necessarily had to choose and edit from the 188 hours of footage, but also because it entailed the same type of subtle shifts and emphases found in Warhol’s work.¹⁹ Like Warhol, de Antonio transferred a degraded source material—cast-off television footage, in his case, back-page advertising and press photos in Warhol’s—to the more noble substrate of 35mm film stock (analogous in “art” associations to stretched canvas). Like Warhol, de Antonio also called attention to the role of media, both through form—blowing up the low-resolution kinescope’s wavy grain much the way Warhol’s silkscreens emphasized the dot patterns of commercial printing—as well as through content: more than merely choosing a televised event, de Antonio called attention to its media context by selecting scenes revolving around visual props—the charts, graphs, and enlarged photographs used by both sides to rhetorical effect. A Warholian interest in celebrity—or more appropriately, notoriety—would be further satisfied by the dueling star turns of Joe McCarthy and Joseph Welch, both of whom play to the television audience (so successfully in Welch’s case that he would go on to an acting career, appearing in Otto Preminger’s *Anatomy of a Murder* [1959], for which he was nominated for a Golden Globe, as well as on TV in *Omnibus* and the *Dow Hour of Great Mysteries*). Focusing on events that took place in a previous decade, *Point of Order* also betrayed a nostalgia similar to that often found in Warhol’s work, from the old typewriters and telephones of his earliest paintings to S&H Green Stamps and even the electric chair (the one chosen being that used to execute Julius and Ethyl Rosenberg in 1953).²⁰ As Warhol explained to de Antonio about the last, “I thought it was an old image, and it would be nice.”²¹ De Antonio also aligned himself with the gay male community by foregrounding the uncomfort-

18. Terry de Antonio, “An In-Depth Interview with Emile de Antonio” (1972), in *Emile de Antonio: A Reader*, p. 89.

19. The main transformation in *Point of Order* occurs in the conclusion, which derives from footage of Senator Stuart Symington walking out on McCarthy, an event that actually took place in the middle, rather than at the end, of the hearings. De Antonio also included in this scene a piece of stock film footage of a stenographer (the sole non-kinescope footage in the movie), the difference in image quality meant to signal to viewers the cinematic nature of what they had been watching (see Bruce Jackson, ed., *Emile de Antonio in Buffalo, Center Working Papers* [Buffalo: Center for Studies in American Culture, University at Buffalo, State University of New York, 2003], p. 59). Far from having any such estranging effect, such alterations went unnoticed at the time. De Antonio discussed other unnoted aspects of the conception and editing of the film in de Antonio, “Some Discrete Interruptions on Film, Structure, and Resonance” (1971), in *Emile de Antonio: A Reader*, p. 352.

20. Georg Frei and Neil Printz, eds., *The Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné: Paintings and Sculpture 1961–1963* (New York: Phaidon, 2002), p. 342.

21. De Antonio and Tuchman, *Painters Painting*, p. 127. See also, handwritten transcript of Emile de Antonio’s interview with Andy Warhol and Brigid Polk for *Painters Painting*, 1970, Emile de Antonio Papers, box 52, file 12, p. 163.



De Antonio. Point of Order. 1963.

ably homophobic slur to which Welch stooped in what was perhaps his most McCarthy-esque moment.²²

Given the parallels, it is not surprising that *Point of Order* was initially received in much the same terms as Warhol's painting. Despite generally positive reviews, most reacted to it solely as footage, evincing what Leo Steinberg isolated as Pop art's foremost characteristic: "to have pushed subject matter to such prominence that formal or aesthetic considerations are temporarily masked out."²³ Voiced during the 1963 Pop Art Symposium at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Steinberg was puzzling through precisely what Warhol and de Antonio had wrestled with the year before, the idea that "there is not sufficient transformation or selection within Pop art to constitute anything new."²⁴

When reviewing *Point of Order* for *Partisan Review* in 1964, Susan Sontag assimilated it to her emerging conception of "camp," an idea that would appear under that name two issues later.²⁵ For Sontag, *Point of Order*, like camp, was utterly devoid of political content, "irresistibly encourag[ing] us to relish the villains aesthetically": "In that it aestheticized a weighty public event, *Point of Order* was the real *comédie noire* of the season, as well as the best political drama."²⁶

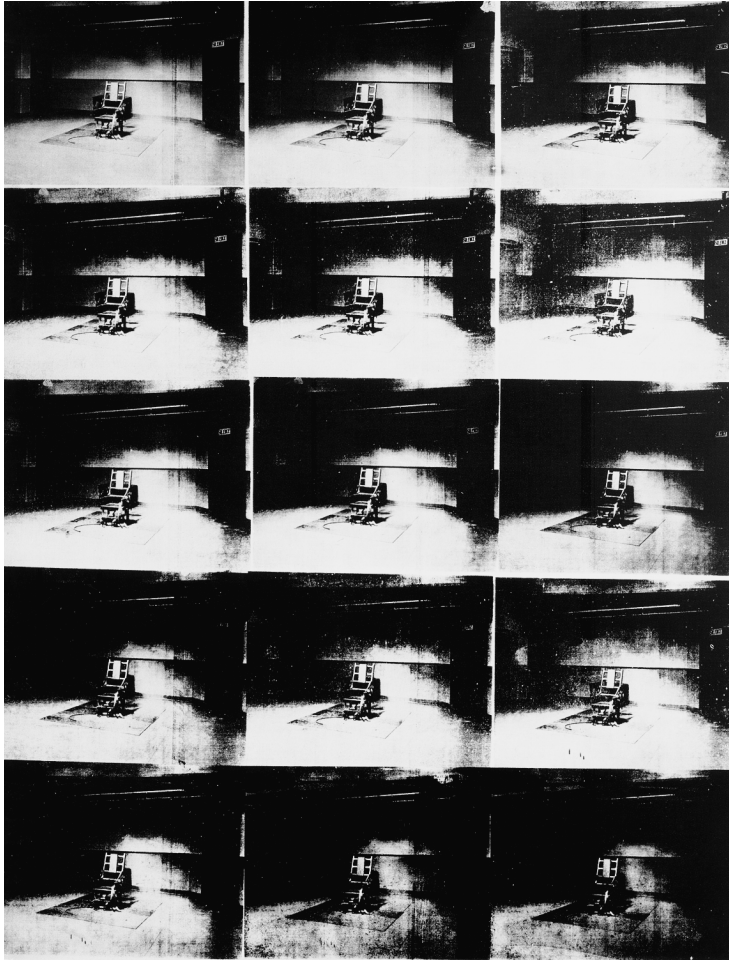
22. De Antonio consistently emphasized that he found Welch almost as reprehensible as McCarthy. The scene in which Welch insinuates the terms "pixie" and "fairy" into the hearings would seem the most clear, if not sole, point at which this aspect of the Boston lawyer becomes clear.

23. Leo Steinberg, in Peter Selz et al., "A Symposium on Pop Art," in *Pop Art: A Critical History*, ed. Steven Henry Madoff (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 72. *Point of Order* was even excluded from the New York Film Festival on the grounds that it was not a film, a category decision reminiscent of *Art in America's* classing of Warhol's early painting *Storm Door [I]* (1961), as a "print"; see "New Talent USA," *Art in America* 50, no. 1 (1960), p. 42.

24. Steinberg, in *Pop Art*, p. 71.

25. Susan Sontag, "Notes on 'Camp'" (1964), in *Against Interpretation* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966), pp. 275–92.

26. Susan Sontag, "Going to the Theater (and the Movies)," *Partisan Review* 31, no. 2 (Spring 1964), p. 292. Reviewer Ernest Callenbach similarly noted, "there is of course no political significance in the film." Callenbach, "Point of Order," *Film Quarterly* 17, no. 4 (Summer 1964), p. 57. Some



Warhol. Lavender Disaster. 1963.
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For de Antonio, however, *Point of Order* was more than comedy or drama. Although he wavered somewhat in later years, he saw it initially as broadly and bitingly political: “my movie is against the whole Establishment,” he stated to the *Washington Post* in 1964.²⁷ It was an indictment of “the failure of American culture” which had fallen, through the manipulation of the media, into demagoguery.²⁸ “The film,” he explained,

is not an attack on McCarthy. The film is an attack on the American government. My feeling is that if you look at the film carefully, Welch comes off as badly as McCarthy. He comes off as a rather brilliant, sinister, clever lawyer who used McCarthy’s techniques to destroy McCarthy . . . Don’t misunderstand me. I wanted McCarthy gored to death but I also wanted the whole system to be exposed.²⁹

What was de Antonio trying to accomplish with *Point of Order*’s “cold ‘no comment’” style? In part, it opposed the emerging aesthetic of cinema vérité—gritty and subjective camera work that proclaimed reality but that de Antonio felt appropriate mainly for documenting rock concerts.³⁰ More expressly, however, *Point of Order* sought to overturn documentary’s reliance on the omniscient, third-person narrator who spoke with the authority of the voice of God. This, for de Antonio, amounted to “fascism.”³¹ More insidiously than an overt directive, however, the trouble with the traditional documentary voice was that it simulated objectivity, a perennial target of de Antonio’s scorn. “I was asked this question (of objectivity) many times and I’m tired of it,” he stated in 1969. “It sounds flippant, but it’s nonetheless correct: only God is objective and he doesn’t make films.”³² What de Antonio opposed in “objectivity” was not the facticity of documentary footage (not at all), but the presumption of the narrator to speak in the name of everyone, to hold forth with the universality of a subject in the know, with the obligation or imposition of a common sense that

years later, de Antonio would note, “In documentary film content is all. Further, documentary is anti-camp. Susan Sontag, *pace*.” Quoted in Kellner and Streibel, *Emile de Antonio: A Reader*, p. 31.

27. Jerry Doolittle, “Producer Here for McCarthy Film Preview,” *Washington Post, Times Herald*, April 18, 1964, E15.

28. “*Rush to Judgment: A Conversation with Mark Lane and Emile de Antonio*” (1967), in *Emile de Antonio: A Reader*, p. 189.

29. Alan Rosenthal, “Emile de Antonio: An Interview,” *Film Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (Autumn 1978), p. 6.

30. Emile de Antonio, “Some Discrete Interruptions on Film, Structure, and Resonance” (1971), in *Emile de Antonio: A Reader*, p. 352.

31. Wintonick, “Quotations from Chairman De,” p. 389; and Rosenthal, “Emile de Antonio: An Interview,” p. 6.

32. Picard, “Inter/view with Emile de Antonio,” in *Emile de Antonio: A Reader*, p. 214. De Antonio discussed his objections to the notion of objectivity numerous times. See also, for instance, Glenn O’Brien, “Interview with Emile de Antonio Director of *Millhouse*” (1972), in *Emile de Antonio: A Reader*, p. 241.



Left: De Antonio. *In the Year of the Pig*. 1968.

Right: De Antonio. *Millhouse: A White Comedy*. 1971.

is, in actuality, merely the hegemonic perspective in neutral guise. For de Antonio, the so-called objective voice appeared to speak a form of “truth” as “discovered by a committee of reasonable men,” though it was actually that of history as written by its victors.³³

In later films, particularly the anti-Vietnam War *In the Year of the Pig* (1968) and the anti-Richard Nixon *Millhouse: A White Comedy* (1971), de Antonio honed his political critique (and further opposed “objectivity”) by more explicitly inflecting his material: conducting interviews, montaging more overt or satirical juxtapositions, emphasizing historical context (almost entirely lacking in *Point of Order*), and engaging in increasingly Brechtian estrangement effects.³⁴ In the early 1960s, however, what de Antonio found most important, indeed crucial, was precisely that which led *Point of Order* to be deemed apolitical: the elimination of the imposing, narrative voice and with it an “objective” distance from the material. Not only was there to be, according to de Antonio, “No preaching,” but “No narration, no explanation, no comment.”³⁵ For de Antonio, there was something compelling about the lack of distance, the absence of comment, that necessitated (or transformed aesthetics into) an almost ethical response.

33. Emile de Antonio, “The Point of View in *Point of Order*” (1964), in *Emile de Antonio: A Reader*, p. 150; Jean W. Ross, “Emile de Antonio,” p. 137.

34. Randolph Lewis attempts to read all of de Antonio’s films as primarily Brechtian, seeing *Point of Order*, however, as insufficiently so or undermining itself (see, particularly, pp. 38–39). The point of my argument, on the contrary, is that *Point of Order* falls into a much more undecidable, and in this “Warholian,” aesthetic. It is notable that de Antonio, himself, varies widely in his discussion of *Point of Order*. While maintaining the film’s broadly political intention, he at times claims that the formal characteristics were of most interest, as in Rosenthal, “Emile de Antonio: An Interview,” p. 6. It is precisely de Antonio’s own failure to grasp, entirely, what he had accomplished in *Point of Order* that is of particular interest to me here.

35. De Antonio, “The Point of View in *Point of Order*,” in pp. 149–50. In his recent book on the Army-McCarthy Hearings, Robert Shogun critiques television journalism from a largely moralistic position, precisely for not providing the authoritative, “neutral” context that de Antonio so problematizes. Shogun, *No Sense of Decency: The Army-McCarthy Hearings: A Demagogue Falls and Television Takes Charge of American Politics* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2009), p. 188.

“Truth in art,” he declared of *Point of Order* in 1964, “is internal, personal, and once committed in form offers itself for judgment.”³⁶

Cut to a gallery exhibiting 20 or 30 of Andy's pictures. A group of people is listening to the explanation by the gallery owner. "Andy Warhol has found the answer to the question of the day."

/ His [the gallery owner's] authentic speech cannot be prescribed, but what he says is half truth and half bluff /.

Again we see the pictures. They are a monstrously enlarged reality which we have seen at the beginning of the film.

*"It is our world," says the gallery-owner. "We have to learn to live with it."*³⁷

In 1962, de Antonio regarded Warhol's practice as aligned with his own. If “McCarthyism was the triumph of the art of advertising—the art of saying absolutely nothing, the triumph of technique over content,”³⁸ as de Antonio contended, *Point of Order* was to expose that technique by appropriating and enlarging it on screen.³⁹ Warhol, he maintained, did the same. As de Antonio noted, somewhat telegraphically, in an unpublished letter of that year:

Andy already big success as painter. The chic buying. Some of the ideas & rationale come from here (I say this modestly since 99% Andy's) and it's a real sound attack on Mad[ison] ave[nue] values: he paints campbell's soup, dollar bills, TV sets, nose fixing ads, etc all done exactly as they are but different scale etc and really effective.⁴⁰

36. De Antonio, “The Point of View in *Point of Order*,” in *Emile de Antonio: A Reader*, p. 150. It is this truth, which bodes forth an ethical response, that de Antonio opposed to a truth “discovered by a committee of reasonable men, however eminent” (p. 150).

37. Emile de Antonio, “Andy Warhol! New York! New York!,” unpublished fourteen-page film-script dated January 13, 1965–April 30, 1966, Emile de Antonio Papers, Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, box 13, file 3, p. 4.

38. Wintonick, “Quotations from Chairman De,” in *Emile de Antonio: A Reader*, p. 391. See also Bernard Weiner, “Radical Scavenging: An Interview with Emile de Antonio,” *Film Quarterly* 25, no. 1 (Autumn 1971), p. 8; and Daniel Talbot, “On Historic Hearings from TV to the Screen,” *New York Times*, January 12, 1964, p. X7.

39. See Thomas Waugh, “Beyond Vérité: Emile de Antonio and the New Documentary of the 70s,” *Jump Cut* 10–11 (1976), pp. 33–39, <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC10-11folder/EmileDeAntonio.html> (accessed September 22, 2008). Waugh writes, “*Point of Order* . . . is an incisive critique of the video medium itself, a documentary parallel of Elia Kazan's *A Face in the Crowd*, the 1957 Hollywood denunciation of the power of the tube. *Point of Order's* impact as auto-critique is stronger because of its documentary authenticity. The alienating effect of seeing video on the cinema screen, and the further effect of the ten-year lapse between shooting and compilation, give the film all the more analytic power.”

40. Emile de Antonio, two-page letter to “Caro Reardo-san,” April 12, 1962, Emile de Antonio Papers, box 1, folder 13, p. 2.

Whether de Antonio's own "cold 'no comment'" style contributed to, derived from, or evolved independently of Warhol's, Warhol's work continued to intrigue, if not disturb, de Antonio for the rest of his career, no doubt largely on account of the initial parallels between them. In 1965, de Antonio began work on an ultimately never-to-be-produced film script entitled "Andy Warhol! New York! New York!." In what would have been, if completed, de Antonio's second major film, he attempted to explicate what he found so compelling. Opening with a shot of a cemetery (a possible reference to Warhol's "Death and Disaster" painting, *Gangster Funeral* [1963]), the film moves to a small "lean-to made of soap boxes and tin" and then to a sequence of ever larger houses and apartment buildings until:

A sixty-story building.

On top of it luminous figures telling us that it is nine o' clock a.m.

52 degrees Fahrenheit.⁴¹

"Andy Warhol!" was to begin with a succession of such pictorial sequences, each progressing from small to large to monumental and from handmade to mechanical to fully automated: cars, homes, filling stations, hamburgers . . . shops, advertisements, sex symbols . . . until, finally:

A small electric chair, a bigger electric chair, the biggest electric chair. This is no longer a real chair, but a picture. The camera recedes. We are in the New York Museum of Modern Art. A young girl is standing staring at the picture. The picture bears a label: the electric chair: Andy Warhol.⁴²

Although one should not prejudice an unshot film, de Antonio's juxtapositions seem banal: Warhol's Factory turning out *Flower* paintings, for instance, which he merely signs ("The automatic line of art" de Antonio calls it), followed by a scene of "the automatic line of the Bond bread factory."⁴³ What de Antonio hoped to convey, however, and which he would later make explicit, was the idea that "Andy's painting inexactly parallels Marx's description of the history of economic growth," from hand-craft to mechanical means to full-scale automation, at which point, writes de Antonio in the unpublished text, "Marx and Warhol," "He was then sufficiently alienated from his painting that he became bored and left it."⁴⁴

41. De Antonio, "Andy Warhol!," p. 1. Although widely known as a "Death and Disaster" series painting, Warhol's *Gangster Funeral* has recently been correctly reclassified as within a series of "Our Town Paintings"; see Frei and Printz, *The Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné*, pp. 338–41.

42. De Antonio, "Andy Warhol!," pp. 2–3. This scene ends with children milling around in the gallery and prefigures the conclusion of *Painters Painting*, which takes place in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

44. De Antonio, "Marx and Warhol," completed ms., pp. 3–4. De Antonio is referring to Warhol's announced "retirement" from painting in 1965 to concentrate on filmmaking and managing the Velvet Underground.

Although Warhol's artwork, according to de Antonio, was inadvertently Marxist, in that it foregrounded and thus made available for critique the various stages of capitalist development, Warhol himself was "not a Marxist but an emblem of American upward social mobility, like Richard Nixon."⁴⁵ Like Nixon, Warhol was part Horatio Alger figure with, as de Antonio declared of the future president, "the burning desire and energy to have the whole piece of cake."⁴⁶ "Andy read our history plain," he contended: "a mountain of corpses up which success trudged, pausing to sniff new views. Careers open to talent. Shoe ads. Money. A fashionable private house, an entourage, but not the view from the top. Yet."⁴⁷

Emphasizing this aspect of the artist's persona in "Andy Warhol! New York! New York!," de Antonio was to couple Warhol's story with that of a fictional hamburger vendor who rises to become the millionaire CEO of a lunch-counter drugstore chain, the foremost collector of Warhol's paintings, and, eventually, an associate of Pop magnates Robert and Ethyl Scull. By this point, de Antonio's film, particularly those scenes set in collectors' apartments, would have come to resemble (if it was not directly patterned after) Ken Heyman's and Henri Dauman's photographs, which rendered Pop as a contemporary commercial Surrealism (perhaps the reason the script featured Warhol's meeting with Salvador Dali and Isabelle Collin Dufresne, later known as Ultra Violet):

The flat resembles a fantastic dream.

Immense hunks of human figures from comics loom from the walls.
Man moves among them like in a world of giants.

"This is our world, we have to learn to live with it," quotes the former hamburger vendor mechanically. He doesn't feel like living with it.⁴⁸

At times de Antonio fell even further into bathos, as in a scene when an unsuccessful young painter, drawings tucked under his arm, stares into a gallery's shop window and wonders, "What would [he] have to do to get a square meal for once?"⁴⁹

Despite, or perhaps because of, de Antonio's earlier commercial involvement with the arts, he also wrestles with Warhol's role within a gallery world that emulated the same advertising and PR strategies as Madison Avenue, what he calls in the script, "the symbiosis of art and society. The artist creates, the public

45. De Antonio, "Marx and Warhol," first page of unpaginated draft.

46. Neufeld, in *Emile de Antonio: A Reader*, p. 111. De Antonio consistently discussed the Horatio Alger subtext of his film on Nixon, *Millhouse: A White Comedy*.

47. De Antonio, "Marx and Warhol," completed ms., p. 1.

48. De Antonio, "Andy Warhol!," p. 7. Ken Heyman's photographs were published in 1965 in John Rublowsky, *Pop Art* (New York: Basic Books, 1965). Henri Dauman's photos were published the same year in "You Bought It, Now Live With It," *Life* 59, no. 3 (July 16, 1965), pp. 56–61. Warhol was introduced to the future Ultra Violet in early 1965. Callie Angell, *Andy Warhol Screen Tests: The Films of Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné* (New York: Abrams and The Whitney Museum of American Art, 2006), p. 205.

49. De Antonio, "Andy Warhol!," p. 12.

buys, the mass media promote and thrive at the same time.”⁵⁰ A decade later, de Antonio’s verdict on the art world would come to resemble that of social historians like Eva Cockroft, Max Kozloff, Moira Roth, or Serge Guilbaut.⁵¹ New York School abstraction was self-reflexive, medium specific, apolitical, and therefore complicit with the Cold War priorities of the US government and the larger capitalist establishment.⁵² De Antonio’s critique soon extended to cinema. In a controversial 1973 interview in *Artforum*, he denounced experimental and structural film. With a characteristic lack of generosity toward his cinematic rivals, de Antonio asserted:

When Jasper Johns paints letters it’s art; Hollis Frampton’s *A, B, C, D* film [*Zorns Lemma* (1970)] is something else. The idea of literally transposing exhausted painting ideas into film is a boring idea and most of the people doing this are painters manqués.⁵³

If, for de Antonio, both Frampton’s aesthetics and his own derived from the Cage circle (Rauschenberg and Cage, in de Antonio’s case; Johns in that of Frampton), Frampton (along with filmmakers closer to Abstract Expressionism such as Stan Brakhage) was regarded as adopting and emulating the New York School’s abstract autonomy, “totally uninvolved with the nature of the social struggle.”⁵⁴ For de Antonio, abstraction seemed to produce an illusion that was the equal opposite of objectivity.⁵⁵ *Point of Order*, by contrast, eschewed both abstraction and objectivity to foreground its subject. Enlarged, displaced, and fixed (in contrast with the fleeting nature of live TV), *Point of Order* reproduced the system in a manner that, although de Antonio was still hard pressed to explain it, allowed the system to be judged. “What seems important to me,” he stated (in language that echoes much early writing on Pop art), “is to make people see the same old things from a new angle.”⁵⁶

While de Antonio would, at times, extend his critique of New York School aesthetics to Cage, Rauschenberg, and Johns, he always stopped short of applying it to Warhol. “Andy is not a Marxist,” insisted de Antonio in another draft of “Marx and

50. Ibid., 4–5. Warhol said de Antonio had been “making art commercial,” in de Antonio and Tuchman, *Painters Painting*, p. 119.

51. See Eva Cockroft, “Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War,” *Artforum* 12, no. 10 (June 1974), pp. 39–41; Max Kozloff, “American Painting During the Cold War,” *Artforum* 11, no. 9 (May 1973), pp. 43–54; Moira Roth, “The Aesthetic of Indifference,” *Artforum* 16, no. 3 (November 1977), pp. 46–53; and Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

52. Alan Asnen, “De Antonio in Hell” (1968), in *Emile de Antonio: A Reader*, pp. 209–10.

53. Neufeld, in *Emile de Antonio: A Reader*, p. 106. Annette Michelson, one of *Artforum*’s editors at the time, would respond to de Antonio’s charges in a letter to the magazine.

54. Emile de Antonio, “The Agony of the Revolutionary Artist” (1971), in *Emile de Antonio: A Reader*, p. 262.

55. “I don’t believe that any filmmaker is objective. I think that objectivity is impossible unless you do abstract work.” Picard, “Inter/view with Emile de Antonio,” p. 214.

56. Wintonick, “Quotations from Chairman De,” p. 389.

Warhol.” “His work is. He has restored the subject to painting. His subjects are a list of that urgent malaise which devalues our bourgeois richness. It is also a comment on his own quest: what he sought, wasn’t worth it.”⁵⁷

No matter how much ink de Antonio committed to the critical potential of Warhol’s work, he never succeeded in pinpointing or explaining the manner in which it functioned. Despite coming at Warhol from every angle in “Andy Warhol! New York! New York!,” de Antonio fails to capture the flash of difference that arises from the blank appropriation in Warhol’s paintings and silkscreens. Rather, by multiplying a series of didactic parallels—cars, billboards, assembly lines, and so on—de Antonio succeeds only in extrapolating the deadening and exhausting sameness of mass manufacturing, consumption, automation, publicity, and advertising. “People can’t even smile,” he notes of a scene to have taken place in the Sculls’ apartment. “Reality weighs them down from all sides.”⁵⁸ And elsewhere: “Ready-made soups, ready-made meals, ready-made feelings, ready-made ideas. The woman sits on a stool in her kitchen, tired, drowsy.”⁵⁹ Try as he might, de Antonio’s dialectic gets him no closer to the significance of that moment, one day in Warhol’s studio, when a seemingly untransformed reproduction of a soft drink opened onto something else. What he could not capture or convey is that which produced his conviction that a “cold ‘no comment’” reproduction of a Coke bottle—or of an electric chair, or of the Army-McCarthy hearings—could form, indeed could be the most valid form of, critique.⁶⁰

In the winter of 1959 I lived a few blocks away and on empty nights would walk up Park Avenue and over to Andy’s. The National Fertility Institute was next door. Andy poured Scotch whisky, never drank it. Looked like a super intelligent white rabbit, a voyeuristic one. New paintings appeared. Dick Tracy, Nose Job, Truss. However, one night two large paintings were put up, one against the other. Both were Coke bottles, both were black and white, both were black and white [sic]. However, one was a Coke bottle nothing else; the other was limned with the brushy strokes of East Tenth failure, second generation Abstract Expressionism.

Andy’s silence was always a question. Others explained, confessed, com-

57. De Antonio, “Marx and Warhol,” completed ms., p. 3. De Antonio would maintain this view, declaring of Warhol in 1982, “You think he’s making fun of it all, and at the same time you know that he’s serious. He means both. He knows how dreary and shallow it is.” David Segal, “De Antonio and the Plowshares Eight” (1982), in *Emile de Antonio: A Reader*, p. 317.

58. De Antonio, “Andy Warhol!,” p. 8.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

60. In this, de Antonio received Warhol’s work in perhaps a somewhat similar manner as did Martha Rosler: “I saw it as sheer critique without offering any alternative. Not even necessarily engaging in critique but *representing* critique. It was sheer negativity.” Martha Rosler, in Benjamin Buchloh, “A Conversation with Martha Rosler,” in *Martha Rosler: Positions in the Life World*, ed. Catherine de Zegher (Birmingham: Ikon Gallery, 1998), p. 29.

mented. "But Andy, you've already answered this. One is great, the other should be chucked out."

Some months later I brought Eleanor Ward who owned the Stable Gallery. We drank Scotch whisky in large white cups, lots of it. Eleanor agreed to give Andy his first show.⁶¹

When interviewing Warhol for *Painters Painting* in 1970, de Antonio placed him within a *mise-en-scène* unique within the movie. "I knew long before the crew arrived exactly how I wanted to film him," de Antonio recalled:

Andy and I on a park bench between the two mirrors, [the cameraman, Ed] Emshwiller standing behind us, shooting over our heads into the mirrors. Andy improvised by adding Brigid Polk to the scene . . . Thus, in long shots, Emshwiller could be seen filming; Mary [Lampson] doing sound; and Brigid, Andy, and I talking on a park bench.⁶²

De Antonio surely relished capturing Warhol within his increasingly Brechtian cinematography. During the interview, he also attempted, directly and repeatedly, to question Warhol about the political implications of the painting that Warhol, at that time, had abandoned. Abetted by the ever-flippant Polk, Warhol proved typically evasive. No closer to pinpointing the artist's political outlook, de Antonio left all exchanges on the subject of politics on the cutting room floor.⁶³

That same year, 1970, Michel Foucault addressed himself to what he called "the greatness of Warhol with his canned foods, senseless accidents, and his series of advertising smiles."⁶⁴ Not unlike de Antonio's abandoned film script, the French philosopher indicated the "boundless monotony" of the automated and repetitive commercial sphere, "the oral and nutritional equivalence of those half-open lips, teeth, tomato sauce, that hygiene based on detergents" and "death . . . between the glistening steel blue arms of the electric chair."⁶⁵ Also like de Antonio, Foucault saw Warhol's aesthetic not only dissolving painting into a one-dimensional society, but also initiating a break or fissure within it: "[S]uddenly," writes Foucault, "arising from the background of the old inertia of equivalences, the striped form of the event tears through the darkness, and the eternal phantasm informs that soup can, that singular and depthless face."⁶⁶

61. De Antonio, "Marx and Warhol," variant draft.

62. Emile de Antonio, "My Brush with Painting" (1984), in *Emile de Antonio: A Reader*, p. 274.

63. De Antonio's questioning is found in the unpublished manuscript of the interview (see, for instance, pp. 157–58). Although Warhol is evasive about the political implications of his painting, he immediately pointed to the recently completed *Blue Movie* (1968): "D[e Antonio]. To get back to something that's dear to me. What about politics. Do you feel that you're [*sic*] work has any political significance? A[ndy Warhol]. Oh yeah, the last movie we made was a blue movie" (p. 157).

64. Michel Foucault, "Theatrum Philosophicum" (1970), in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 189.

65. *Ibid.*

66. *Ibid.*

What Foucault called “phantasm” was not only that “incorporeal materiality” that “arises between surfaces” and is thus inextricably allied with the rise of the media, but also “the first leap of an imperceptible difference,” an “acategorical” difference, difference without concept—precisely what remains of reproduction once all meaningful distance, all legible commentary, has been removed.⁶⁷ David Antin had well characterized this phenomenon four years earlier, in a passage made famous by Leo Steinberg: “Before the Warhol canvasses we are trapped in a ghastly embarrassment. This sense of the arbitrary coloring, the nearly obliterated image and the persistently intrusive feeling. Somewhere in the image there is a proposition. It is unclear.”⁶⁸

Foucault would give this embarrassing, unclear proposition a name: *stupidity*. Stupidity, according to Foucault, opposed itself not to thought (with which it was secretly in league), but to intelligence, “the categorical act of avoiding error.”⁶⁹ “[B]y situating the free supplement of error,” explained Foucault, “categories silently reject stupidity. In a commanding voice, they instruct us in the ways of knowledge and solemnly alert us to the possibilities of error, while in a whisper they guarantee our intelligence and form the a priori of excluded stupidity.”⁷⁰

It is here that de Antonio’s reception and Foucault’s analysis of Warhol’s painting converge. For, as we have seen, it was precisely the commanding, instructional intoning of the traditional documentary voice-over that de Antonio felt compelled to do away with in *Point of Order*—to take the authority of narration away from the documentary tradition and leave the viewer confronted by an event.⁷¹ “[T]here is no explanation,” proclaimed de Antonio. “It’s not told to you. This is what you are seeing, *you see it*.”⁷² And in this blank confrontation (both aesthetic and, possibly, ethical), both Foucault and de Antonio saw similarly what was at stake: the freeing of thought from the subjection to common sense. According to Foucault, stupidity, that form of difference that arises from Warhol’s repetitions, is opposed to categories; but categories, in his view, are what limit and circumscribe thinking, and do so in the service of common sense. In order to overcome common sense, to have different thoughts, to delve into alterity, one must get outside of the categorical and confront stupidity. This is why stupidity is the first step of oppositional thought, what Gilles Deleuze called its “genitality.”⁷³

67. Ibid., pp. 169, 186, and 189.

68. David Antin, “Warhol: The Silver Tenement,” *Art News* 65 (Summer 1966), quoted in Leo Steinberg, “Reflections on the State of Criticism,” in *Robert Rauschenberg*, ed. Branden W. Joseph (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), p. 36.

69. Foucault, “Theatrum Philosophicum,” p. 190.

70. Ibid., pp. 188–89.

71. Recall de Antonio’s notion of artistic truth in *Emile de Antonio: A Reader*, p. 150.

72. Picard, “Inter/view with Emile de Antonio,” p. 219.

73. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 167, 275–76. More recently, Avital Ronell has noted, “whereas dumbness might be part of the irreparable facticity of existence, there is an ethics of stupidity, or let us say simply that it calls for an ethics.” Avital Ronell, *Stupidity* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002), p. 42. In this analysis, I am also thinking of Douglas Crimp’s approach to Warhol from the perspective



De Antonio. Painters Painting. 1972.

As demonstrated concisely by de Antonio's abandoned film script and much more copiously by art historical literature at large, the singularity of difference that Warhol's repetitions bring forth is infamously difficult to nail down. Foucault's attempt is no better, perhaps, than others, and no worse. But if the inarticulate and embarrassing singularity of difference that surges forth from Warhol's paintings and silkscreens remains ungraspable in its essence, it proves traceable, or so I would argue, in its effect: both in the generating force it had for de Antonio (his conviction that he and Warhol were accomplishing the same thing) and in the disturbance that it left within de Antonio's reception (the manner in which he was never able fully to explain the operation behind his conviction).

In any case, Warhol and de Antonio would ultimately follow the two paths laid out by Foucault, what he called thought's "two horns: one is perversity (to baffle categories) and the other ill humor (to point to stupidity and transfix it)."⁷⁴ The former path would become Warhol's—particularly, but not solely, in his cinema, which explored the transgressive and queer potentials of sexuality (but also technology) to invert and undermine the categorical dictates of state power. (De Antonio himself would point out the perceived threat posed to the US government by Warhol's *Lonesome Cowboys* [1968], which occasioned intense FBI surveillance.)⁷⁵ The latter

of an ethics of viewing; see, for instance, Douglas Crimp, "Face Value," in *About Face: Andy Warhol Portraits*, ed. Nicholas Baume (Hartford, Conn.: Wadsworth Atheneum, 1999), pp. 110–25.

74. Foucault, "Theatrum Philosophicum," p. 191.

75. De Antonio discusses the FBI's response to *Lonesome Cowboys* in *Mr. Hoover and I*. See also Margia Kramer, et al., *The FBI File on Andy Warhol* (New York: UnSub Press, 1988).



De Antonio. Underground. 1976.

path would become that of de Antonio, whose increasingly pointed exposés indicted and spoke back to the American political system with ill humor, if not caustic satire.

Two years after the release of *Painters Painting*, de Antonio began work on *Underground* (1976), his documentary of the radical, and at that time still fugitive, Weather Underground. Its centerpiece was a lengthy interview, clandestinely arranged and shot in a California safe house. “What did I want?” wrote de Antonio to himself:

I certainly did not share their tight, elitist, sectarian politics. They didn’t kill like the PLO or the Russian Narodniki. No Nechayevs among them. They were American to the core, media people. The makers of headlines. From the beginning I saw the film as an extension of their activity. What the film did or what happened to the film would be a media action. Their bombings were dangerous. They were threats to society because they were successful media acts.⁷⁶

At the time, both de Antonio and the Weatherpeople were concerned to shield the group’s appearance. Still atop the FBI’s most wanted list, none of the Weatherpeople had been photographed for nearly five years. After a couple of false starts, including

76. De Antonio, *Journals*, quoted in *Emile de Antonio: A Reader*, p. 55.

the erection of a scrim that could all-too-frequently be seen through, de Antonio proposed a solution. Cameraman Haskell Wexler would focus on a mirror which revealed the Weatherpeople only from the back. By inverting the *mise-en-scène* established for Warhol five years earlier, *Underground* makes for an intriguing, if possibly unconscious, homage to the “intelligent white rabbit” whose work de Antonio found so generative and baffling. As though across a magic looking glass, with de Antonio present on both sides, Warhol the media manipulator—whose painting de Antonio continued to regard as political—faced off with a radical political group whose actions, even bombs, de Antonio considered media events.