

ANDY WARHOL IS NOT YOUR FRIEND

I have never got to grips with thinking about the ethics of reproduction, especially now we're online and can press the button to make a copy, download the digital file and play.

Andy Warhol is not your friend. I repeat, Andy Warhol is not your friend. He knows too many people, has too many friends. He will put you to work in a factory and secretly film you asleep.

I have never got to grips with thinking about who gets the credit and why. Take anywhere and freeze it in time, make numbered copies and sign these peculiar versions of life.

Andy Warhol is not your friend. He repeats himself at your expense, owns too many wigs. You're not on the guest list, don't have a credit although it was all your idea. Put it down to survival skills.

“A smooth expanse of flawless beauty.”

ANDY WARHOL COULD BE YOUR COUSIN

He repeats the image the same but not quite
again and again and again
not at my expense or yours
but he sure took those assistants for a ride
when they could have taken some credit.

Andy Warhol could be your cousin
if only you got the nightshift
to press the factory buttons. Be part
of one big, happy extended family
of Andy's paint-crazed little helpers.

Don Judd might have been a relation too
except he bluntly said after an opening
that the best thing about Andy's silk-screens
is the panache of his colour
no matter how inaccurate.

Andy Warhol could be your cousin
or even Marilyn's. Every relationship
as artificial as a flavouring:
Cherry Marilyn, Mint Marilyn, Lemon Marilyn
hiding behind the lipstick, eye shadow and blonde rinse.

“Only what can be seen is there.”

FRANCIS BACON IS NOT YOUR FRIEND

I never think to read
the safety information provided.
If we crash, we crash;
we'll try to get out fast
with all our limbs intact.

Francis Bacon is not your friend.
He'd smudge your face and pin you
to the floor or bed, pull open
wounds to admire their beauty,
paint them purple, red.

I never think to read
what the critics said,
prefer to trust the horse's mouth.
If he said that's how he saw it
then that's just how it is.

Francis Bacon is not your friend
He knows how time smears flesh
and memory, how chance predicts
the future and that paint can tell you
everything you'll ever need to know.

“Words frozen in my broken mouth.”

FRANCIS BACON COULD BE YOUR COUSIN

How self-confident and charming
with his sado-masochistic hair
and gambling smile. So much flannel
with his jutting jaw, fudging
any slack signs of remorse.

Francis Bacon could be your cousin
down at the Gargoyle Club, introducing
you to his obnoxious friends who insist
on discussing your indiscreet walk,
your feeble fear of painful carousing.

Embarrassingly worked up, camped out even,
how can you remain impartial to such threats?
How riveted we all are
by a wildlife sportsman in pads
ripped and splattered into decay.

Francis Bacon could be your Soho cousin
on condition you admire his medical plates,
agree to wear the X-rated goggles,
sit on his couch and snarl for him,
pose as a primate-pope for a day.

“Try not to flinch at what comes popping up out of the gloom.”

JACKSON POLLOCK IS NOT YOUR FRIEND

I know I shouldn't be thinking like this.
I mean it's all in the past and we've been
and moved on, but I find myself below glass
watching over and over the blur of a man
as black paint is flicked, poured and thrown.

Jackson Pollock is not your friend,
he works far too large for comfort,
makes too much mess in the lounge
and leaves drips everywhere in the toilet.
(Light olive with spots of dull umber.)

I know I shouldn't be thinking like this.
New ideas are great but up on the wall
they can suddenly seem old. And I can't
help but think of the drunk, brutish painter,
his one-sided fights with poets and friends.

Jackson Pollock is not your friend.
He wouldn't want to be one anyway,
would rather turn the jukebox up and down
pints at the bar before bragging about
his ongoing battle with colour and form.

“The stars are brilliant tonight.”