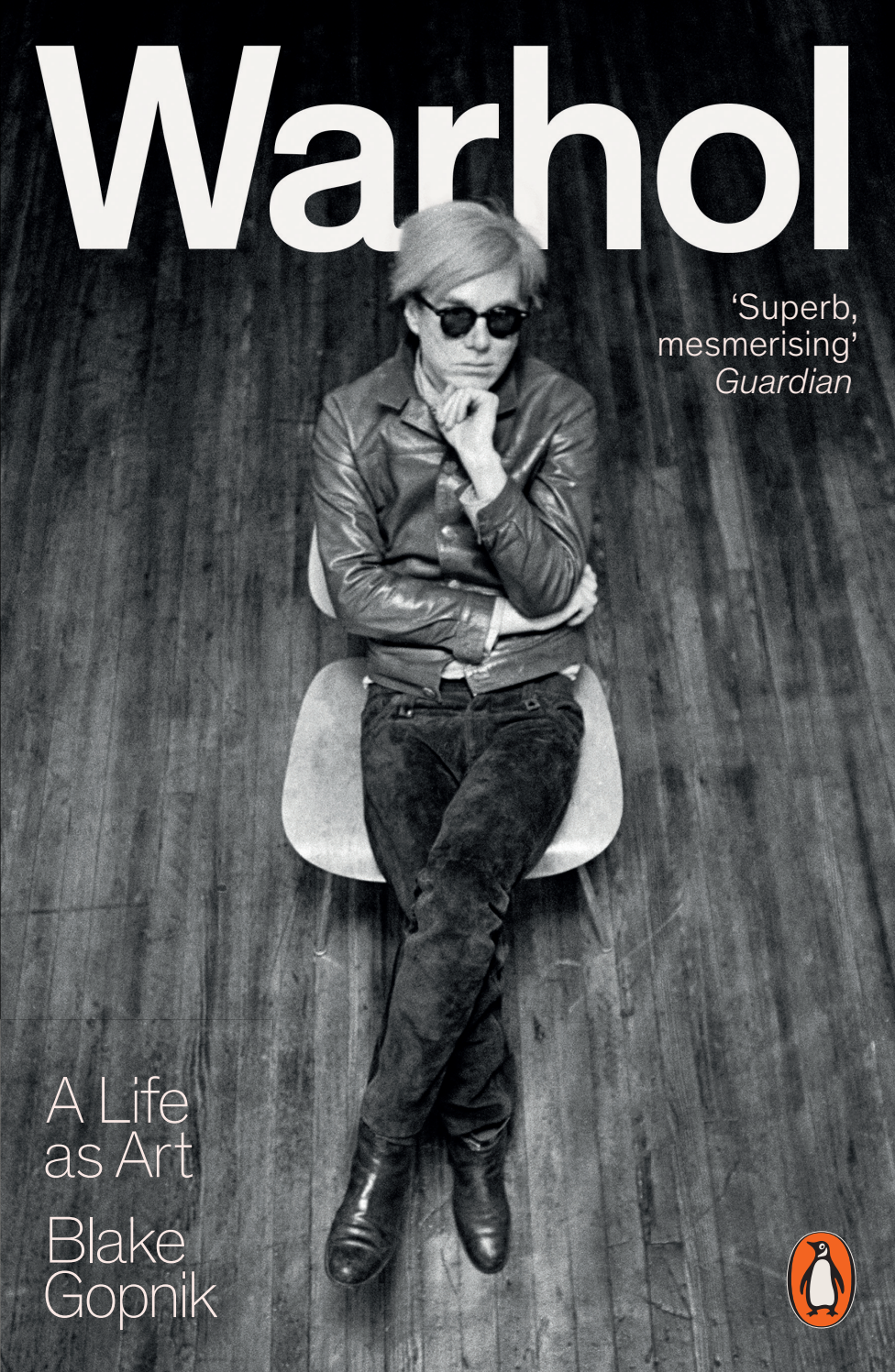
Warhol



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A Life as Art

Blake Gopnik

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Library Journal Edit

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Blake Gopnik is one of North America's leading arts writers, has served as art and design critic at Newsweek and as chief art critic at the *Washington Post* and Canada's *Globe and Mail*. He is a regular contributor to the *New York Times* and has a PhD in art history from Oxford University.

WARHOL

BLAKE GOPNIK

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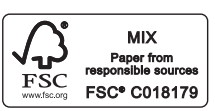

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To Lucy Hogg,
without whom this book—and its author—would barely exist.

And in memory of Matt Wrbican,
a lost mother lode of all things Warholian.
He wanted this book to be . . . longer.

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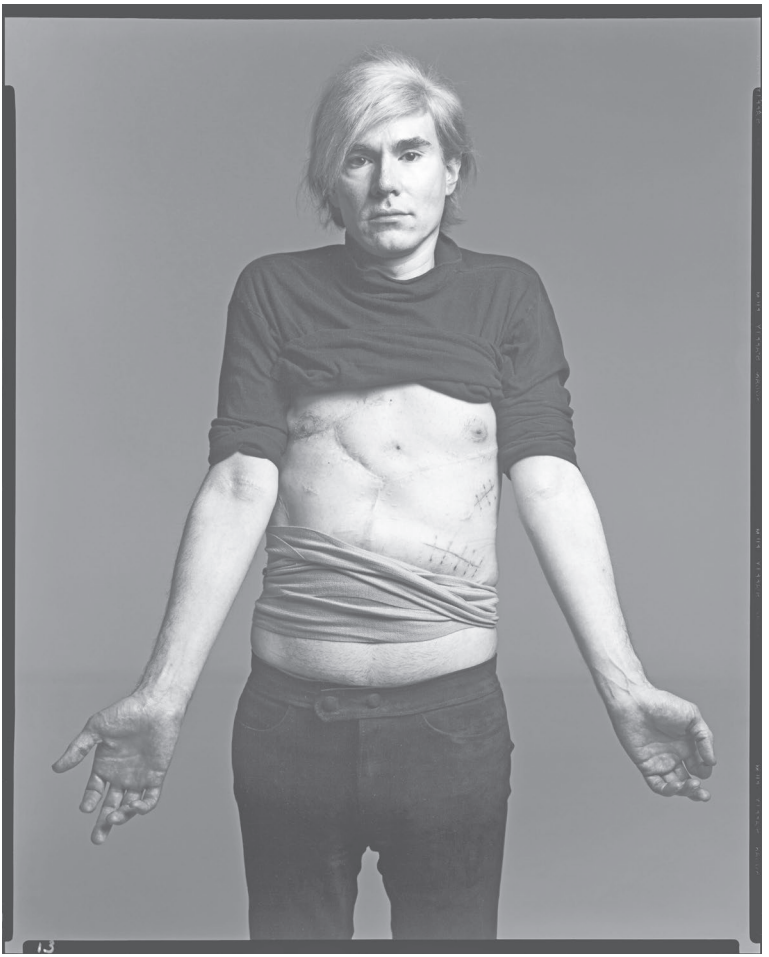
WARHOL



Warhol showing the scars from his shooting.

PRELUDE

DEATH

Andy Warhol died, for the first time, at 4:51 P.M. on the third of June 1968. Or that was the grim verdict of the interns and residents in the emergency room of Columbus Hospital in New York. Some twenty minutes earlier, the artist had been shot by Valerie Solanas, a troubled hanger-on at his famous studio, the Factory, which had recently moved to a new spot on Union Square. During the time it took for the ambulance to arrive, Warhol slowly bled to death. Once the patient was dropped at the hospital, a few blocks away, the young doctors in the E.R. couldn't find a pulse. There was no blood pressure to speak of. The patient's color was newsprint tinged with blue. By any normal measure, this thirty-nine-year-old Caucasian, five foot eight, 145 pounds, was D.O.A.

At the moment that the dead-ish victim was being wheeled in on his gurney, a gifted private-practice surgeon named Giuseppe Rossi, forty years old, was checking on a patient recovering in the intensive care unit. He heard the page on the P.A. and rushed to emergency to see if he was needed. As his juniors filled him in on the case, he reached out to make one final check on the fresh corpse where it lay unmoving, eyes closed, soaking the gurney in blood. He lifted an eyelid and watched as a still-living pupil contracted in the glare of hospital lights. There was work to be done.

Rossi rushed to figure out why his patient, who he took for one of Union Square's tramps, had gone into deep shock. He found the tidy entry wound of a single bullet on Warhol's right side, about midway down his chest, and furious bleeding from a ragged exit in his back on the left. The doctors installed a chest tube to deal with a collapsing right lung, pushed a breathing tube down Warhol's windpipe, started pumping in oxygen, called for blood and sped their patient along corridors and on up in the elevator to get to the operating room before he died.

Warhol was lucky in having Rossi for his doctor that day. The surgeon had immigrated from Italy after the war, when an expanding American medical system let him get training in the new field of open-heart surgery.

Since it could still be hard for a foreigner like Rossi to get a staff position, he found gigs in emergency rooms all over New York—including in Harlem, where he saw plenty of gunshot wounds. Years before hospitals had trauma specialists, by pure chance Warhol had ended up in the hands of a highly trained thoracic surgeon who knew all about bullets.

Residents sliced into the veins in Warhol's elbows, pushing in tubes for fluids and blood; they left scars that could have passed for stigmata in the arms of this lifelong churchgoer. Without wasting time on the usual five-minute hand wash, Rossi raced to find the source of the bleeding that was about to turn the body in front of him into a cadaver. He cut open Warhol's left chest—the first tissues he sliced through were too drained to bleed—and found a nasty rip in the bottom lobe of the lung; a huge metal clamp took care of that for the moment. Even as Rossi worked the anesthetist declared a cardiac arrest. Rossi cut open the sac around Warhol's heart, untouched by the bullet, and massaged the organ by hand. Death averted, once again.

Now Rossi cut into Warhol's right side, slicing from near the entry wound almost to the breastbone as he hunted for damage. Stories have been told of three or four bullets piercing Warhol's body, or of the lead from a single slug ricocheting inside his torso like some hellish pinball game, but Rossi found that a single slug had punched straight through the dying man. He saw where it had nicked the inferior vena cava, a garden-hose vein in the middle of the body that feeds blood from the legs back up to the heart, and that a clot had formed there that was keeping Warhol from instantly bleeding out. Making a new slice into the dying man's chest, down to the bottom of the breastbone then deep through Warhol's abs and straight toward his belly button, Rossi ratcheted the mess open with a steel retractor to get a clear look at the damage. "I'd never seen so much blood in my life," recalled Maurizio Daliana, the chief surgical resident at the time.

Rossi found more destruction: two holes in the arc of the diaphragm muscle, pierced both right and left as the bullet crossed through Warhol's body; an esophagus severed from the stomach, so that food and gastric acid were spilling out from below; a liver whose left lobe was mashed and bleeding and a spleen utterly destroyed and spilling more blood than any of the other organs. Solanas's bullet had also cut a ragged hole in Warhol's intestines, releasing feces and upping the chances of fatal infection.

What was left of the spleen had to go while the liver's injured lobe was also a hopeless case. Rossi used huge stitches to seal it off from the bulk of the organ so it could be sliced away without losing more blood, which was still flowing into Warhol as a transfusion and out again through the new holes in

his body. By the end of the operation, he'd received twelve units of blood; a body without leaks normally holds ten.

Just as things were getting under control, the O.R. was thrown into turmoil again by a visit from the hospital's top doctors. They told the surgeons that the man whose life they had better be saving was the superstar artist Andy Warhol—the very man who had made the term "superstar" famous—and a crowd of reporters and groupies was waiting downstairs. "He cannot die," said the visitors.

Rossi had barely heard of the artist or his antics.

He returned to the open body and took on the tricky repairs that remained. He tackled the oozing intestines, cutting out the damaged part and stitching together the clean ends. Then there was the severed esophagus to reattach, the most finicky procedure that evening. Rossi had to use the finest silk sutures and make sure the connection to the stomach was perfect. Any misalignment or excess scarring might have left Warhol in misery, unable to swallow properly. He did in fact go on to have trouble eating, remembered one doctor friend.

Exhausted from a long and tense operation, Rossi inserted all the standard tubes for drainage and closed up the body whose innards he had gotten to know. For convenience and safety—and maybe because he wasn't at all sure his patient would live to care—Rossi used huge stitches that gave Warhol's torso a network of Frankenstein scars. He showed them off for years to come.

. . . with Julia Warhola and big brother John.

1

1928–1934

BIRTH | PITTSBURGH | CARPATHO-RUSYNS | CHURCH

"The worst place I have ever been in my life"

Andy Warhol—or rather Andrew Warhola—was born on the sixth of August 1928, in a grim little flat on Orr Street, in Pittsburgh's Soho neighborhood, on a middling-hot day under overcast skies.

Andy's eldest brother Paul, who was born in the same room six years earlier, told the story that he'd heard his mother's screams "and then somebody said, 'It's half past five'"—although whether that was morning or evening has never been clear. Depending on who you believe, either a doctor or a midwife was in attendance.

Warhol's father was also Andrew (born Andrej or Andrii), a Slav who became an American a few months before his namesake was born.

Andrej was a laborer, like the thousands who worked in the Jones and Laughlin steel mill, a few steps down the hill on the shores of the toxic Monongahela River. He worked there before he went into heavy construction, when he traveled widely for a firm that moved buildings on rollers. It seems he would always have preferred the "easier," indoor, more settled life of a millworker, but somehow couldn't manage it. Although he was only five feet five inches tall he weighed 185 pounds and people remarked on his massive arms. A little after Warhol's birth, Andrej—likewise always known as "Andy," which was even how he signed his will—had his gallbladder removed, without complete success according to his son Paul. Six decades later, Andy Jr. would die after the same operation.

The screaming young mother was named Julia. She was thirty-six years old, an immigrant housewife with almost no English and a husband and three boys to tend: A middle son named John was three years older than Andy. For weeks or even months at a time her husband would live on construction sites across several states. A 1930 photo shows him and his work crew in

Indianapolis, shifting a 12,000-ton building that was still occupied. Julia was a sort of work widow—when things were going well. With the arrival of the Great Depression in 1929, there were times when Andrej had no work at all and Julia cleaned houses and sold crafts door to door. According to one story Warhol told, their soup wasn't Campbell's. It was made from water, salt, pepper and ketchup—Heinz brand, of course, a signature Pittsburgh product produced by a family that became patrons of the artist.

The Orr Street "apartment" was two rooms on the second floor of a tiny wooden row house. The walls were "just wooden panels going across—not even panels, just slats," one neighbor remembered. There was only cold water to wash in and the toilet was an outhouse in the alley—not a special indignity in the Warholas' world, but it couldn't have been fun in winter. A bit earlier, a Pittsburgh reformer's study of the Soho neighborhood had voiced contempt for its "insanitary, disease breeding vaults without sewer connection, ever ready to spread contamination and endanger the health of the neighborhood" and had described its houses as "veritable fire traps." In 1922, the year Paul Warhola was born, a newly published history of the city was describing the neighborhood's housing as "old and not attractive . . . populated by foreign mill workers and their families."

Within two years of Warhol's birth the Warholas had moved twice, ending up just down the street, and a touch up the ladder, in a four-room flat with a potbellied stove, a galvanized hip bath and an indoor but unplumbed toilet. The three boys slept in one bed, "but you didn't feel you were poor, because everybody else lived the same way," recalled John Warhola. They shared that house on Beelen Street with another family and paid $18 a month for the privilege, about a quarter of their monthly income.

The Pittsburgh that Andy Warhol grew up in wasn't just an example of blue-collar America. It was *the* archetype of that life and its struggles. In 1914, a charitable organization called the Russell Sage Foundation finished publishing *The Pittsburgh Survey,* whose six massive volumes contained the nation's first notable example of systematic urban sociology. The *Survey* became famous worldwide and made the city it treated famous, too, as a potential site of industrial progress and an actual site of hardship. As H. L. Mencken put it, in a famous essay written not long before Warhol was born, "Here was wealth beyond computation, almost beyond imagination—and here were human habitations so abominable that they would have disgraced a race of alley cats."

In American culture, being from Pittsburgh and working class was a distinctly "marked" condition, like being from Los Angeles and in movies. And for all his adult life Warhol did more to escape his clinging roots, or

obscure them, than to exploit or explore them. In 1949, when Warhol had just arrived in New York, a magazine editor asked him for a potted biography. Warhol gave him almost nothing: "My life wouldn't fill a penny postcard. I was born in Pittsburgh in 1928, like everybody else in a steel mill," he wrote, getting the steeler cliché out of the way even though it didn't quite apply to him, given a father who actually worked on faraway building sites. Yet that vita was a high point of self-revelation. Once he'd truly made it in New York, Warhol's story got even vaguer: He was born in 1929, or maybe '30, or even '33—he lied about his age even to his doctor—in toney Philadelphia or Newport, Rhode Island, or in humble Forest City or McKeesport, Pennsylvania. Over Warhol's thirty-eight years in New York, he barely returned a handful of times to his hometown, "the worst place I have ever been in my life," as he described it; he once reminisced with a college classmate about how the smog would turn a white shirt black by the end of the day. "I never give my background, and anyway, I make it all up different every time I'm asked," Warhol once admitted—more or less, in an interview in which his words were rearranged and sometimes made up. By '65, he'd told *Who's Who* that he was born in Cleveland to the aristocratic—and fictional—"von Warhols." Two years later, a Warhol scholar threw up his hands: "It is generally believed that he was born sometime between July 27 and August 17 and that he is somewhere between 39 and 47." The confusion lasted into the '90s.

Warhol's Pop Art is sometimes described as a celebration of his lowly origins—many of the other Popsters were more middle class—but it's just as much about moving up from those roots. His actual childhood didn't involve supermarket tuna, cans of Campbell's Soup or any of the other shiny brands of Eisenhower America that Warhol later showed in his art—before World War II, those were still products targeted at the elites. (It was only in the early 1960s, when Warhol was riffing on these brands, that the working class was being coaxed to buy them.) A 1930s neighbor of the Warholas, still living in her childhood home in 2015, didn't remember any canned goods of any kind in her mother's kitchen, even though their family was relatively prosperous. "Canning," she said, meant putting up your own vegetables in glass jars.

Julia cooked with crude utensils handcrafted by Andrej, and when the Warholas could afford better than watered-down ketchup their soup was immigrant fare, made by Julia herself, almost daily, from homegrown tomatoes, kohlrabi and radishes, or, as one brother remembered, from the pet chicken in the yard. The family made their own "kolbasi" sausage, rather than buying it ready-made from a butcher. Even once Warhol's career was taking off in New York, Julia was still offering visitors chicken soup cooked from scratch, not poured from a tin.

Andy Warhol wasn't born on the ladder's bottom rung. Even by the low standards of working-class Pittsburgh, he was in the mud at its feet. His parents' thick accent wasn't any of the standard, almost-respectable ones: Scottish or German, Irish or Italian. The Warholas would have been thought of as generic "Slavs" and, as *The Pittsburgh Survey* would have it, "a Slav is slow and unspectacular in making an impress upon the imagination of the community . . . [and] lacks the animation so characteristic of the Italian."

A chapter heading in the *Survey* had to remind its genteel readers—in the decent Scottish brogue of a Carnegie—that "A slav's a man for a' that." The *Survey* condemns the higher rents Slavs were forced to pay, and the contempt they were held in by their immigrant neighbors because of "their willingness at the outset to work at any wages and under any conditions." Among unskilled laborers, the *Survey* explains, "the Slovak, Croatian, Servian, and Russian (Greek Orthodox) may be said to perform tasks the roughest and most risky, and the most injurious to health." Something like 80 percent of the laborers at the giant Carnegie Steel were Slavs.

Andrej Warhola Sr., one of the "sturdy and submissive" Slavs that Pittsburgh's foremen sought out, was born in 1886 in a hungry village called Mikova, on what was then the remote eastern edge of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It was populated by a little-known ethnic group now called the Carpatho-Rusyns, and one Pittsburgh Rusyn remembered a 1930s article in *Life* magazine that described her homeland as where "the least civilized people of Europe live." The village is still hungry but is now in Slovakia, huddling on its border with Ukraine and Poland, on the edge of the Carpathian Mountains. For most of Warhol's life Mikova was in the artificial, pan-ethnic country of Czechoslovakia and Warhol usually referred to that nation-state as his family's homeland, even though he was well aware that it was a purely artificial, political entity of recent date. Like many immigrants of his era, he preferred the ethnic vagueness of political borders to greater cultural specificity—although he certainly knew that Czechoslovakia itself was founded in part by his fellow Rusyns, in Pittsburgh no less, when his father was a new arrival there.

Mikova had fewer than five hundred occupants when Andrej was young, although that was enough to divide it into an "upper" and "lower" town. Its inhabitants lived off the land: Every family had a little mill to grind its grains, while local flax and hemp were spun into cloth and each family's sheep provided cheese, wool and hides. Still, it was hard to make ends meet without finding seasonal work on larger farms in the Magyar or Slovak lowlands. By

1914, something like a quarter-million of these villagers considered a brutal, bankrupting, even illegal trip to America, followed by brutalizing manual labor once there, as an improvement over life at home.

In 1909, the Warholas—or rather "Varcholas"—from the upper town and with a decent little plot of land and several beehives, were better off than some Mikovans, but that wasn't saying much. It wasn't, at any rate, enough to impress the seventeen-year-old Julia Zavacky, a fellow villager of Andrej's whose family, also from Upper Mikova, had about the same middling-poor status as his. Six decades later, Julia remembered having wept at the prospect of her arranged marriage, even to the "so good-looking" Andrej, until he bought her affections with a legendary gift of candy. Andrej's sweets might have meant less than his American connections: He'd already made one foray to the New World sometime around 1905, when he probably worked for a bit as a coal miner. That was the standard first employment for new Slavic immigrants to Pennsylvania, and it's the stock workingman's occupation that Warhol sometimes liked to claim for his dad—when he wasn't busy denying it.

When the May wedding came, it was, as Julia remembered it, a grand three-day affair, with her hair dressed "like gold." Andrej wore ribbons and a white coat and there was a feast of "eggs, rice with buttered sugar, chickens, noodles, prunes with sugar, bread, nice bread, cookies made at home," as well as a band of fully seven Roma playing music.

Within a few years, however, Andrej was off to America again, leaving behind his wife and infant daughter, never to return again. He was fleeing conscription into the Austro-Hungarian army. Steamship agents working for American industrialists, but wearing local folk dress to avoid the imperial authorities, would remind young men of their impending service as they sold them tickets for the American passage. One Warhola brother who stayed behind did end up in the army and died from wounds sustained in World War I. Although around the time of Andrej and Julia's wedding, a Pittsburgh veteran of Russia's wars said that he "looked upon his experience on the battlefields as quite commonplace compared with his experience in the steel mills. From the first he emerged without a scratch; in the second he lost a leg."

Andrej's departure couldn't have much surprised Julia. It was a standard event in the region, and several of her own siblings had already settled near Pittsburgh, in the area around Lyndora where their descendants still live. But it did leave her in a difficult fix. She was stranded among her aging Warhola in-laws, who she was expected to serve hand and foot while also caring for younger siblings and an infant. Her life's first tragedy came when she lost the baby after only six weeks.

During World War I, the Germans and Russians fought over and through the region, with the conflict reaching right into Mikova, leaving the earth scattered with skulls of dead soldiers that shone "like large white mushrooms," as Julia remembered. She fled up the mountains and into the woods, her house was torched and she lost everything—"War, war, war. . . . Oh, you don't know how bad." Her father (yet another Andrej) had died the year of her marriage, and her mother died in the war's last year—of grief over a false story that her son had been killed in battle, says one tale—leaving Julia with two much younger sisters to care for. Family lore said that Andrej often tried to send money for his wife to join him in America, and that it was always stolen en route. In 1921, Julia finally arranged the trip for herself, thanks to a loan from a village priest.

It's not hard to imagine the contrast between life with five hundred near neighbors and kin among the fields and forests of the Carpathian mountains and life in a smoke-choked city of six hundred thousand people, bustling with Italians and Germans and Irish and Jews—as well as the occasional Presbyterian busy voicing contempt for the others. Andrej didn't even arrange for the couple to live among their own, in the so-called *Ruska dolina*—the "Rusyn valley"—down deep in a creek-bottom "run" where other villagers had crowded together and built a church.

If life in the United States might have been dislocating for Julia, that was a dislocation shared by all her kin in *Ruska dolina,* even more than by your average immigrants. Back in the Old Country, Mikovans like the Warholas and Zavackys were just "our people," with no more specific ethnic identity than that, or any need for one. They were set off from other groups by where they lived, in villages in the back of beyond in the mountains, more than by some idea of who they "were." In the United States, however, these newcomers were expected to fit into an ethnic pigeonhole, the way other Ellis Islanders did. Were they Poles? No. Romanians? Certainly not. Hungarians, Serbians, Croats? None of the above. They had a language that was distinct to them, rather like Slovak and not that far from Russian or Ukrainian but also quite different from all three—*po nashomu,* Warhol's kinfolk called it, meaning "what we speak." It's only since the fall of the Iron Curtain that "Carpatho-Rusyn" has become the preferred term for the group, recognized as distinct by most of the countries where they now live.

American immigration records, and *The Pittsburgh Survey,* sometimes set Warhol's people off from other Slavs as "Ruthenians," except that that name could also cover people who were more clearly Ukrainian or Slo-

vak. The Warholas and their ilk might also be called "Rusyns," unless they were going by "Rusnak"—or even, confusingly, "Ukrainian" or "Russian." A Zavacky from Warhol's generation said that he referred to himself as Russian, knowing that he wasn't, "because it was a big country everyone knew." To this day Julia's relatives in Lyndora call their old-timers' language "Russian," rather than using the other misnomers, "Slavish" or "Czech" or "Slovak," favored by Warhol and even today by some Pittsburgh Warholas. A woman who lived near the Warholas in Soho described them as "Slovak and Pollack"—like Slavic pushmi-pullyus—while their more Americanized neighbors simply thought of the Warholas as a few more "Hunkies" to be despised and made fun of. It didn't help that their Rusyn Bibles and ethnic newspapers were often written in the same Cyrillic script favored by commies.

The world movement for Carpatho-Rusyn culture has tried to spot the roots of Warhol's art in his parents' rural homeland. His "touch" has been compared to the touch on the Rusyns' hand-painted Easter eggs, ignoring the fact that one of Warhol's more notable achievements was to push back against both signature touch and hand painting. And while it's true that there is a notable folk element in his early commercial art, rather than being specifically Rusyn, it is generic enough to have come out of almost any peasant culture—or to have been invented whole by any good illustrator. Folksy styles were everywhere in Warhol's early years, as has now been largely forgotten.

It may be more sensible to see how being a Rusyn—or Rusnak or Ruthenian or Russian—might actually have left Warhol in a particularly good place to make his new country's most all-American art. On a rare occasion when he was asked about his ethnic identity, Warhol denied any interest in it: "I always feel American—100 per cent." Since the Rusyns never had much hope of getting their own ethnically based state, they could make a special investment in America's nonethnic nationhood, as well as in its panethnic consumption—of canned soup, tuna fish, cars and movie stars, all subjects of Warhol's greatest art. In this the Rusyns were a bit like the world's wandering Jews, except without the binding force of evident and wholesale persecution. Warhol's people were hyphenated Americans, just like all the Italian-Americans and Hungarian-Americans they had as neighbors, but with the unique distinction of having nothing to put before their hyphen. Warhol grew up "one of us" at home, and pretty much a blank slate—a "figment," as a reporter suggested his tombstone should say—out in the wider world. This underspecified outsiderism might have been the most precious gift his forefathers handed down to him. It let him adopt the role of American Everyman:

He could explain the nation's culture to itself as only an outside observer could, while also reshaping it from deep inside.

A few days after Warhol's sixth birthday, just before he entered first grade, his family moved up in the world to the newly built, pan-ethnic Dawson Street, on the southern edge of a bourgeois East Pittsburgh neighborhood called Oakland but also just up the hill from the Rusyn enclave. In the depths of the Great Depression, Andrej had somehow found the $3,200 in cash to buy a nice little house being repossessed by the bank, next door to a home already owned by his brother Jozef—"Joseph," by then—a giant man who worked in the mills. The brothers had matching scars on their faces earned during a drunken fight after a wedding, and people were afraid of them. Real estate records list Andrej's new home as having been bought for one dollar, which might signal some sort of tax dodge—the kind of thing Warhol was not above trying later, once he began to make money.

The Dawson Street house, semidetached and faced in brick, was only eight years old. It had both a yard and a bathtub, unheard-of luxuries by Soho standards and especially prized by the six-year-old Warhol. Despite the repossession, the price of the house—a little less than three years of a working man's salary—matches others for sale in Pittsburgh at the time. It looks as though the years in cheap-and-uncheerful Soho could have been a financial choice, to help save for a home, rather than because the family simply could not afford better. Andrej had a reputation as a penny-pincher: In Soho days, the family would be uprooted each time Andrej found a place that would save a few dollars a month on rent; he fixed his own children's shoes with tools that survive to this day. With work scarce during the Great Depression, he spent his time getting the new house ready for the family to move in, sanding floors, scraping wallpaper and getting a painter cousin to refinish the walls because he was "real reasonable."

Andrej also seems to have had notable social aspirations. One neighbor described him as "a little bit of a step above," while *The Pittsburgh Survey* describes "Slovaks" like him as "the most ambitious and pushing" of Slavs. The family's new East Pittsburgh location must have been chosen in part for the opportunities it represented: The area's development was held up by planners as a model of the new City Beautiful movement, while the *Survey* launches its denunciation of Soho by contrasting its horrors to the carefully planned and much publicized glories of Oakland, with its parks and impressive new museums, concert halls and library.

For most of Warhol's childhood, the ultimate symbol of Oakland's

excellence was going up just blocks from Dawson Street. Both the skyline and headlines were dominated by the new Cathedral of Learning, a forty-two-story, neo-Gothic skyscraper at the heart of the University of Pittsburgh, and a huge source of civic pride. As a publicity stunt for the Cathedral, the university got ninety-seven thousand of the city's schoolkids to contribute dimes to a buy-a-brick program that supported the construction, with Warhol's own school raising $76. He would have watched the tower's completion from his front porch—he even took pictures of it—and this colossal childhood presence must have lurked behind one of Warhol's most important film works, his eight-hour observation of that other colossus on his later horizons, the Empire State Building.

Warhol's school was Holmes Elementary, housed in a grand 1893 building that was only a few doors up on Dawson Street where more than one thousand kids from every ethnic group took their lessons. "It was the most wonderful place to go to school," said one classmate of Warhol's, recalling its orchestra and other ambitious offerings.

Like many schools that had bought into the twentieth century's progressive education movement, Holmes offered its students ambitious art classes. "This little kid was very, very good at drawing," remembered Catherine Metz, Warhol's second-grade teacher, fifty years after she'd taught him. "All his teachers seemed to recognize his art ability, and they would get him to come in and maybe make a border for the room or something."

Without money for toys or entertainments, or even a radio until Warhol was eight, Julia kept her boys busy with art. That's a major theme in the older brothers' accounts of their youth—"the three of us used to make all As in art," said John. Julia rewarded good pictures with candy bars, often won by Warhol, and made sure basic art supplies were at hand. The three boys based their pictures on magazine photos ("football players, airplanes, and the like") as Warhol went on to do for his entire professional life, while Julia particularly encouraged pictures of butterflies and angels, which became staples of Warhol's commercial imagery in the 1950s.

A telling story has circulated, in various forms, about Warhol's first day in first grade—or possibly kindergarten, in a version that seems set near the first Warhola homes in Soho. Dragged to school by his big brother Paul, or in some accounts by a neighbor, Warhol had such a miserable time that he ran home early in tears. One explanation for the tears has Warhol getting slapped by a little girl, who Paul Warhola has sometimes described as black. That hazy first-day-of-school story often gets paired with another that places Warhol in the outfield of a neighborhood baseball game, but disappearing halfway through to make drawings on the Warholas' front stoop. Whether

the slap or the ball game ever happened hardly matters: These are important genesis stories, told to establish the origins of someone who was clearly less virile than Pittsburgh expected of a boy child, and who went on to be a pioneer transgressor of gender roles. "He was drawing pictures of like flowers and butterflies—that's where I noticed he was different," recalled his brother John of that fateful baseball day, and also described the colorful tulips that a ten-year-old Warhol later tended in their garden. Forty years later Warhol could proudly proclaim his difference: "Everybody knows that I'm a queen."

The ultimate proof of Warhol's particular brand of "difference" might have come when his brother Paul bought him one of the manly meat-and-French-fry sandwiches from Primanti's famous lunchroom, and he could only get through half of it.

When the Warholas chose their new Oakland home, one big selling point was how close it was to the family church of St. John Chrysostom, which belonged to its Greek (a.k.a. "Byzantine") Catholic congregation. It was down the hill in *Ruska dolina,* and every Sunday since Soho days, Julia and the boys, with Andrej if he was in town, trekked there to confess and hear various services; they might go other days as well, for other liturgies their church year offered up. Andrej's sons remembered him as strict and devout, forbidding all play or work on Sundays, "but all the people were like that," said John Warhola. Julia's religiosity was probably similar: more churchy than some, but not bizarrely so, for a community that was built around prayer—or by it, they'd have said. There has been awed talk of Julia's "six-mile" walk to church from the family's Soho apartments, but that counts both going and coming, and a three-mile trudge at that time was unremarkable, not a sign of extreme, penitent devotion. When the trolleys shut down after the great flood of 1936, Julia made her boys walk even farther just to call on a relation, while her brother-in-law in Mikova dragged his family many times farther to get to the particular church he preferred. After the move to Dawson Street, the Warholas' walk to church was cut to a pleasant half hour down shady lanes and cobblestoned streets.

Chrysostom had been founded in 1910 by some of Pittsburgh's new Rusyn immigrants. At first they built a wooden church and steeple in an almost New England style that didn't carry any memory of the beautiful timber churches of their Carpathian homeland. That was where Warhol was baptized. But by 1932 the flourishing parish needed something bigger. Instead of tearing down the old building, they put it on rollers and moved it over one lot so their new, Byzantine-inspired masonry church could go where the

original one had stood. Since Andrej Warhola worked on house-moving teams, it's likely that he was involved in the project—later, he actually went on to work for the very firm that had handled the church's move.

St. John Chrysostom inaugurated its grand new building just as the Warholas moved to its neighborhood. That church was the focus of their Rusyn community, and of Julia's life in it. Rusyn identity, such as it was, was as much religious as strictly ethnic. The Carpatho-Rusyns' very peculiar history as Christians was inseparable from who they were and where they came from. Christian devotions in the Carpathian Mountains had always been built around Eastern Orthodox rites and rules: The liturgy was chanted in Church Slavonic (the Slavic equivalent of Latin), priests could marry and children were confirmed when they were still infants. About four hundred years ago, however, these rural worshippers were convinced to pay allegiance to Rome and the Pope, as a new "Uniate" or "Ruthenian" church that wasn't asked to change much in its worship. Strictly speaking, that made the Warholas, Zavackys and their kinfolk Roman Catholics. Once in the United States, however, they were suddenly asked to obey Irish bishops who couldn't stand the way these Slavs did things, and vice versa. In the 1920s, the conflict led Rome to grant American Rusyns their own level of church administration called the Apostolic Exarchate for the Byzantine-Rite Faithful of Subcarpathia, which had its base in Pittsburgh and fingers reaching back into the Old Country. The name alone gives a sense of the baroque complexities of these ecclesiastical politics.

All the many Warhol explicators who simply label him "Catholic" ignore what a vexed term that was in Andrej and Julia's world. Warhol's brother John remembered a "natural animosity" and even actual violence between the Irish and "Slovak" Catholics in their childhood neighborhood.

"No Byzantine Catholics would consider themselves Roman Catholic," said the Rusyn theologian David Petras. If Julia Warhola had spent a Sunday in a Roman Catholic church of her era, what she heard and saw would have felt deeply alien. Why did the priest mutter in Latin instead of chanting boldly in Church Slavonic? What was with all those parishioners sitting silently with their rosaries, instead of joining in with the liturgy as she and her kin did? Why didn't the men and the women keep to their own sides of the church, and why did these Irish prefer dour, thin hymns to the lusty folk singing she was used to?

The year that the Warholas moved to Oakland, the Vatican itself said that it was worried that the Old Country customs of Byzantine Catholics, especially their married priests, would be "a source of painful perplexity or scandal to the majority of American Catholics."

Both as a child and a grown man, Warhol felt that his peculiar religious identity made him stand out awkwardly: Byzantines crossed themselves "backward" and celebrated Christmas on the "wrong" day. A niece of Warhol's talked about Byzantine Christmas being "so very special and meaningful" compared to the Roman Catholic masses, and the Warhola church of St. John Chrysostom was a militant force in preserving such specialness, pushing back against the Catholic establishment when some Rusyn churches were giving in.

The crowd of mainstream Roman Catholics in Warhol's later circles, often mentioned as telling, may be nothing more than a standard statistical fluke. The Warhol studio counts as a sample size of one, so there's no reason to expect it to show an even distribution of America's religions. It may be more accurate to say that Warhol favored outsiders, strivers and fellow immigrants—not to mention beautiful young men with curly black hair—and that those categories would naturally net a large Catholic contingent, not to mention several Jews. At least some of Warhol's most prominent followers—Edie Sedgwick, most notably—were old-time American Protestants, his boyfriend for all of the '70s was Lutheran and one of his closest confidantes of later years was a Christian Scientist. In any case, it's hard to know how he would have gone about guaranteeing a Catholic majority among his followers: There's no record of Warhol making newcomers fill out a religious questionnaire or of him dropping an acolyte who turned out not to also genuflect to the Pope.

The links between Warhol's religious background and his later identity are complex. "When Andy was a boy, we thought he was going to be a priest. Even under pressure he never swore," John Warhola once said, but that sounds more like a general comment on the boy's demeanor than a real assertion of his religiosity—he never even took the lessons in Church Slavonic that his brothers endured. Throughout his life, Warhol was certainly a regular churchgoer, at least off and on; one Rusyn source claims he was an actual "supporting member" of his mother's Byzantine Catholic parish in New York. But there's no way to look into the artist's heart and know whether this shows deep religiosity or instead a mix of aesthetics and of a quite practical superstition—after all, he also wore crystals to ward off disease, and it can't be right to bill that as less sensible or normal or less effective than Christian prayer.

In terms of sheer word count, Warhol's diaries show him having a much keener interest in his crystals than in his religion. The way he sprinkled holy water around the house, as a kind of heavenly disinfectant, seems more pagan than Vatican II. Warhol certainly wasn't "religious" in the sense

of knowing or caring about the details of his faith's actual precepts and theology—which must be a requirement for counting as a good Catholic of either the Byzantine or the Roman rite.

According to his longtime employee Bob Colacello, raised Roman Catholic, "He said mass took too long, and confession was impossible because he was sure the priest would recognize him through the screen and gossip about his sins, and he never took communion because he knew that it was sacrilege to do without confessing."

His frequent Sunday visits to church only occasionally took place during Mass. Mostly, he would show up either before or after the liturgy, when he would sit quietly toward the back in the shadows. "I always go for five minutes," he said in his diary. "Ten or five minutes." Warhol actively denied the existence of an afterlife, which is just about the most basic belief of any Christian faith. "I believe in death after death," he once said. And, "When it's over, it's over."

Warhol could sometimes sound less like a divine than an aesthete, like all the atheists and Jews who also adore and study ecclesiastical architecture and liturgies: "I like church. It's empty when I go. I walk around. There are so many beautiful Catholic churches in New York. I used to go to some Episcopal churches too." The Roman Catholic Church of St. Vincent Ferrer, which he frequented in his later years, was in fact a stunning, neo-Gothic pile that looked very like one of New York's posh Protestant minsters, and would have attracted a visit from anyone at all with an eye for beauty. Warhol said that he'd always found the Catholic liturgy "delightful."

Ethnic habit might have played a fair role in his churchgoing, such as it was. As one Rusyn activist said of her own visits to Warhol's childhood church, "I'm a heathen, but I'm still there every Sunday."

One of Warhol's very first boyfriends insisted that the artist never went to church when they were sleeping together in the early 1950s, and a follower who spent several years in close contact with Warhol in the mid-1960s said that she couldn't imagine him having any religion at all. In the early 1970s, after the religious "awakening" that Warhol was supposed to have experienced on recovering from being shot, he answered point-blank questions about whether he was a Catholic, or in any way religious, with a clear-cut "no." (Although a few years later, when asked "Do you believe in God?" his answer was "I guess I do.")

Warhol certainly lived a less holy life, made more profane art and committed more mortal sins than should have been on the conscience of any devout Catholic, as defined in his era. On Good Friday of 1977, a day of commemoration for the death of his Lord, Warhol's choice of evening

entertainment was a screening of the grotesque horror film *Carrie*. One of his later followers, a Catholic, said he believed that acting in Warhol's films was a sin; his priest agreed, but said it could be forgiven because it was done only to survive. The prior of Warhol's last church, who clearly had some tolerance for Warhol, nevertheless said that the artist's lifestyle was "absolutely irreconcilable" with Catholic doctrine.

After Warhol's death, the Roman Catholic clergy in New York were willing to give his ungodly behavior a pass by allowing a memorial to be held in St. Patrick's Cathedral. But the eulogy he got at his funeral in Pittsburgh, from a Byzantine Catholic priest, described Warhol as having wandered far from the Church. It compared him to the sinning thief who Jesus managed to forgive. "I had to adopt some defensive measures, to stand up for the image of the Church," said that Ruthenian eulogist when he came under fire.

Maybe the most important thing to recognize, whatever the internal, unknowable state of Warhol's soul, is that he came across to his contemporaries as your standard secular, gay, lefty, party-going avant-gardist, and that was the image he chose to let loose on the world. "Church is a fun place to go" was his comment on religion in one of his very last interviews. Since his death, some of Warhol's greatest supporters have wanted to sanitize his mores and morals and memory, as though their artistic hero would be greater were he more conventional and rule bound in his ways, when in fact a lot of his greatness and identity always derived from his transgressions.

Even in more practical terms, as a stylistic influence, it's hard to know what his childhood attendance at St. John Chrysostom might have meant. His art's use of repetition has been compared to the ranks of images decorating the church, but seriality was everywhere in modern art and image culture by the time Warhol came of age. Besides, the point of Orthodox icons is that each one has an utterly distinct meaning and identity, as expounded by Byzantine Catholic priests in their homilies, whereas Warhol's endless repetitions were as much about diluting an image's essence and power as reinforcing them. He turns Marilyn Monroe's unique face into just another product on the supermarket shelf, surrounded by more of the same. In branding terms, she was the "Heinz" to Liz Taylor's "Hunts."

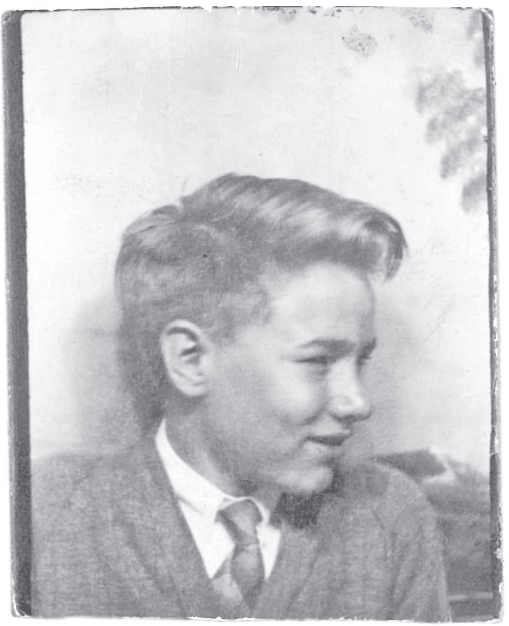
More coherently, observers have often compared the glowing gold background on a handful of Warhol's Marilyn paintings to the gold-ground paintings on view today on the giant altar screen of his family's church. Unfortunately for that theory, old photos prove that all those gilded images weren't installed until long after Warhol's Sundays at Chrysostom. In his era, the altar screen was covered in images of saints posing against landscape backgrounds, inspired by Italian Renaissance paintings. Those were also the

model for the saints that parishioners would have seen painted in churches in the Old Country, where blue skies were more in evidence than burnished gold.

A more likely source for Warhol's gold were the Russian icons in a famous exhibition held in 1944 at the local art museum, where Warhol took classes; the show launched a national craze for the art form during his last year in high school. His college art text also included a chapter on "Early Christian and Byzantine Art," with a subsection on icons and with a gold-ground mosaic as the chapter's only color plate. "We looked at all sorts of art books—this is what he was good at, picking up on things," remembered one college classmate. By 1954, a *New York Times* article about Christmas cards—including a goofy one by Warhol—mentioned how a taste for the Byzantine was gaining ground.

Or maybe sacred gold of any kind is a red herring in thinking about Warhol's Pop Art, as one '60s boyfriend of his believed: "The gold is there because Andy was into gold and glitter. . . . The gold in *Gold Marilyn* doesn't represent Byzantine icons; if it represents anything, it represents Miami Beach."

There's one last mental image at Chrysostom that's hard to resist. It's of the young Warhol, sitting in church every July for the major Byzantine Catholic feast of Saints Peter and Paul, staring at the day's icon of the two apostles—who were often shown kissing. Utterly chastely, of course.



. . . as a cheerful Pittsburgh kid.

2

1934–1945

FAMILY LIFE | SCHOOL | ILLNESS | THE CARNEGIE INSTITUTE | SCHENLEY HIGH | COLLEGE BOUND

"As genuine as a fingerprint"

The photos show a contented, ordinary American boy: a skinny first grader with a bowl cut and goofy grin sitting next to his stylish mother; a gap-toothed eight-year-old wearing a tie and too much Brylcreem on his corn-silk hair; a middle school boy joshing with his teenage brothers. Through his first years on Dawson Street, and even beyond, Warhol's existence looked pretty much like any other neighborhood kid's.

Warhol played with his brothers and neighbors and Lucy the family pet, a shaggy blond dog named for Lucille Ball. (There was also a white cat as well as two fluffy rabbits in a hutch in the yard: The black one was John's and the white was for Warhol, who took it hard when it died.) Warhol went to school, went roller-skating and sledding in the park, read comics and dabbled in art. One childhood friend remembered him being just as interested in having fun as any other neighborhood kid—but also how he would collapse at the slightest contact during games of street hockey. Like every Pittsburgh child, he watched movies as often as he could. If Julia couldn't spare him the eleven cents for admission—ten cents plus a one-cent tax—Warhol's brothers might treat him. They earned an extra dime or two, or ten, hawking papers and peanuts at the ballpark, where Paul got smaller kids to subcontract from him, teaching them how to make the bags of nuts look bigger than they were. The boys also sold used bottles to moonshiners and old boxes to the junkyards, or in the winter they shoveled walks and carted coal ash. Paul would fill in for observant Jewish neighbors when they couldn't tend their businesses on the Sabbath or holy days, and he attributed his work ethic to that Jewish influence. The Warholas were, to say the

least, an industrious family, setting a standard for hard work and business savvy that Warhol stuck to until his last day.

Julia was also bringing in extra cash, especially when the Great Depression kept Andrej from earning enough, since the Eichleay Co., where he worked moving buildings, cut back heavily in the 1930s. By the end of the decade Andrej was bouncing from job to job as a laborer. He told census takers he had earned $1,200 in all of 1939; a decade later, a Pittsburgh steelworker said that even earning double that still meant "making out the grocery order with a pruning knife." The family also took in boarders, something quite standard for Rusyn families and for others throughout their neighborhood. To make way for some Jewish tenants—"they had the businesses; they were the ones that had the money"—the boys all slept on one mattress on the attic floor, beside their parents' bed. "What I used to dream about," Warhol recalled in his heyday, "was having a glass of fresh orange juice in the morning and a bathroom of my own." In fact, breakfast on Dawson Street was always the same: a bowl of oatmeal, half an orange and Warhol's daily glass of milk with Ovaltine powder.

On top of her housecleaning jobs—standard work at the time for immigrant women from Eastern Europe—Julia Warhola also crafted sparkly flowers out of old peach tins, selling them door-to-door with her kids for a quarter and using the funds for Warhol's new sneakers. Not long before he died, Warhol credited Julia's cans as the inspiration for his decision to paint the ones from Campbell's. Whether or not that was a true tale about the birth of Pop Art, which had happened twenty-five years before he told it, it shows Warhol wanting to credit his mother as the source of his first blockbuster work.

You'd imagine that little Andy might have been mortified to help flog his mother's crafts, but it turns out he shared her entrepreneurial spirit. He earned his own movie money by offering to draw portraits of neighbors. Those first Oakland patrons prefigure the Dolly Partons, Giorgio Armanis and other paying sitters who made the artist's last decade so profitable.

Especially as a teen and young adult, Warhol gained a reputation for shyness, but it may always have been more theatrical than disabling. Zavacky girl cousins recalled that Warhol was so mischievous they had to tie him to the bedpost when they were babysitting. (They made sure his mother didn't find out.) The landlord's son in Soho remembered Warhol as "a holy terror devil" who once peed on him, not quite the move of someone eager to avoid attracting notice. In his college psychology textbook, next to a passage describing bedwetting as an "attention-getting behavior," he scribbled, "Wet my bed! Ha! Sorry ma."

What Warhol could not have known is that bedwetting is also a common symptom of a neurological disorder he seems to have had as a kid, and that shaped the rest of his childhood and maybe the rest of his life. It struck in the spring of 1937, when he was eight years old and just finishing third grade, after he contracted a streptococcal infection that turned into scarlet fever. Because the illness was untreatable in that era before antibiotics, it led to the dangerous autoimmune disorder known as rheumatic fever. Warhol's disease progressed, as it often did in those days, into a neurological condition called Sydenham's chorea, then known as St. Vitus' Dance. Almost overnight, a perfectly normal child became a mess of writhing limbs and uncontrollable grunts. Sydenham's was only just being defined at the time, and one young doctor described how "twitching and sudden spasm of the muscles of the face produce the most abrupt and bizarre changes in facial expression. . . . Loss of moral sense is almost invariably present. The child displays an increasing peevishness, sensitiveness, disobedience or selfishness." Today, doctors might also consider a diagnosis of PANDAS, a similar poststreptococcal condition with tics and psychiatric symptoms—including bedwetting—that are especially close to what Warhol suffered. All his relatives cite this as a transformative moment, to the point that the illness sometimes gets mythologized into something close to the plague. Warhol's levelheaded brother John, however, insisted that the illness wasn't as bad as others have made out.

The reality is that the original, life-threatening sickness would most likely have kept Warhol in bed for a few weeks, and then the Sydenham's chorea or PANDAS would have afflicted the little boy with a few more weeks or months of spasms, and in Warhol's case blackouts, but no lasting disability. (Although recurrences aren't all that rare, records show that Warhol's memory of three yearly attacks was accurate.) More interestingly, scientists have recently discovered a correlation between rheumatic fever in children and adult psychiatric problems such as obsessive-compulsive behaviors and the severe body-image issues of what's now called body dysmorphia—just the symptoms Warhol displayed as an adult hoarder and hygiene freak who was fixated on the idea that he was hideous. In 1973, when *Vogue* magazine asked Warhol what was on his mind, half his answers had to do with such classic OCD preoccupations as hygiene ("I can't go to sleep if I know there's dust in a bureau drawer") and safety ("Are the cigarettes out? Is the back door closed? Is the elevator working?"). Warhol once said that he felt as though he was "missing chemicals" that other people had, which sounds like a realistic intuition about a difference in how his brain was wired. It is possible that his relatives were more right than they knew, and that Andrew Warhola started becoming the artist Andy Warhol, in a quite concrete and even neurological

sense, in tandem with his childhood illness. Those shakes were what first made him stand out from the people around him: A playmate remembered Dawson Street kids making fun of his twitching. The disease's effects on his psyche may have doubled down on that difference.

One other symptom of PANDAS is an unreasonable attachment to a parent, and family lore had Warhol moving into bed with his mother in the dining room while his father slept upstairs with Paul and John. But as far as art lovers are concerned, the illness probably did more good than harm. Walter Hopps, a curator and friend of Warhol's in the 1960s—who also had the strangest of habits as an adult—remembered childhood spells of rheumatic fever leaving him "cut off from other kids, so the life of the imagination was what I had." Warhol was in the same boat, except that he had his mother to help feed his imaginings. Bed rest left him in the perfect position to absorb her creative eccentricity.

"My mother would read to me in her thick Czechoslovakian accent as best she could, and I would always say 'Thanks, Mom,' after she finished with *Dick Tracy,* even if I hadn't understood a word."

The key background to Warhol's later excellence as an artist probably has little to do with his generically Rusyn, Warhola roots—the brothers' anecdotes barely ever mention their father, who Paul considered a "shadowy figure"—and everything to do with being Julia Zavacky's son. After all, how many laborers' wives thought it natural to keep their sons busy with art, or kept the supplies on hand to do it? Once, when a critic was planning a book about Warhol, the artist demurred: "The book should be about my mother. She's so-o-o interesting."

All the stories of Julia's childhood mention her artistic talents. Whether those stories' details are correct or not, they give a good idea of how others remembered her. (Caution is called for: They were "remembering" someone who they knew went on to be the mother of one of history's greatest artists; they needed to recall her in that role.) As a girl, legend has it, Julia had helped decorate the church in Mikova, a job usually reserved for men. She was also said to have practiced the Rusyn art of ornamental house painting, figuring out how to mix the traditional colors when there was no money for premixed paints.

She was known for singing Orthodox chants in church—again, something usually reserved for men—and folksongs at home. (The two genres of music had more overlap among Rusyns than in other groups.) Julia didn't pass any musical talent down to Warhol, except maybe as a kind of overall urge to perform, revealed in his forays into dance and theater.

The most important gift Julia gave to her son might have been something you could call the Zavacky Way—a willingness to be recognized as different and eccentric and, in some indefinable way, a touch more cultured and interesting than others. Warhol's circle in New York may have seen the woman living in Warhol's basement as a standard-issue babushka from the Old Country, but that was because they couldn't see through their own clichés to the more interesting woman beneath. "Everyone who went there thought she was stupid, but she was brilliant beyond belief . . . marvelous. And much smarter than Andy . . . much smarter," recalled one friend who got to know her especially well. Warhol built an underground movie around Julia in 1966, and it shows her playing along with the babushka clichés but also messing with them in ways worthy of her artist son.

Recent visits to the Zavackys of Lyndora, who Warhol saw many weekends as a boy, found them still living in the peculiar family compound where they'd gathered for decades, and still reveling in a sort of cultured singularity. Warhol's Lyndora cousins are famous for treating visiting Warhol scholars to daylong feasts of stories and Rusyn pierogies. They have been caught on film fearlessly bellowing Old Country songs and declaring their kinship to the family's most famous character: "When we read some of his *Philosophy,* we laughed, because we didn't realize he was so much like us." They've described grandfather Jan (later "John") Zavacky, Julia's brother, as having had a constitution unsuited to his peers' factory work. It led him to open a general store. Jan had taught himself to play violin and cello, on which he would accompany the classical records he bought. (Warhol himself took violin lessons as a kid, but quit because his teacher was mean.)

Jan is also remembered as notably lettered, an eager reader in Russian, Greek, Rusyn, Old Church Slavonic and English, in both Cyrillic and Roman scripts—both of which Warhol's parents also knew, Andrej even mixing them in his letters. Julia's brother was a founder and leader of Lyndora's Byzantine Catholic church, giving this business owner a cultural eminence his brother-in-law Andrej, the laborer, could never claim.

Warhol's illness may have been read, by the boy and his mother and her kin, as just another sign of Zavacky uniqueness, and as an opportunity to make him more of a Zavacky than ever.

Being sick gave Warhol a rare chance to experience a life filled only with "culture," of one kind or another, since he remembered his mother always saying, "You can't go anywhere or do anything." His summers were spent "listening to the radio and lying in bed with my Charlie McCarthy doll and

my un-cut-out cut-out paper dolls all over the spread and under the pillow," wrote Warhol. There were also all the supplies he needed to draw and color (Snow White was a favorite, girlish coloring book) as well as comics to copy pictures from, as he did in his very first Pop paintings a quarter century later.

"Andy always wanted pictures," recalled his mother, a few years before her death. "Comic books I buy him. Cut, cut, cut nice. Cut out pictures. Oh, he liked pictures from comic books." His brother Paul said he taught Warhol to use a ball of warm wax to transfer the pictures from the Sunday funnies to another piece of paper, foreshadowing the blotting techniques Warhol perfected in art school.

It looks as though it was also around this time that Warhol started using the family's new $1.25 Baby Brownie Special camera. Before long his brothers had built him a darkroom in the basement fruit cellar, which their father had dug out with his own two hands. This may be the true moment when Warhol's artistic future was born, since almost every important image he went on to draw or paint was based on a photo. An art historian from Mars could easily read him as a photographer who happened to silkscreen his images rather than as a painter who worked from photographs.

But movies were what really started to dominate Warhol's cultural life. Maybe even more than the rest of the nation, Pittsburgh was movie mad—the city boasted of having opened the world's first dedicated cinema. Warhol shared the obsession. When he couldn't find the dime it cost for a ticket, or get a neighbor to pay him for taking their kid, he'd sneak in past the ushers, which his brother John described as "the worst thing that Andy ever did."

It seems also to have been a time when Warhol ran his own cinema, of sorts, foreshadowing the pornographic one he ran in the later sixties. Saving her earnings from housecleaning, Julia had spent fully nine dollars—nine days of her work—to get her youngest boy one of the new home-movie projectors he'd asked for, apparently buying it without her husband's knowledge. Her money paid for an electric machine that was more than half-decent.

"He'd buy a film of Mickey Mouse or something like that and show it on the wall over and over again," recalled John Warhola. Decades later Warhol told a friend that Mickey was his favorite actor and Minnie his favorite actress. "When a relative would give him a quarter he'd save it and then buy another film," his brother said.

This could have been the era when Warhol started his Hollywood scrapbook, which held the photos of stars that were handed out in theaters after certain movies or that he bought for a cent from vending machines at the local amusement park. He also wrote to celebrities for autographed

pictures, or would get his brothers to write away for them, as Paul claimed he did for Warhol's famous eight-by-ten of Shirley Temple.

The scrapbook survives, and it showcases an almost random assortment of major movie and big band stars, from Henry Fonda to Carmen Miranda to Mae West, but also even more second-raters. "Best Chesterfield Wishes," wrote the smoking trumpeter Harry James, or some flack or machine signing for him. In a nice reversal, once Warhol became famous it was his turn to cope with the flood of autograph hunters whose requests still litter his archives; mostly, he was a devoted signer.

Little Miss Temple, born the same year as Warhol, had a page to herself in the scrapbook—but lest we make too much of that, she shares that honor with the little-known actor John Shelton. The starlette may have been the inspiration for Warhol's childhood ambition to grow up to be a tap dancer, which of course was shared with thousands of other kids at the time.

Given the iconic paintings that Warhol later made about movie stars, as well as his own work in film and his constant efforts to infiltrate Hollywood, it's tempting to read his childhood cinephilia as all that in embryo. It's equally easy to overread it. Almost every kid in America was at least as bitten by movies as Warhol: Old fan-club images and even entire scrapbooks survive in vast numbers on eBay. Warhol's elementary school had to take action against nearby cinemas that were attracting pupils during school hours. We don't need to imagine Warhol as some odd-duck Hollywood obsessive. What made him matter was his ability to clue in to the obsessions that were shared across America, and then to come at them from the oblique angle of art. When, in a 1966 photo, we witness him displaying that Shirley Temple headshot on his New York mantel, it was a normal detail from his working-class youth re-presented as ironic and arch.

Another gay Pittsburgher who kept a movie-star scrapbook just when Warhol did—who ran away from home twice to see *The Wizard of Oz*—may have an interesting take on the artist's filmic interests: "I can't imagine straight boys being interested in [scrapbooks] at all."

The scholar Blake Stimson has talked about the complex role that certain Hollywood stars like Mae West and Shirley Temple could have played in building a young boy's gay identity. In Warhol's case that particular identity, with all its rewards and challenges, went on to power an art that was all about being in the mainstream but not of it.

By the fall of 1937, in fourth grade, a separation between Warhol and his peers began to gel as his artsy identity took shape. Art classes at Holmes were being given by a teacher named Annie Vickermann, a busty woman with a booming voice who recited the Gettysburg Address to her students. She gave

rigorous, old-fashioned training in color, composition and perspective. "All her children could really draw," said a colleague, and Warhol was always the best of them. Miss Vickermann got Warhol admitted to Saturday drawing classes at the Carnegie Institute, a lavish complex of museums "where we kids in Oakland hung out in winter after school—it was our place, a special place," said one childhood friend, and Warhol and his brothers were among its regulars. "It didn't cost you a penny," remembered a neighborhood playmate.

Twenty minutes up from the Warholas' house, the Carnegie Institute was an inescapable landmark of downtown Oakland. Its grand concert hall, museums and library (a special favorite of Warhol's) filled an imposing Beaux Arts building that had the names of the West's cultural heroes carved into its façade. A painter such as Leonardo got to shoulder up against other titans like Goethe and Beethoven—all three becoming subjects of Warhol's later art. Given the modest culture of the Warhola home, the immersion Warhol would have needed in the language of art could only have begun in that building. Without knowing what artists and audiences had seen and appreciated and *counted* as art in the past, Warhol could never have carried his culture's art forward.

Crossing the Carnegie's soaring atrium on the way to his new art classes—there are photos of pupils making that trip—Warhol was treated to a deluxe suite of murals that began with a hellish view of the city's mills, depicted from precisely the smoke-choked hills of Soho where Warhol was born. As he and his classmates climbed the stairs, the smoke was shown giving way before the Angels of Art anointing an ascendant figure of Labor—Andrew Carnegie himself, costumed as a knight. This was an allegory of cultural and social ascension that Warhol seems to have taken to heart.

The kids in the museum's art classes were known as Tam o'Shanters, apparently a Scottified, Carnegie'd reference to the classic Montmartre artist's beret. The world-famous program was just a few years old when Warhol joined. The most notable of the program's teachers was a certain Joseph Fitzpatrick, who happened to be a Warhola neighbor in tidy South Oakland. A slim, tall man who taught in a natty suit and tie, he was barely in his thirties when Warhol knew him. He'd spent a few years as art supervisor for the public school system, which had a notably ambitious cultural agenda for its students, and then taught at Warhol's own Schenley High in Oakland.

Fitzpatrick was famously strict, and his lessons might seem a touch Victorian: as many as six hundred children sitting in the Institute's grand

Music Hall—"the largest art class in the world"—all in ties and tidy dresses and all drawing pictures of the same thing. But Fitzpatrick also voiced more modern attitudes: "I looked for the boys and girls to express themselves in their own ways. In other words, I didn't say that a drawing had to be this way, or that way . . . but I did say it had to be excellent."

Another Carnegie teacher wanted his students "to learn to see beautifully." He played Debussy on the piano while the little Tam o'Shanters drew "forms that sprang into life from hearing the inspiring notes." Sometimes that teacher made his own abstractions as the little ones sang. Fitzpatrick and his colleagues had their charges "all on fire . . . about art, as an idea" according to one Tam o'Shanter friend of Warhol's.

Warhol prospered, winning accolade after accolade for "very realistic work . . . with a decorative quality that was very becoming," recalled Fitzpatrick, more than a half century after Warhol was supposed to have made that impression. "I distinctly remember how individual his style was. . . . From the very start he was quite original." Yet in 1939, the Carnegie art classes had almost twenty-five thousand names on their attendance sheets, with several kids nominated from every public and private school, so it would be a mistake to dwell too much on young Warhol as part of some budding artistic elite. Even his brother John had enough artistic talent to start classes there at the same time as Warhol, but quit because he didn't have his sibling's willingness to miss out on playing ball with the neighborhood boys.

A statement by the Carnegie might as well have had Warhol in mind: "We are looking forward to a time when we shall search out and find the potential artist. We shall nurture him, like the queen bee, on special artistic food. . . . [s]o that a leader in this field shall not be lost."

If the lessons were important for Warhol's future, their setting may have mattered even more. The Carnegie art students sketched and eventually made watercolors right inside the museum's Old World galleries, where Warhol got the chance to know the museum's permanent collection. In those early days, there weren't many masterpieces on view—Andrew Carnegie had wanted his museum to focus on recent art of a conservative bent—but its decent holdings in Old Master portraits set Warhol up for his career as the greatest portraitist of his era.

The shortcomings in the Carnegie's permanent collection were made up for by an ambitious roster of special exhibitions, which would have fleshed out the thorough grounding in art history Warhol had got from Miss Vickermann at Holmes. Looking at the exhibition program from Warhol's time as a student at the Carnegie museum is like looking at a prehistory of his career. When he was almost twelve, the museum brought in a show of

European "masterpieces," which gave Warhol his first taste of classic works by the likes of Rembrandt, Rubens and Poussin, setting the bar high for his later ambitions. In 1941 there was a blockbuster Picasso show, on tour from the Museum of Modern Art, which included *Guernica,* the era's celebrity painting. It let the young Warhol take the measure of his most important twentieth-century rival, who was a special favorite of his in college. Later, at the height of his Pop Art fame, Warhol made the rivalry explicit by wearing the striped T-shirts Picasso was famous for.

A silkscreen exhibition gave him early exposure to his signature Pop medium. Surveys of the French outsider Henri Rousseau and of American "primitives" sparked his lifelong interest in outsider and folk art, which was a vital model for his work in the 1950s and which he collected all his life. As late as 1976, Warhol was still including "American primitive painters" on his list of all-time favorite artists. When a Pittsburgh paper raved about the Carnegie's "magnificent" survey of Rousseau, it described him as an artist who "paints a child's world in adult terms. . . . We suspect many modern artists of also going back to their childhood, only their excursions lack the unforced directness [of] Rousseau." A good part of the appeal of Warhol's 1950s illustrations came from their simulation, at least, of a childlike directness.

A Carnegie survey of contemporary self-portraits launched Warhol into depicting himself, which he started early and never abandoned. Other Carnegie exhibitions—"The Artist as Reporter," "The American Weekly Exhibit of Magazine Art," annual photo shows, the landmark survey of Russian icons—seem tailor-made to turn Warhol into the particular artist he became.

In April 1940, the Carnegie published a photo of a crowd of its art students. One of them is a scrawny young man whose shock of blond hair bears a suspicious resemblance to the hairstyle of a certain preteen named Andrew Warhola. Whether that's him in the shot or not, what really matters is what those Saturday pupils are doing: They are hard at work sketching the piles of advanced contemporary art that the museum brought in once a year for its famous Carnegie International.

Every October since 1896 the museum had hosted that show, the country's only survey of the latest in world art, rivaled only by the Venice Biennale in scale and importance. During Warhol's early Pittsburgh years, it was organized by a man named Homer Saint-Gaudens, son of the celebrated sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens. Homer was brought up among America's first modern artists—John Singer Sargent painted him at age ten—but he was also a toff who captained the Harvard fencing team.

In Paris or New York, his tastes might have seemed a bit tame, but he claimed his Internationals had been wild enough to blow up Pittsburgh's

"self-contented ignorance." The local press agreed with him, and didn't like it. One paper gave front-page play to a New York critic's reactionary attack on the first prize that the International's "stupid" jury awarded to a quite demure Picasso portrait.

Of course, controversy had its benefits (another important lesson for Warhol): Crowds thronged to one International that included a controversial first-prize painting titled *Suicide in Costume*. Its artist said that his grotesque dead clown symbolized "our civilization." The painting was the talk of Pittsburgh for decades. But by 1950, a year after Warhol left the city, Saint-Gaudens could claim that he'd won the fight for Pittsburghers' hearts: "They used to spit at 50 yards at a modern painting; now they say, 'I don't know anything about it—it may be all right.'"

On top of teaching Warhol that backing the avant-garde paid cultural and social dividends, the Carnegie International under Saint-Gaudens promoted an advanced view of art as involved in the world around it. It regularly showcased works about the horrors of industry and Jim Crow, sometimes even including black artists in its mix. Art, wrote Saint-Gaudens, "must justify itself; must be measured by its effects on the social orders." Warhol took that lesson to heart. His mature work certainly did have—was intended to have—such an effect, at a time when many other artists were busy exploring and expressing their interior lives. The first-prize picture at the Carnegie's 1941 exhibition depicted lynchings and other troubles of the American South; it might as well have been one of Warhol's highly charged Death and Disaster pictures, in embryo, with their depictions of police attacking black marchers and electric chairs awaiting their next victims.

In 1940, with war raging in Europe, the annual show got cut back to artists in the U.S.A., including émigré art stars such as Max Ernst and George Grosz and major American figures such as Georgia O'Keeffe, Milton Avery and Edward Hopper. It's especially nice to know that the young Warhol had a chance almost every year to see some notable painting by Stuart Davis, the one true avatar of Pop Art in this earlier generation. Davis's pictures of store signs and cigarette packs, done in the bold, bright styles of package design, set an example for Warhol of how it was possible to make world-class pictures that riffed on popular culture. Davis's influence was acknowledged decades later by Henry Geldzahler, the powerful curator who "discovered" Warhol and Pop Art.

As a Pittsburgh teenager Warhol had no way of knowing that by scanting abstraction, the Carnegie's annual was missing out on the sharpest cutting edge. The Warholas shared Pittsburgh's general skepticism about abstract art, and that may have been at the root of Warhol's later tendency

to see abstraction as a desirably daring form he didn't quite have access to.

"American art, now in the process of creation, belongs to the future . . . a fresh, vigorous creation of a new form rapidly approaching maturity, perhaps its Golden Age," proclaimed Warhol's college art text, published while Warhol was still in elementary school. That important—but in fact incorrect—idea that American English was the normal language of the avant-garde would already have been planted in the young Warhol by the Carnegie's wartime annuals. In the 1930s, when those lines in the textbook were written, they represented wishful thinking, but their ideas still set a target for Warhol's ambitions. A truly American creativity, his textbook informed him, would someday "transcend the incomplete experiments of the early twentieth century so that a universal art and a more comprehensive meaning may be created for mankind's future." Warhol gave himself a role in building such a future.

Saturdays in the 1930s saw Warhol learning how to be an artist. Post chorea, it looks as though the rest of the week also saw him pulling away from his peers.

His most notable friendship was with a neighbor boy named Nick Kish, whose family came from near Mikova. They were both outcasts, said Kish, who chose not to "loaf with the cliques on the corners" or play craps with the neighborhood roughs. The boys had artistic interests instead. They spent hours at each other's houses, sketching trees and the sky from life or girls from their imaginations: "Any girl who had not been properly introduced would not walk into your house without mom or dad kicking them out."

Sometimes the two of them went sketching in Schenley Park, a spread of manicured nature that overlooked the city. "I painted his hand, he painted mine. I painted Andy, he painted me," Kish recalled not long after Warhol died. It's tempting to think that a surviving image of two naked boys in an embrace, drawn in the late 1940s or early 1950s, was Warhol's fantasy of moments with Kish in Schenley Park—by the time of the drawing, Warhol would have known of the park's Prospect Drive, dubbed the "fruit loop," as a gay cruising ground.

This must have been about the time when his home life was getting complicated. Around 1939, the abdominal trouble that Warhol's father had suffered from for years began to get worse. Family lore says that he drank "bad water" on a construction site in West Virginia and came home sick and disabled, confirmed by records that have him missing weeks of work that year and even more the following one. He went to "German doctors" for a

"tea," and it looks like he had a reprieve: Tender letters he wrote to Julia in March 1941 show him on the road and hard at work again. But by May 6, 1942, just when Warhol was getting ready for his graduation from Holmes Elementary, Andrej had been admitted to Montefiore Hospital. He died nine days later from what his autopsy described as tubercular peritonitis—a bellyful of tuberculosis, that is, that would almost certainly have drifted down from infected lungs rather than being gulped in with bad water.

His youngest son was deeply distraught, as any thirteen-year-old might be, and then is said to have gone haywire at the standard Carpatho-Rusyn custom of displaying the body in the dead man's home, in this case for three days. There's even a story that Warhol stayed under his bed for the duration of the wake. Rusyn culture gives high marks to a good laying-out and funeral, all carefully planned by the deceased during life, so Warhol's withdrawal would have seemed particularly eccentric and distressing.

Within just a few months of that crisis at home, Warhol moved up to Oakland's Schenley High, where his existence didn't get any easier. He had mostly lost his shakes, only to be plagued with serious skin problems. He was called "spotty" from the day he arrived, and a pattern of disfiguring, "piebald" blotches made his face look like some kind of world map. Areas that had lost pigment seemed like they'd been splashed with bleach, a problem that he shared with a Zavacky relative who got the cruel nickname of "pinto pony," but who outgrew the condition once all pigment had quite disappeared from her skin. Warhol's blotches remained into the 1960s, despite records of treatments, and it was still on his mind in the year of his death, when he duplicated its look in a series of grim self-portraits that layer a camouflage pattern over his face. The nude swimming classes, standard at the time, were a nightmare for Warhol: He spent them in the showers facing the wall. "If someone asked me, 'What's your problem?' I'd have to say, 'Skin,'" he once wrote. As late as 1964, *Life* magazine was advancing the absurd notion that a bad complexion, especially when coupled with shyness, could actually "cause" homosexuality, a claim Warhol might have dismissed but couldn't have ignored.

"As genuine as a fingerprint" was the tag line printed beside Warhol's yearbook photo at Schenley, and that seems to be a polite way of signaling a growing quirkiness that he turned into a central part of his adult identity. At Schenley, he was already playing around with who he wanted to be. A high school portrait he did of Nick Kish is very clearly signed "A. Warhol," although we may not want to make too much of Warhol's early name changes: Slavic names in Pittsburgh were always in flux. More significant may be John Warhola's memory of his little brother getting protection from an "Irish kid" who later became a cop. You don't get protection in high school unless there's

something about you that puts you at risk. "We used to refer to him as a queer. He seemed to carry his books in a very feminine way and loaf with the other sissies," remembered a high school classmate. "It was the wrong thing to say, looking back. . . . He and one or two other boys used to loaf together all the time, in a little corner somewhere in [Schenley] Park or by the Schenley Hotel." John Warhola once referred to his brother as "loafing with a rough crowd" when he was fourteen or fifteen.

Warhol seemed to take refuge in his budding skills as an artist. "When he was about 14, his interest in art was apparent. He changed then," remembered a cousin. At a benefit for a local art center, Joseph Fitzpatrick, then Schenley's senior art teacher, got his favorite student to raise funds by doing one-dollar portraits. "A more talented person than Andy Warhol I never knew. He was magnificently talented" is how Fitzpatrick remembered his student many decades later, after he'd achieved international celebrity.

"He was too thin. I used to wonder if there was enough food at home. . . . There was a poetic quality about him—sensitive, interested in art," said Mary Adeline McKibbin, a tenth-grade art teacher who always marked Warhol as "outstanding." His later Pop work fared less well with her: "His reliance on sensationalism disappoints me," she once told a reporter. In the late 1980s, McKibbin said that she encouraged Warhol to enter Scholastic Magazines' national art contest, for which it turns out she was the local organizer. The competition was open to high school students from across the country, and finalists from each region sent in a jaw-dropping twenty thousand works to be judged and displayed each year at the Carnegie art museum.

McKibbin said that Warhol won a prize, and that's often mentioned as a sign of his early brilliance. But a pile of local coverage for both the 1944 and '45 contests shows that it couldn't have been one of the top awards or college scholarships, or even one of the War Bonds handed out to the best of Pittsburgh's local contestants. It looks as though the most Warhol could have achieved was an unnewsworthy "honorable mention," whose gold pin he wore in the '80s. Before he came up with his glorious ideas for Pop Art, Warhol's artistic genius was never as clear as hindsight makes us imagine.

At Schenley, Warhol remembered, "I wasn't amazingly popular, although I guess I wanted to be, because when I would see the kids telling one another their problems, I felt left out. No one confided in me."

McKibbin recalled the teenage Warhol as "quiet, sensitive, intense. In my classes, he seemed to pal with no one, but to become immersed in his work. He was in no way a problem, but hard to know personally." Fitzpatrick, her

fellow art teacher, had a similar memory of his favorite pupil as "personally not attractive, and a little bit obnoxious. He had no consideration for other people. He lacked all the amenities. He was socially inept at the time and showed little or no appreciation for anything. He was not pleasant with the members of his class or with any of the people with whom he associated." A classmate agreed that he was "a loner," but he was also normal enough, and nerdy enough, to have been on the school safety patrol and involved with a new "teenage canteen" called The Hi-Spot that held dances and hang-outs Friday nights at the Oakland YWCA. "I didn't think Andy was the greatest jitterbugger, but he did slow dance very nicely," recalled one female friend. In his junior year Warhol proudly wore a boosterish Schenley sweatshirt. For a medical history taken in 1960, he described "lessening nervousness" across his high school years. Maybe it was beginning to dawn on him that his exemplary outsider status could be a magnet for other outcasts like him.

Warhol spent a lot of his time at Schenley with a new best friend, Eleanor ("Ellie") Simon, who came from a modest but cultured Jewish background and in college earned a reputation as a bohemian. Her brother Sidney, another college classmate of Warhol's, became a prominent curator. In the 1950s, when he visited Warhol in New York, he was researching Stuart Davis, the proto-Pop artist whose work Warhol had often seen at the Carnegie. Ellie said that she helped Warhol with his Schenley assignments, even doing them from scratch and getting Warhol to copy them out.

This fits with a common notion that Warhol was deeply un- or even anti-intellectual, and maybe marginally illiterate or at least dyslexic. Despite comically bad handwriting, spelling and grammar throughout his life, severe dyslexia seems almost impossible, or at least irrelevant, given all the books we know he treasured and collected, and the vast evidence for his extensive reading. When it wasn't a deliberate artistic conceit, Warhol's terrible handwriting could actually have been a sign not of dyslexia, or of the plain inanity that detractors have alleged, but of PANDAS, the autoimmune disorder that might have caused Warhol's childhood spasms—as late as 1975 he was still referring to his "shaking hand." As an adult Warhol read several newspapers as well as thick popular books and sometimes quite obscure ones. Stendhal's *The Red and the Black* and a history of painting were his airplane reading on his first trip to Paris, in 1965.

He brought both Kitty Kelley's new biography of Frank Sinatra and Jean Cocteau's diaries to the hospital where he died, and not long before had been reading *The Merchant of Venice* aloud with a friend. One writer who knew Warhol in the 1970s said that Warhol was always careful to hide the fact that he was "exceptionally well and widely read: far more so than most visual art-

ists, including many thought to be much brainier than he was"—in fact Warhol knew that author's quite obscure novel, and commented on it with acuity.

And then there's the fact that, for a supposedly illiterate painter, a fair part of Warhol's creative output consisted of publishing books and a famous magazine. In 1957 the French author Philippe Jullian, a wildly cultured friend of Warhol's, received a letter from the artist and replied, "You know how to write—a shock to me."

It's obvious that Warhol was no academic or man of letters. It's also clear that he was sharp as could be, as was obvious to people who got really close. "Warhol only plays dumb. It's his style. . . . He's incredibly analytical, intellectual, and perceptive," said Henry Geldzahler, a 1960s friend of Warhol's who was a curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. "Why, Andy can make puns in French. But still every so often I fall into the trap. Like once Andy said, 'What was the First World War all about?' and I said, 'Well, the First World War . . .' And then I thought, 'Listen, he knows more about it than you do.'" Emile de Antonio, Warhol's first art-world friend, got incensed at the common notion that Warhol came up with his masterpieces by luck, without knowing why he did or what they meant: "Bullshit. Andy always knows."

Warhol certainly enjoyed the accomplishments and also the company of eggheads throughout his life. For some time in the 1950s and '60s, he hung out and went to the theater with the prominent Shakespeare scholar Paul Bertram, who said that Warhol's conversation about the plays they saw was as sophisticated as any other amateur's. Bertram once warned Warhol not to rush through a "deceptively straightforward" book by Upton Sinclair. One family tale even has Warhol skipping first grade after acing an intelligence test. Although that isn't borne out by his report cards, it does show that a tale of big brains was seen as credible.

If Warhol had really been the dullard that stories of his cheating at Schenley imply, it's hard to imagine his teachers not smelling a rat when he turned in fine assignments and got good grades. In an era before "social promotion," if he had shown serious signs of weakness his teachers would not have hesitated to demote him from the higher, "academic" stream he was in.

Warhol was already on the Honor Roll at Schenley in his first weeks there—Ellie Simon was, too—and he later took Latin and trigonometry and was a proud assistant in the Schenley chemistry lab. He got mostly Bs (including in English and American History) but also quite a few As (in Art, of course—which he took only through tenth grade—but also in French, World History, Biology and Elementary Algebra). Just a few years later, Warhol's nephew "Pauly" Warhola was proudly describing his own

straight Cs as "good marks." Warhol was tested at a perfectly respectable IQ of 104, for whatever that's worth, and graduated in the top 20 percent of his class, at a time when many of Warhol's peers would not have been expected to earn their diplomas at all. Only seventy-five boys from his high school year did. (There were twice as many female graduates.) As his mother later remembered, "Andy very good for school. He keep school nice. He says, 'I like school.' He finished school in Pittsburgh and my neighbor say, 'Oh Andy, he's a good boy. He finish school.'"

These were the war years, so for most boys—and Warhol's homeroom only had boys in it—"finishing school" would have meant graduation into the military, at least until victories over the Nazis in the fall of 1944, when Warhol entered eleventh grade. Luckily, Warhol's good grades offered an escape: Since 1942, college-bound students had been accelerated out of high school a year early to get at least some higher education, or even an entire degree, before going to war. Thanks to summer school, Warhol's last two years of secondary education were compressed into one.

The war had also added to tensions in Warhol's home life. Paul Warhola had been contributing to the household since 1941, laboring in the steel mills, but after his father's death he left for the merchant marine. John took over his financial duties by driving an ice-cream van, and then, when the war ended and the job market was flooded, by joining a Zavacky cousin in operating a studio that shot photo-booth portraits—shades of Warhol's own photo-booth works of the 1960s. "To me, Andy was just like one of my sons, instead of a brother," John recalled.

In 1943, before going to sea, Paul married Anna Lemak, a neighborhood girl whose mother was from very near Mikova. Still, Julia wasn't happy: Anna was already pregnant and her new mother-in-law had planned on a different bride for her eldest son. The couple nevertheless moved into the top floor of the Dawson Street house, paying rent for it to Julia. The new bride's arrival caused conflict in the home, especially given her disdain for Warhol's effeminacy. A video of Anna in her nineties shows her mimicking a fey hand gesture and saying, "It came to me whenever he would wave his hand, that he was from another world—you know what I mean?" In an early interview, Warhol's college friend Philip Pearlstein recalled Warhol's brothers as having also been unsympathetic to their sibling's uniqueness: "They made fun of him."

Although Julia later said that Andrej had left her $11,000—more than five years of a laborer's wages—there's no sign of that in his estate's documents, which list $1,514.07 in assets and no real estate. Despite Social Security payments for Julia, that left her boys saddled with supporting the household. Warhol helped out by doing a stint as a soda jerk—he never lost his taste for

old-fashioned diners, eventually scheming to open one—while Julia rented one of the Dawson Street bedrooms to returning soldiers for five dollars a month.

She was also bringing in cash with her house cleaning, until she was laid low by colon cancer, originally considered mere bleeding hemorrhoids. She had her large bowel removed in the fall of 1944. The five-hour operation left her wearing a colostomy bag for the rest of her life, and it seems she didn't even know quite what was being done to her until she awoke from the anesthetic, not that surprising given the medical ethics of the era.

"I'll never forget the first day Andy come down there after she was operated on. The first thing he asked me, he says, 'Did Mumma die?'" remembered his brother Paul. "Andy had a lot of sadness. . . . We tried to listen to my mother and we just prayed, we prayed a lot. We visited mother in the hospital every day." Warhol's fear of hospitals could have dated to this moment, coming on top of his father's death under medical care just a few years earlier. But the life-saving success of Julia's operation could as easily have fostered a deeper faith in medical interventions—Warhol, always a hypochondriac, was also a frequent and eager patient of any number of doctors.

John Warhola said that, in order to care for his mother's yearlong convalescence, he switched to a job that began at 4 P.M. That way he could hand nursing duties over to a teenage Warhol fresh home from high school, where he had dropped his optional art class and saw all his grades suffer. This may at last be when tinned soup enters the Rusyn household. John Warhola claims to have fed himself and his little brother on Campbell's at almost every meal, and Warhol once said that he'd only ever eaten it when he was "in school." The boys' nursing must have worked: Julia eventually became a star example of the operation's success, shown off to others about to undergo it.

On June 22, 1945, a bare few weeks after the Nazi surrender, the sixteen-year-old Warhol received his Schenley diploma. During his last year of high school, Warhol and his friend Nick Kish had both applied to the University of Pittsburgh. Warhol was accepted into the education department, apparently with the idea of becoming an art teacher like his mentor, Joseph Fitzpatrick.

He was on his way to being the first college-bound member of his family, in a world where class mobility was almost nonexistent—"you graduated from high school and you went to the mill," as a Dawson Street neighbor put it. Warhol had to have shown pretty extraordinary signs of talent and even brains for anyone to have imagined him moving further in his education.

Warhol's Schenley transcript said he had "no evidence of bad habits" (that wouldn't last), that his "manner and appearance" were "pleasing," and that he

had good emotional control, although a similar document forwarded to Pitt rated him low in "Acceptance by Classmates." When Kish, who was older, was drafted and had to postpone college, Warhol put in an application instead to the Carnegie Institute of Technology, maybe to pursue its program in art education.

He would already have attended rigorous art classes held at Tech every Saturday morning during his high school years; they were the normal culmination of the Tam o'Shanter program, at least for its best students. That, together with a scholarship that often went with the Saturday classes, might have pushed him toward dumping Pitt for Tech.

The application process for Tech's art department was ferocious. Warhol had to sit through four solid days of testing, to check on his abilities in such things as life drawing and general creativity. Applicants were asked to draw their room from memory and to portray themselves as seen from the back. According to a story that a veteran Tech instructor liked to tell, one of the assignments was to draw a Coke bottle without looking at one, "and in all those years, Andy was the only one who'd got it right"—a legend that pushes the prehistory of Pop Art back about as far as it will go.

Coke bottle or no, Warhol passed the tests, but that wasn't the final hurdle. According to his brother John, "They weren't going to accept him because he was going to just go in the evenings to save money, but my mother told him to go back and tell them that he'll go in the daytime and she gave him the money. I think it was $200 a semester." That number is right, although Tech estimated that students would spend that much again in likely incidentals each year. The money seems to have come out of the $1,500 left behind by Andrej, which he'd wanted used for his youngest son's education. Considering that an early estimate put Warhol's own estate at a conservative $215 million—it has since grown into billions—college turned out to be a fine investment.

. . . as a college senior, sketched by a gay instructor.

3

1945–1947

FINE ARTS AT CARNEGIE TECH | CLASSMATES AND TEACHERS | A DOSE OF FAILURE | WINDOW DRESSING | GAY LIFE AND ITS DANGERS | ARTISTIC ROLE MODELS

"The question always was—'Should Andy stay or go?'"

Q: Why do you desire to come to this institution?
A: Because it is noted as the best College for Art in the state.
Q: Why did you select the course of study you plan to pursue?
A: Because I am interested in Art and wish to continue my education.

That little interrogation, from Warhol's application to the Carnegie Institute of Technology, just about sums up his modest ambitions and savvy on the eve of art school. He was barely seventeen. A photo taken the day before he started classes makes him look like any other goofy freshman, with a messy blond pompadour and a giant white collar that frames his face like a clown's. He's got a lovely, shy smile, but the shot can't quite hide the blotches that covered his ghostly white skin, or just how scrawny he was. He wished he wasn't: On his college application, he added an inch to his height and fattened himself by ten pounds.

"He wore whatever he had to keep warm and covered," recalled one of his new teachers. "The campus was full of returned GIs, and they at least had a little money. Andy was poor and had a rough time."

October 2, 1945, was Warhol's first day of class at Carnegie Tech. What he found there over the next four years shaped the man and artist he became.

Right off the bat, the Tech campus brought Warhol face-to-face with the delicate balance between tradition and the avant-garde that governed his entire career. At the south end of the grounds, about a twenty-five-minute walk from the Warhola home—that family didn't believe in the expense of

trolleys—the first thing he encountered was the College of Fine Arts building, one of the oldest structures on campus. It was a grand Beaux Arts pile from 1916, with a façade full of curlicues and historical details that invoked all the Old Master achievements the young artist was supposed to emulate—and that the mature Warhol was keen to outdo or undo.

Inside, casts of classical sculptures, still there in the twenty-first century, were meant to provide inspiration as well as actual models to copy, in an art college that had long considered itself a "drawing school" of a traditional bent. One young professor of Warhol's referred to the Fine Arts building itself as part and parcel of "the heroic efforts of the academy to stem the tide of modern art," and Warhol's own college textbook pointed to the draughtsmanly strand in American art schools as "evidence of our lack of creative imagination."

Right next door, however, the avant-garde lay in wait for the freshman Warhol. Skibo Hall, Carnegie Tech's student union, had started life as a World War I hangar, but just when Warhol arrived a new renovation had left it with a Bauhaus look—low-slung, sleek and industrial in its gridded glass façade. It was proudly featured in the college yearbook for 1947, itself an impressive piece of modernist design put together by Warhol's peers. Skibo was the necessary hangout for art students at Tech and Warhol went on to hold court there.

He was enrolled in the Department of Painting and Design, whose students were always known as "P&Ds," and he majored in its newly renamed Pictorial Design program, once known as Painting and Illustration. The new name was meant to signal the arrival of a cutting-edge pedagogy: Rather than giving narrow expertise, the new curriculum was designed to encourage "the development of habits of observation and analysis and the acquisition of skills necessary to the most effective expression of ideas"—just what Warhol, the noted observer and analyst, went on to build his art around. A Warhol classmate said they were taught "the ideal that there was no line between the fine and the applied arts and there [are] certain fundamental principles of design and certain aspects of creative expression that all work together."

This was "Bauhaus stuff," heavy on idea and light on technique, according to one of Warhol's teachers. Despite Warhol's reputation as an anti- or postmodernist—Clement Greenberg, modernism's white knight, accused him of killing the modern avant-garde—he explored Tech's modernist Bauhaus ideals for the rest of his life. He crossed over between different media (photography, painting, printmaking) and between "low" and "high"

disciplines (illustration and fine art), and always valued conception over execution.

The freshman Warhol knew some of his instructors from the Saturday classes he would already have attended at Tech. But by his second week as an undergrad he had got a full sense of their aesthetic range, since their works had just been included in the latest of the Carnegie museum's annual shows. Warhol said those annual exhibits were the best things he saw during his time at Tech.

Samuel Rosenberg, a relatively traditional figurative painter who was just then moving into abstraction, was one of Tech's senior faculty. He won an honorable mention that year for a vaguely cubist painting of a rabbi, matching the wise-old-man role he went on to play for Warhol.

The 1945 Carnegie annual also included Russell Twiggs, the art department's beloved and influential "massier"—Tech's Frenchified term for the studio manager who hung student work when professors gathered to judge it. For years, Twiggs had been heavily covered in the local press as the city's first maker of abstract art, the style "which makes the public gasp, 'What under heaven is art coming to, anyway?'" according to one Twiggs review. That criticism alone was a clear sign of the kind of modern avant-gardism that would have attracted Warhol's attention. The admiration was mutual: Twiggs was in charge of choosing which student works would enter the college collection, and he chose Warhol's.

Twiggs also happened to be Pittsburgh's most important devotee of the hot new art of silkscreen printing. He even used it to make paintings, as Warhol went on to do. That means Warhol's famous move to silkscreening, in 1962, wasn't quite the watershed it's been made out to be. A classmate who bought a painting from Warhol in their senior year remembers that they learned the technique in class. Another P&D remembered Warhol going out of his way to try silkscreening.

The most substantial figure in the art department was Balcomb Greene, a Paris-trained abstractionist, novelist and intellectual who had studied philosophy, literature, art history and also psychology—in Vienna, as a disciple of Freud. He was six foot five, square jawed and dashing, a dead ringer for Gregory Peck and a genuine art star. "I advocate arrogance, not arrogance in painting, but complete arrogance," Greene said. His wife was a sculptor who went by "Peter" (but wasn't otherwise gender-bending), and the pair were once arrested for punching out cops who were raiding a speakeasy.

In Warhol's freshman year, Greene was working out a high-profile new

style, Gorky-ish and de Kooning–esque, that prefigured the Abstract Expressionism that was about to be hot. Four years later, during Warhol's last term at Tech, Greene was named the city's "Man of the Year in Art," and a photo of him at his easel was splashed across the cover of the *Bulletin Index* ("Pittsburgh's Weekly Newsmagazine"). Whatever else he taught Warhol, Greene showed him that being an artist was also about staying in the public eye.

At Tech, Greene shocked his more craftsmanly colleagues by declaring that art schools needed to scrape off the "barnacles" of technique. He endeared himself to his idealistic students by declaring that "the social meaning of art is that it opposes conformity and is a constant indictment of materialistic forces."

Greene gave a new, mandatory "Arts and Civilization" class that Warhol attended every day of his junior year. It covered everything from Picasso, Dada and Bergsonian philosophy to Flaubert, Zola and Ibsen, by way of Brecht, Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du printemps* and *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. Its textbook included bold discussions of whether beauty mattered in art and whether form could ever trump meaning, issues at the heart of Warhol's later achievements. Presciently, given the engaged artist Warhol would become, the book also stressed the social functions and meanings of art, describing art history as "cultural and social geography"—this in an era when analysis in terms of pure color, composition, texture and line was much more the fashion. Warhol got a proto-postmodern education while the rest of the art world was still working through modernism.

Greene did such a good job schooling his P&Ds in the most radical modern culture that a couple of Warhol's classmates went on to write graduate theses on Dada artists. Greene's own M.A. dissertation, completed not long before Warhol became his student, had been titled *Mechanistic Tendencies in Painting, from 1901 to 1908,* and he taught his students "the emotions characteristic of the mechanical"—perfect training for the most famous machine-inspired artist of all time.

Greene could also be impenetrable. "I always had the impression that he was saying something profound, because I couldn't understand what he said," remembered one student. Others called him "Mumbles" and fell asleep in his class. But if young Andrew Warhola had even half listened to his lectures—he later remembered Greene and his slide lectures as "wonderful"—he would have had vital grounding in the art he would go on to compete with. Three decades later, Warhol could still hold out comfortably on such topics as Caravaggio's chiaroscuro—at least when there wasn't a journalist around to witness his performance.

Greene also helped shape Warhol's Oedipal relationship to abstraction. In the late 1930s in New York, Greene had been the founding chairman of the uncompromising American Abstract Artists group, insisting that "the abstract artist can approach man through the most immediate of aesthetic experiences." By Warhol's Tech years, his teacher was in touch with the Abstract Expressionists in New York—Willem de Kooning said he'd been influenced by Greene, and the two had once been close colleagues—but had also started to feel that abstraction was a dead end. He began to take nude photos and make paintings that were inspired by them as part of "his answer to the trend back toward the realm of natural appearances," as one critic put it in 1947. Warhol took his doubts about abstraction even further than Greene did: As early as 1961 or '62, he moved into Pop Art by pissing on AbEx—almost literally, in a series of urine-covered canvases—and continued to do ironic riffs on abstraction for the rest of his life. The postwar moment when abstraction seemed to have finally won the Battle of the Styles was also the moment, as always with such things, that its value began to be questioned, with Warhol as one of its leading inquisitors.

But even Greene didn't buy into all of Warhol's radicalism. He was writing about the "excesses" of neo-Dada (as Pop Art was first known) as early as May 1961, just after his former student had shown his own Pop work for the first time in a department store window in New York. "I think of Pop as essentially phony, artificial, attention-getting," Greene later said, and attacked Warhol by name.

In his years at Tech, Warhol's Pop reputation as sphinx and con man was still a long way off. He was an "angel in the sky," according to one college friend. Another remembered Warhol's personality as "quite different from what you'd expect. He was very shy and cuddly, very much like a bunny rabbit." Warhol, he felt, "was not sophisticated, he was not corrupt . . . and he was not a manipulator of people. He was, as Shakespeare would say, 'an innocent,' and he appealed to the maternal and paternal instincts in people in those days."

That bunny soon become the coddled baby of the program's women, since most of the returning G.I.s at Tech were notably older than both Warhol's female classmates and than Warhol himself, who was one of only two males fresh out of high school in the entire program. Ellie Simon, Warhol's high school friend and Tech classmate, became particularly close and maternal in college. "She was always saying 'Did Andy have breakfast?'" remembered

one member of their crowd. "'Did he have lunch? Who's taking care of him for supper?'"

"We could always tell when Andy was happy because he would skip across campus," recalled Betty Asche Douglas, who was the only black P&D and felt a special kinship with Warhol because of his outsider status. Another classmate and later roommate said that art school at last gave Warhol a place where he could feel at home among other misfits like him.

"I can remember several parties where Andy and I were sitting on the steps just before you get into the room just watching everybody else," said Douglas. "And he would make these wry little remarks and comments about who was doing what and what was going on." For the rest of his life, Warhol turned observation into his own special kind of acting out. "If I really want to know what happened somewhere, I ask Andy," said a friend of his in the 1960s. "He may have only stayed three minutes and never raised his eyes, but there's nothing he hasn't observed."

This got its start when Warhol was at Tech, as "a listener, an observer, a loner, always the odd man out when a group of students got together and paired off," according to one particularly social classmate. In the same psychology textbook where Warhol scribbled his confession to bedwetting he also added heavy underlining to the page on "Withdrawing as a Defense: Seclusiveness and Timidity."

Toward the end of Warhol's first year, he must have taken special pleasure in observing the exaggerated, avant-garde misfitism of the art department's famous Beaux Arts Ball. In April 1946, a surrealist theme was meant to bring the dance back to life after a decade of dormancy: A newspaper report talked about a bunch of "junior illustrators" who shared a caterpillar costume while two students, the Misses Waichler and Schroeder, paired up as a "split personality." Photos make the ball look like something straight out of a painting by Salvador Dalí. In his junior year, already billing himself as "Andy Warhol," he was honored with a place on the ball's planning committee, which decided on the less demanding theme of Bali. The boys—including, delightfully, Warhol—went topless in flowered sarongs, with glitter on their torsos and golden armbands. The students' labors won them a luscious spread in *Life* magazine, the first of several that Warhol would score over the course of his career.

But if Warhol was finding a place for himself in his new milieu, he was also at risk of flunking out of it. Tech had just launched a tough new humanities curriculum meant to "correct the limitations of the typical art student," according to the dean at the time, and Warhol seemed to need a lot of correcting. He had special trouble with the "Thought and Expression" class,

which met every day for two terms and was meant to cram an entire liberal arts education into a single course. It was taught by Gladys Schmitt, a prolific novelist who was *"the* teacher to have at the time . . . a terribly stimulating and exciting person," according to one P&D. Schmitt despaired at Warhol's "mutilations of the English language." She made Warhol repeat her course in his second year, then gave him straight Ds.

These kind of troubles are hardly rare among working-class students in their first year at a rigorous college, but a lot was at stake: Doing badly put Warhol's Carnegie scholarship at risk, since it depended on his keeping a decent GPA.

He wasn't just bad at the new academic courses. Some instructors also considered Warhol a lousy draughtsman. By midterm of freshman year, he'd been given Cs or Ds in Color, in Pictorial and Decorative Design and in Drawing I, where he seemed to have problems with charcoal and perspective. A sketch of his cousin Joe is at best middling good; an anatomical drawing that survives by Warhol looks much better, at least to twenty-first-century eyes, but standards were so high at Tech that it only received a grade of B. As of that January, Warhol and his freshman class were in fierce competition with a newly arrived cohort of G.I.s, since the Bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima the previous August—on Warhol's birthday, no less. The department made it clear that only the fittest would survive to the following year. By early spring, Warhol looked bound for the long list of students who were put on probation or flunked.

End-of-year evaluations took place on what was known as "judgment day." Russell Twiggs would hang all the students' work in a gallery that spanned the building's top floor. Then, in private, a crowd of faculty would skitter along in front of the art on a long bench on wheels, horse-trading their opinions until a final decision was reached on each pupil. As one professor remembered: "The question always was—'Should Andy stay or go?'" That first year, the answer was "go." Or at least, after more jockeying among the faculty and some melodrama from Warhol—"I created a big scene and cried"—the decision was that he'd have to take a makeup class and produce drawings during the summer months that would prove him worthy of readmission in the fall.

That summer of 1946, Warhol worked alongside his brother Paul selling produce door-to-door off the back of a truck—"huckstering," it was called. Despite the name, it was a perfectly respectable part of Pittsburgh's retail landscape. It's not known whether Warhol was any good at flogging peaches

or tomatoes—mostly he seems to have carried orders up clients' stairs—but we do know that he started a sideline drawing caricatures of the customers. "The 25 cents he got for the pictures helped him to buy the art supplies he needed," recalled his brother John.

More important, by far, those drawings were designed to win him readmission to Tech. They are strikingly fluent and also funny—one shows Warhol himself suffering the torments of customer service—and are better, at least in traditional terms, than almost anything else from Warhol's college years. During just those few months, Warhol perfected a line that traced the outlines of his subjects and the urban scene around them in a mess of calligraphic loops. His new style even acted as a kind of X-ray vision, so that shoppers' comically sagging breasts and bulging bottoms showed right through their clothes. You get the sense that Warhol was getting quiet revenge on the women whose orders he had to lug.

But to properly understand the nature of Warhol's emerging genius—the same genius he deployed for the next forty years—it's important to realize that Warhol's "new" manner was borrowed straight from the caricatures of Honoré Daumier, one hundred of which had been presented to Pittsburghers at the Carnegie art museum the previous January. We don't know exactly which images were included, but there's an overwhelming resemblance between Warhol's produce-truck caricatures and a Daumier such as *Smell the Merchandise Before Manhandling It,* from the 1842 Parisian Types suite. In fact, a local newspaper article on Warhol's summer drawings began with an anecdote about the huckster's customers manhandling the merchandise, a story that could have been fed to the reporter only by Warhol.

Warhol's debt to Daumier is an early sign of his extraordinary, lifelong skill as a sponge, repurposing ideas, images and styles he found ready-made in the world, whether in the works of other artists or in the supermarket aisle. That debt also meshes with Warhol's own account of his forced "re-education" that summer. He believed that Tech faculty simply hadn't liked his drawing style—"they do not appreciate my artwork," he told one neighbor, in high dudgeon—so, with his trademark flexibility, he changed to one he knew they'd prefer.

Warhol's freshman-year professors were right: He never had the innate talent for realistic drawing that even many minor artists have. Throughout his life, whenever he was making a purely functional and private sketch, say for the composition of a magazine page or to lay out an exhibition, the result was almost always a comically awkward image such as a more natural draughtsman could never bear to turn out. "Andy was a good art-

ist, but he could never draw, you know—he would never draw realistically, he would never force himself to search; he would always do it a mechanical way," remembered one art-director friend from the 1950s. A later critic called Warhol's manner "straight efficiency drawing. . . . What Roland Barthes would call zero-degree drawing"—the artist's line, that is, being reduced to fulfilling its most essential, mechanical tasks without leaving any fine art residue.

But across all his four busy decades as a draughtsman, Warhol overcame his innate limitations by taking on (and sometimes inventing) a series of very artful styles that he could channel his images through, the way a pasta maker pushes dough through shaped dies. You can't tell a Warhol drawing by its "hand," as connoisseurs like to say. The best you can do is spot which of his several trademark styles it was made in, and wonder if maybe you're witnessing that style being aped by a well-trained assistant, as was in fact often the case. Warhol was, you could say, a style maker first and an artist—at least in the traditional sense—second. Milton Glaser, the noted postwar graphic artist, recognized precisely this: "In terms of what it means to draw beautifully, in terms of control, I don't think he was very notable." But, said Glaser, "he had an enormous sense of style, and he could bring that burnished style to a product."

This began in that summer of 1946, when he pushed his weak freshman drawings through the art of Daumier and turned out winning art goods. In October, he went back to Tech as a recipient of the $40 Martin B. Leisser Prize, awarded to him and two classmates for "unsupervised art work" made during the summer vacation.

The drawings won him his very first solo exhibition, held for a single day in the gallery at Tech, as well as something he would have valued even more: A big article on page two of the *Pittsburgh Press,* one Sunday in November, that had photos of both him and his art. The text has so few direct quotes that it looks like Warhol was already clamming up with reporters fifteen years before reticence became his trademark. "People are funny" was about the best line he offered. Otherwise, the coverage of his drawings done on Pittsburgh streets provided an early lesson in a truth that Warhol took to heart later with Pop: Art built around the public's own culture can grab that public's attention.

Warhol's sophomore year continued to go better than his first. At home, Julia had moved upstairs to leave the ground floor to her son and his art projects. His brother John recalled how Warhol would listen to the radio, do his homework and eavesdrop on kitchen conversations, all at the same time—

the same virtuoso multitasking that kept him productive even in the chaos of his 1960s Factory scene.

At school, Warhol settled into a circle of ambitious friends, including Philip Pearlstein, the one classmate who went on to be a noted artist. Pearlstein was a working-class Pittsburgher whose huckster father knew Paul Warhola. Four years older than Warhol, Pearlstein had been drafted after his first year as a scholarship student at Tech, in the spring of 1943, and was only now returning, with full funding through the G.I. Bill.

What first brought the two students together was Warhol's fascination with Pearlstein's early success and exposure as an artist. Back in 1941, Pearlstein had already won both first and third prize at the Carnegie's national exhibition of high school art. Still more impressive, Pearlstein had two of his winning paintings reproduced in color in a *Life* magazine feature on the show. "Andy asked me: 'How does it feel to be famous?' My spontaneous answer was, 'It only lasted five minutes,'" said Pearlstein, laying claim to the genesis moment for Warhol's trademark idea that fame can be counted on the clock—although Pearlstein has told that story in so many versions, and so many others have competing claims for inspiring Warhol's celebrated "fifteen minutes of fame" line, that skepticism is in order.

Warhol's tight little group at Tech included Pearlstein's future wife Dorothy Cantor as well as the couple Ethel and Leonard Kessler (called "Pappy" because he was older), diehard lefties who taught the others about activism. Warhol was "our little pet," Leonard Kessler remembered, claiming that he took his impoverished new friend to his very first restaurant, a Jewish place where Warhol marveled at the free radishes brought to every table. Kessler described Warhol as having been "the most shy, reticent, uncommunicative, non-verbal person—but absolutely extremely gifted, the only truly intuitive artist I've ever known in my life. He could not do anything wrong in his work, really, and he could never explain why."

Another member of their set, if only for one year, was the openly gay George Klauber, who had studied already at Pratt in New York and, after the war, in Paris and Oxford, which led him to speak English "with an accent of his own invention, with elements of French and Oxford accents," according to Philip Pearlstein. Pearlstein said that Klauber impressed the rest of them because he was up-to-date on "the abstract painting of Pablo Picasso and Piet Mondrian, the architecture of Corbusier and the music of Gustav Mahler, and had read most of the *Remembrance of Things Past,* by Marcel Proust."

Photographs of the group sprawling on the campus grass make them

look like an Our Gang of artsies. "We went to the Pittsburgh Symphony concerts every Friday night, as well as movies at the art theater," remembered Pearlstein, while his classmate Art Elias mentioned them going to every exhibition at the Carnegie art museum. One in particular seems telling: Toward the end of Warhol's sophomore year, the museum opened a big show of works by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, and the picture it gave of Toulouse-Lautrec as a radical avant-gardist, in life and art, might as well be the template for Warhol's life as an artist. (Toulouse-Lautrec was one of the first artists Warhol bought when he started earning good money in the later 1950s.) The show's catalog sums up Toulouse-Lautrec in a passage that could easily pass as a summary of Warhol's Pop career: "First impressions are that he played a lone hand. This was not true. It was also said of him that he was shockingly cruel and cynical. That is not the way to express it. . . . He was chiefly interested in putting down without irony or bitterness what he saw in life. . . . He was charitable to even the most neurotic and morbid tinge of this grotesque society. . . . He was not concerned with boundaries, social, literary, illustrative, or commercial."

Warhol was learning the culture and values of an artiste, and he naturally started to dress the part—"very ill-kept . . . sort of a pre-beatnick." (He received a D in a Tech course called Hygiene.) One P&D remembered him wearing "a faded gray corduroy sports jacket and tennis shoes painted with all these bright colors," while another had him in a turtleneck and paint-spattered jeans, worn with the brown-and-white saddle shoes that were then in fashion but with the white parts painted over in black. When Warhol got a summer job, he arrived so disheveled that colleagues mounted a kind of clothing drive to dress him. He thanked them, then immediately cut the sleeves off the shirts and slapped silver paint on the shoes—or so the story went, as it was told and retold some forty years later. These are our first glimpses of the so-called Raggedy Andy look that Warhol was still affecting for his first few years in New York, in the early 1950s, until success let him start shopping at Brooks Brothers.

By the end of his sophomore year, at the latest, Warhol began to go by the echt-bohemian name of André—especially easy to adopt as a Frenchification of his father's Rusyn name—and college friends continued to address their letters to "André" for at least another decade. It was Corinne ("Corky") Kessler, sister of Pappy Leonard, who had encouraged Warhol's name change, but he didn't need much encouragement: The end papers of one of his college textbooks show him working on variations of his moniker—he scribbled "Andre," "Warhold," "Warol," "Narhold," "Narol" and "harold."

Pearlstein recalled that Corky was the one responsible for changing Warhol from a "very likeable kid" into a poseur. Corky also launched Warhol into his lifelong love of modern dance, since she was enrolled in some kind of dance program in Pittsburgh. As a sophomore he saw the Pittsburgh native Martha Graham make a splash with her *Appalachian Spring,* and later told Graham herself that it had touched him deeply. One Tech classmate said that their crowd counted Graham as "very 'in'" and that her Pittsburgh appearances were an important influence on Warhol's taste for the cutting edge.

In the 1940s, modern dance still counted as a radically new art form, not at all a part of the standard cultural mix that it would be on a twenty-first-century campus. Warhol's interest in it required a notable emotional and social investment. Snapshots taken on the Tech campus show him striking unironic ballet poses, and he eventually became the only male in the school's modern-dance club, founded a decade earlier. Year after year, that club had been featured in Tech's yearbooks with photos of its smiling girls—only girls—set above cheery little texts about the club's parties and visits to all the local dance events. Then suddenly, in the 1949 blurb on the club, the photo turns almost comic. It shows five pert young ladies in leotards alongside a sullen, balding Warhol, in chinos and dress shirt, above a text that still talks only about the "women" who make up the club. Miss Kanrich, the club's longtime faculty supervisor, looks less than amused in the shot. Warhol, she said, "was a nut!"

He must have been serious and skilled enough to get through the club's auditions—he also drew a recruitment poster for it—but one P&D nevertheless recalled Warhol as less than impressive: "Members danced to music from a record player, and Andy tried to keep up with the others but appeared awkward and uncoordinated. He came into art class one day with his elbows bruised from learning to fall." In a charming riff on his predicament, Warhol made and mailed a droll Christmas card featuring five pink-skinned male dancers in tight mauve tops and scarlet shorty-shorts. The card's fey look—sketches for it had included fluttering butterflies—points to something vital in Warhol's existence around this time: a willingness to experiment with an openly "queer" persona and to play with gender norms.

Warhol's relationship to his own sexuality, at first in the face of Eisenhower America's vicious opposition to it, became a driving force behind his entire

conception of how to make art and live life. Openly displaying an identity that most of society had contempt for put him at risk, of course, but it could also be empowering. It represented a certain kind of courage and boldness, in a society that wasn't likely to grant either virtue to men like him. Warhol's identity as a gay man, almost but never quite out, shaped reactions to him for decades, whether among homophobes, sympathetic straights or the other gay men whose worlds he moved in. Without those tensions and complications, and the distance they gave him from the mainstream, Warhol would never have become the great and enigmatic artist he was. And it's at Tech that this identity began to take shape. For one self-portrait assignment, Warhol went so far as to depict himself as a girl with Shirley Temple ringlets, shocking both teacher and class. "Who the hell is that? Is that your sister?" one classmate is supposed to have asked. "No," replied Warhol, "I always want to know what I would look like if I was a girl."

There's only circumstantial evidence for Warhol's first explorations of his homosexual self. We know that Warhol was utterly immersed in the gay community almost as soon as he arrived in New York in 1949. For another dozen years—right up until the explosion of Pop—he lived his life, and made his art, almost entirely within its borders. Given that, there must have been some major moment before then, in Pittsburgh, when he would have come out, at least to himself and other gay men—the original meaning of "coming out," before it meant revealing oneself to straights. It must have happened at the latest by the fall of 1947, after he had replaced his jobs selling milk, jerking soda and hawking produce with a summer job at the Joseph Horne Company in downtown Pittsburgh, "a luxurious department store that catered to the upper class," according to one longtime employee. The store installed air-conditioning before any of its rivals and escalators just months before Warhol got there, and boasted that an entire floor for women's fashions had been designed by the great Raymond Loewy himself, father of streamlined design. Locals would make a special trip just to ogle its high-end store windows.

Warhol ended up working in the department that created those window displays. In one of his classic understatements, he said that his job merely involved thumbing through glamorous fashion magazines to look for ideas, without "ever finding one or getting one." In fact, early sources have him getting his hands properly dirty in the store's street-side fashion windows. One photo that survives of a window he worked on shows a display full of sexy women's beachwear, with the words "male-tested" plastered all over the window's plate glass—guaranteed to have sparked

a smile among the men who painted those words, since their interest in bikinis was limited.

"In the display department there were a number of flaming queens and [Warhol] was fascinated with them and always intrigued by their conversation," remembered Perry Davis, an art teacher at Tech. (Kauffman's, Pittsburgh's other leading department store, had notably straight window trimmers, according to a gay friend of Warhol's who worked there.) The display boss at Horne's was a gay man named Larry Vollmer, who had hired Warhol "right in the elevator" and described his new staffer as "really a wild bird, an odd duck," but also as an extraordinary talent who was "academic and fantastically original, all at once." Vollmer had once designed windows at the Bonwit Teller department store in New York, as Warhol later did, and he told his new protégé war stories about fighting over a display with Salvador Dalí, who ended up in jail and on the front page of the *New York Times* when his bathtub "made of Persian lamb" crashed through the store window. It's no wonder Warhol, a lifelong fan of Dalí and his larks, described Vollmer as the idol of his student years.

Charming photos from Horne's, date-stamped August and October 1947, show Warhol mugging with the other members of his department among the toy monkeys and giant spectacles they used for displays. Warhol's gay colleagues "would talk about their costume parties. Some of them were very talented people, but what Andy noticed about them was the bizarre dress, mannerisms and that sort of thing," said Davis. Warhol took note: He spent the fifty cents an hour he earned at Horne's on a snazzy corduroy outfit his friends called his "dream suit," a pink one, according to a gay Pittsburgh man who admired it at the time as a "unique, challenging and beautiful outfit." It made Warhol the instant center of attention: "You didn't go downtown in Pittsburgh in a pink suit," said the same man, who came of age there. Corduroy was getting an especially hard sell that year by the collegians who manned Horne's Campus Shop, near such manly departments as Guns, Cameras and Sporting Goods, but Warhol didn't exactly style his gear as those virile young salesmen advised. He wore his suit with mismatched shoes, a tie dipped in paint and brightly colored fingernails. Oscar Wilde once said that "one should either be a work of art, or wear a work of art." At Horne's we get our first sign of Warhol aiming for both.

Perry Davis felt that Warhol's classmates were wrong to think of him as innocent and sexless; all he needed was some exposure to gay sexuality. His job at Horne's gave him that.

Department store toilets were often "tearooms," gay code for likely spots for casual sexual encounters. "There were so few places for men to meet each

other," said one gay Pittsburgher of Warhol's generation who remembered Horne's as having "the most beautiful men's rooms." You flushed the toilet by stepping on a button in the floor.

Horne's position at the very west end of downtown also meant that it was right up against a scruffy warehouse district, known as The Point, full of "cheap saloons, prostitutes—you wouldn't want to go down there during the day, let alone at night," one veteran Horne's employee recalled. The Point was also a major gay cruising zone, making it prime hunting ground for cops looking for "sex deviates" to beat up and arrest.

The late 1940s in the United States was about as bad a time and place as could be imagined for a young man to discover his attraction to other men. Warhol took a junior-year class called Psychology of Adjustment (on "human behavior in the group and individual sense") and his copy of its textbook survives, with its pages on homosexuality underlined more heavily than any other part of the book. The psych text's first words on gay desire might have sparked some hope in Warhol: "Few conditions of behavior are so misunderstood or so despised in popular opinion. Homosexuality is not a 'sign of degeneracy.'" But that hope got dashed by the book's next lines: "[Homosexuality] is an inadequate sexual adjustment, often a maldevelopment." The author explains that most sufferers manage their condition without descending to "overt sexual acts," but that "more pronounced cases" can lead all the way to action. Warhol would have read, with either worry or delight, that a "cure" was often difficult, "because the person affected is satisfied with his form of adjustment, often defending it with elaborate rationalizations," causing "severe anxiety . . . which is relieved only on sexual readjustment"—a hellish pseudotreatment that Warhol was luckily spared.

In a little-known self-portrait that Warhol painted at Tech he portrays himself with such an absurdly, self-consciously limp wrist—maybe even with white nail polish, a later favorite of his—that there's no way local homophobes wouldn't have spotted him as a "fairy." He comes off the same way in a portrait by his classmate Philip Pearlstein. "He would always do little things like stick his finger up or something to make himself stand out," Pearlstein remembered.

Warhol's effeminate manner would have made him an easy target for the college boys of Oakland, known to be especially cruel, even violent, toward homosexuals. Decades later, Warhol made self-portraits that show him being punched or strangled.

Homophobia was fully institutionalized across postwar America. In 1950, the United States Senate, self-declared as "the world's greatest deliberative

body," issued a report titled "Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government." It gives some useful general tips for prospective inquisitors ("contrary to a common belief, all homosexual males do not have feminine mannerisms") before concluding that "One homosexual can pollute a Government office." The report launched a Lavender Scare that led to wholesale persecution. In 1977, when the FBI finally destroyed the records of J. Edgar Hoover's "Sex Deviate" program, there were 330,000 pages of documents to be burned.

For gay men in Pittsburgh, the orderly witch hunt going on in Washington might have seemed almost the bright side of the picture. In 1948, two Pittsburgh judges referred to homosexuals as "society's greatest menace," citing police lists with the names of one thousand of these "known perverts."

In Pennsylvania as a whole, the crime of sodomy (which included oral sex) could be punished by up to ten years of hard labor, and in 1949 prosecutors piled charges onto one McKeesport man until his sentences totaled fifteen to thirty years—of which he served fully nineteen before proving he'd been framed by the police. In 1951, Pennsylvania's maximum sentence for sodomy was increased to life, a penalty otherwise reserved for treason, murder, kidnapping and prison hostage taking, but now extended even to "solicitation to commit sodomy." A psychiatric examination helped determine your fate, maybe replacing hard time with an indefinite stay in a mental hospital. As one gay Pittsburgher remembered, "If you got caught, they had two choices, jail or shock treatments."

At just the moment when Warhol was coming out, the odds that you would get caught began to soar. In September 1948, a year after Warhol's summer at Horne's, the Pittsburgh police department created a special "Morals Squad" whose only job was to arrest gay men. Those were the cops who cruised the Point district behind Horne's and attacked gays with "vicious brutal and unprovoked assaults." Within the first two weeks of the unit's creation its cops had shot two gay men.

Almost as soon as the Morals Squad was formed, its thirty-six members realized that they'd just been handed a ready-made extortion racket: What gay man wouldn't cough up a tidy $200 to have all charges dropped, if it would avoid exposure in the newspaper, the likely loss of a job and possibly a decade in prison? One clerk from a smaller department store a few blocks from Horne's was a regular at the Point, and remembered being arrested there by undercover squad members even before he'd had a chance to make any advances. The Morals Squad soon discovered that their extortion worked just as well on straight men out late alone, who would rather

pay up than be shamed with a charge of "deviance." One straight friend of Warhol's, out walking at night with a female P&D, discovered that even he wasn't safe, once the Squad had decided his parents would rather pay up than see him facing a morals charge. (He fought the charges and eventually won.)

As the *Pittsburgh Press* put it, when the scandal finally broke in 1951, "decent, respectable men could not enter certain public places in downtown Pittsburgh without endangering their reputations, homes and families." The less "respectable" men of Pittsbugh were in a full-blown, paranoid panic.

A state grand jury eventually handed down indictments against twelve corrupt members of the Morals Squad although, tellingly, the scandal wasn't described in terms of its vicious effect on the almost eight hundred men who were arrested. Instead, it was held up as an example of how corruption was hindering the important work of cleaning up the "conditions of unbelievable depravity involving male homosexuality."

This was Warhol's world. His difference from the average male put him at risk, but like many young gays he also used it as a source of individuality and power. Warhol's homosexuality was pushing him toward the social cutting edge, which had always also been a place for cutting-edge art. The two would never be separate for Warhol; part of his brilliance was helping others recognize the connection. You can see it already in his best student piece, although we only know it from a single description.

One of his junior-year assignments was to illustrate a scene from a short story completed in 1920 by Willa Cather, Pittsburgh's best-loved author. The story was called "Paul's Case: A Study in Temperament"—"temperamental" then being a euphemism for "gay." Cather's adolescent hero is described as a "dandy" who wears a "scandalous red carnation" and whose eyes are "remarkable for a certain hysterical brilliancy" deployed "in a conscious, theatrical sort of way, peculiarly offensive in a boy." He loses himself among the pictures in the Carnegie Institute's art museum and then sits in its concert hall "intoxicated" by a soprano singing opera—as Warhol was later in New York, whether listening live at the Met or with Maria Callas cranked up on his stereo.

Of course Cather's antihero is ill suited to life and school in Pittsburgh, where his only pleasure is found among the thespians at a local theater, which has "all the allurement of a secret love." He gets all the stars there to sign their photographs. Kicked out of school, Paul steals a fortune from his employer and runs off for a week of flowers and champagne in a fancy New York hotel. He parties with "a wild San Francisco boy, a freshman at Yale" and discovers

that high society, and the money that buys access to it, means everything to him. Cather might as well have written the story just for Warhol—or about him, almost.

Paul's forbidden pleasures cannot last, and he ends up dead in the snow under the wheels of a train, which was the moment that Warhol and his classmates were supposed to illustrate. The whole class did standard images of locomotives and mangled corpses. Warhol, in his first clear moment of artistic brilliance, presented his puzzled instructor with a blank white sheet with one big splat of blood-red paint in its middle. This was an abstraction that was up-to-date with the latest splats from Jackson Pollock and his crew, who were much on the mind of Tech's P&Ds, but it also counts as the first of Warhol's Death and Disaster pictures, done exactly fifteen years before that Pop Art series came about. The piece also hints at Warhol's body-fluid abstractions, this picture's "blood" preceding the semen and urine that came later as materials for Warhol's paintings. The image also expressed the continuing pain of being a gay teenager in Pittsburgh, forty years after Cather published her story. "We used to average 12, 15, 20 people a year committing suicide," said a gay bartender who came out in the 1940s. "Our people met in parks and we dreamed of love and all that stuff, but there wasn't the arena for that."

Yet there were glimmers of hope even in Warhol's homophobic hometown. A certain condescending tolerance existed for the most outrageous gay men—the Horne's window dressers, for example—to whom 1940s straights "afforded a liberty not unlike that granted by peasants to the village idiot."

A local gallery called Outlines also showed Warhol that there could be some quiet openness toward homosexuality: It hosted some of the first public appearances together of the composer John Cage and dancer Merce Cunningham, who had only recently become partners in art and life. They had an apartment in Pittsburgh during a residency that lasted for all of June 1946, so Warhol had the chance to notice that this creative duo were more than just friends and that their creativity and intimacy might just be connected. Warhol explored that connection between gay life and the avant-garde for the next forty years, and it helped make him a central figure in American culture.

Pittsburgh even had a small network of short-lived gay clubs, although one of the earliest, in McKeesport, was so secret its entrance could only be reached by climbing across the roof. Could memories of that club, where Warhol might possibly have been "born" as a gay man, have fed into his standard lie about having been born in McKeesport? There were also close-knit

networks of gay friends and lovers who, in utmost secrecy, would perform clandestine gay weddings.

Warhol was probably too young and naïve to have been a part of that hush-hush world, but he would have known at least one example of an elite professional who lived life as someone evidently "queer," as later theorists would say, if not as an avowed homosexual. This was Andrey Avinoff, head of the Carnegie Institute's natural history museum, where Warhol (another Andrej) went to draw on many Saturdays.

Avinoff, described by a relative as "an elegant, sparrow-boned man, with pince-nez and natty bowtie," was a Russian aristocrat who had begun his American exile as a successful society portraitist and commercial artist in New York. The Russian also had a legendary knowledge of butterflies, gained during his Czarist youth, and he parlayed that into a career in the Carnegie Institute's natural history wing. He was a national celebrity, profiled in *The New Yorker* in 1948 and scheduled for big play in *Life* when he was felled by a heart attack in the summer of 1949.

In Warhol's hometown, Avinoff, the noted entomologist, was also a celebrated painter: He taught art at the University of Pittsburgh and exhibited and lectured at Carnegie Tech. At the end of Warhol's junior year, the Russian had an exhibition of his fey flower-and-butterfly paintings at the Carnegie art museum at about the same time that Warhol, at Tech, was doing his fey drawing of boy dancers with butterflies. A few years later, Warhol made a drawing of a toddler with a butterfly on his head, on which he wrote: "Here is Andy at the age of two—Looking wistfully at you—He has wings like a butterfly—And if you ask the reason why—He will say: I'm a butterfly you see—Won't you come and fly with me."

Avinoff was also part of a discreet circle of gays at the highest levels of Pittsburgh society. These included married bigwigs such as Alcoa heir Roy Hunt (who funded Tech's library) and aviation tycoon George R. Hann (the owner of Russian icons that Avinoff showed and who was also, it seems, Avinoff's lover), as well as Edgar Kaufmann Jr., the design-savvy son of a local department store magnate. Later, as a curator at the Museum of Modern Art, Edgar Jr. helped Warhol find work in New York.

Avinoff "descended on our city like a fabulous creature from another planet," said a man who studied art in Pittsburgh. "He was the idol of my youth," he continued, "like a twirling Christmas ornament in a department store window, he reflected in muted brilliance all the facets of the world around him"—a store-window "fabulousness" that also sounds like code for Avinoff's queer style.

In his inner circle, at least, Avinoff's homosexuality was "merely a small

part of his charm, everybody knew about it, nobody was bothered by it." He attended one Pittsburgh soiree dressed as a butterfly, and was caricatured as one in a *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* cartoon that made a barely veiled poke at his queerness. After Avinoff left the Carnegie, he started hatching plans for a gay association in New York, designing a wildly pornographic frieze for its clubhouse that culminated decades' worth of more private erotica. Some kind of contact seems likely between Avinoff and Warhol, two successful gay illustrators from Pittsburgh who did life-drawing sessions at the same institutions, in the same era, and who both built pictures around penises and butterflies. In fact, Avinoff had found many of his nude models among the students at Tech and was a judge for that Scholastic art contest that had once given Warhol some kind of a prize.

By the middle of Warhol's junior year, Avinoff was sharing his soft-core art, and stories of the gay life behind it, with a very important new pen pal who he'd first met in entomological circles: the sexologist Alfred Kinsey, whose *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* had just made a big splash. By April 1948 its publicity had boosted sales of a stodgy old whiskey named "Kinsey's" by 50 percent; by year's end, the report had earned a line in Cole Porter's *Kiss Me, Kate*.

Life, which Warhol read, gave the book huge play. Warhol learned that, for the first time in American history, it was possible to treat homosexual acts and people as a normal part of American life. One of the biggest bombshells dropped by the book was Kinsey's finding that 25 percent of adult men under fifty-five had had "more than incidental" homosexual experiences for at least three years straight in their lives. This was a promising vision for a nineteen-year-old who had recently discovered that he was attracted to other men.

Within weeks of Kinsey's book appearing, Warhol got a chance to read even more about his "condition," which was at last beginning to seem more like an identity than a disease. Gore Vidal's third novel, *The City and the Pillar,* a book built around homosexual culture, hit the best-seller list that same winter—Vidal said he lived off its royalties for ages. By the following year an underground guide to gay life was saying that its "accurate dialog and color" made it "unlikely to be surpassed" in its treatment of queer realities.

Despite the standard tragic ending for its gay hero, most of the book takes the radical position that homosexuality ought to be a quite acceptable part of America's sexual and cultural mix—a minority taste, for sure, and stigmatized, but not in itself all that strange or remarkable, or shameful. The book dares to imagine "a world where sex was natural and not fear-

some, where men could love men naturally, the way they were meant to." There's no way of being certain that Warhol read Vidal: The *Washington Post,* worried that the novel was at risk of making a perfectly respectable homophobia seem boorish and bigoted, said the book belonged in psychology libraries, "not in the hands of effeminate boys, pampering their pathological inclinations." But with buzz like that, how could the novel not have been the subject of constant discussion among Warhol's gay friends?

It's clear that Warhol absolutely devoured yet another gay-themed book that appeared around the same time, which, given postwar homophobia, turned out to be an unlikely watershed for gay writing. It was a novella called *Other Voices, Other Rooms,* by the twenty-three-year-old prodigy Truman Capote, who appeared on its back cover in a sultry photo that caused a commotion. There's even a story that on a trip to New York the following spring, Warhol went so far as to nab an enlargement of that portrait from the offices of *Theater Arts,* a magazine he eventually worked for.

Capote's text must have been as important as his photo for the nineteen-year-old Warhol, who stalked its author in the 1950s and became his close friend in the '70s. One writer who was in college when *Other Voices* appeared remembered how, surrounded by "truculent" veterans on the G.I. Bill, she and her fellow aesthetes found each other through Capote's new book: "To walk with Capote in your grasp was as distinctive, and as dissenting from the world's values, as a monk's habit."

At some point during his early years, Warhol went to the trouble of writing out a full page of notes on the book's characters, as though planning to illustrate them. In general, it looks as though Warhol took more inspiration from Capote's camp, flamboyant but also closeted vision of queerness than from the inklings in Vidal of an open but unremarkable gay culture that can meld perfectly with the mainstream. According to an early review in the *New York Times,* Capote's book is "fascinated by decadence and . . . evil, or perhaps only by weakness . . . [and] filled with sibilant whispering"—a not-so-veiled hint at its homosexual moments and characters.

The book's hero is the thirteen-year-old Joel, a blond waif described as offending mainstream notions "of what a 'real' boy should look like . . . he was too pretty, too delicate and fair-skinned; each of his features was shaped with a sensitive accuracy, and a girlish tenderness softened his eyes." That's not a bad evocation of Warhol at that same age. A cruel playmate of Joel's even tells him to "go on home and cut out paper dolls, sissy-britches," just as Warhol did during his childhood illness.

Other passages evoke the man Warhol will become, maybe because they helped bring it about. Joel read movie magazines "till he knew the latest do-

ings of the Hollywood stars by heart," and had an irresistible, distinctly Warholian urge to "keep and catalogue trifles . . . magazine photos and foreign coins, books and no-two-alike rocks, and a wonderful conglomeration he'd labeled simply Miscellany."

We also meet an older relation of Joel's who is a decadent, neurasthenic, cross-dressing aesthete "neither man nor woman . . . whose every identity cancelled the other, a grab-bag of disguises." His room is absurdly crowded with Victoriana and gewgaws, "carved tables, velvet chairs, candelabras, a German music box, books and paintings"—a gay-fabulous style that's like the décor in Warhol's own later homes. Reading one of the most famous books of its time (the "fairy *Huckleberry Finn*" as one wag called it) Warhol would have been pleased to discover that his alter ego, Joel, comes out of the tale intact, unlike the gay hero in Cather or even in Vidal and in almost all earlier fiction.

In fact, the tiny, hermetic world of Carnegie Tech also offered hints of a reality that could turn out well for gays. Like almost nowhere else in town, except maybe the display departments in the biggest stores, Tech's College of Fine Arts was a haven for a minority that could be almost openly homosexual.

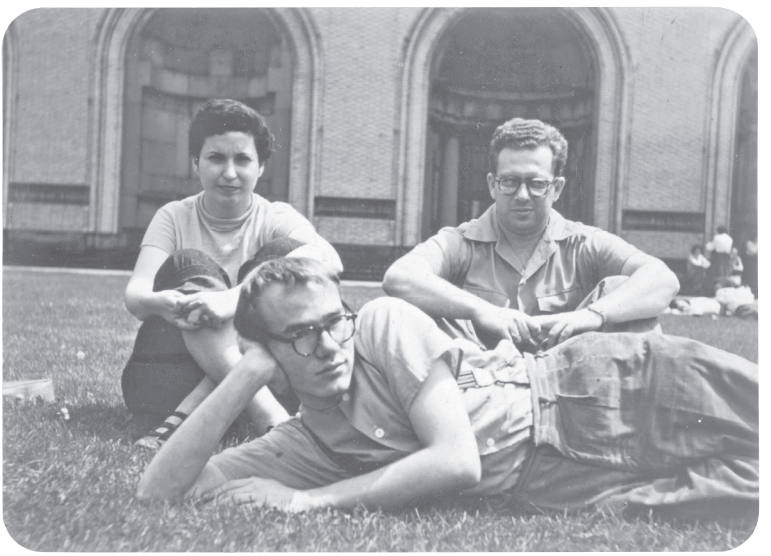
Warhol had friends in the college dance scene there who were not totally closeted, and in the art department itself "homosexuality was pretty well accepted," said Perry Davis, the gay teacher who had noticed the "flaming queens" at Horne's and once recommended Capote as an author worth watching. Davis himself wrote lyrics for drag queens who performed at a Black music club.

Warhol's fellow student George Klauber was fully out, and went on to be part of an openly gay crowd in New York: He became Warhol's first and most important contact in that world. Roger Anliker, a teacher who arrived only in Warhol's senior year, was gay but mostly closeted. He said he counted Warhol more as his friend than his student and drew a very intimate and sensitive—and effeminate—life portrait of the younger man holding a tiny toy bird.

Perry Davis himself was "very gay and flamboyant," according to Dorothy Cantor. He wore hot pink shirts, seen at the time as a sure sign of homosexuality, and in photos he comes off as slight and pretty. One cruel student called him "the little fruitcake."

At one art-student party held in Davis's flat Warhol arrived with his hair dyed chartreuse—a sure reference to a new movie called *The Boy with Green Hair*. It premiered in November 1948 and starred the child actor Dean Stockwell, who as an adult would show up at a Hollywood party given for

Warhol in 1963. The movie's plot involves a twelve-year-old orphan who wakes up one day to discover that he's become "different" from everyone else—because of his suddenly green hair—and has to learn to cope with discrimination and even beatings. Warhol and the P&Ds who watched him parade his emerald dye job could only have read this as a parable for coming out gay in Pittsburgh.



. . . in front of the College of Fine Arts with Dorothy Cantor and Philip Pearlstein.

4

1947–1949

DADA AND FILM AT TECH | OUTLINES GALLERY AND THE AVANT-GARDE | STAR STUDENT | ORIGINS OF THE BLOTTED LINE | NEW YORK HORIZONS

"Andy did what he damn well pleased;
he got approval by being impossible"

In his junior year, as Warhol was dipping his toe into gay culture, he was also taking his first deep plunge into avant-garde art. "Make it new" was modernism's most vital ideal, and however postmodern Warhol can sometimes seem, that ideal shaped everything he made and did. You could say that he was only led into the stranger corners of postmodernism by his early training in modernist innovation: If there's any single force behind the wild range of Warhol's art, it is his hatred of the already done. Philip Pearlstein remembered that, more than anyone else in their clique, the young Warhol believed "that you should always try to find something new." This idea, so central to Warhol's entire career, wasn't something he was born with; we can track him learning it as a student aesthete in Pittsburgh. A teacher of his at Tech is supposed to have laid down the law to him: "You have got to do things the way you want them, and be damned with what I think, be damned with what anybody else around you thinks. Go do it the way you see it, to please yourself, or you'll never amount to anything."

At Tech, the P&Ds were in full backlash against a local art scene that was still under the sway of the social realists and American Regionalists who dominated the Carnegie annuals. "Abstraction and Abstract Expressionism—that was the new frontier, essentially. Those were the guys that we admired," said one student. Their teacher Robert Lepper remembered both being baffled by Jackson Pollock and also being convinced that

abstraction had to be defended, however reluctantly, as the "inevitable" destination of art in an industrial society. When a Tech assignment asked him for a depiction of "rain," Warhol turned in a mess of dribbled paint in yellow, blue and red.

Pearlstein recalled that he himself "deliberately did not do anything representational" in his later years at Tech. His surviving paintings, almost all figurative, make clear that this wasn't strictly accurate, but the memory is even more telling for being false: "Abstract" was the word to conjure with, and Warhol later came to use it for almost any art—any *anything*—that came with notable complications.

Out beyond even abstraction's cutting edge, Betty Asche Douglas especially remembered Warhol listening in on heated discussions about Marcel Duchamp "and whether or not what he had done or was doing in art—whether it was legitimately an art issue or whether it was peripheral in some way."

Students cooked up "our own little version of the Dadaist happenings. . . . The idea was to do something unique or unexpected," said Douglas. There was general silliness, involving dressing up like vintage movie stars—Warhol was already expressing his love of Shirley Temple—as well as more serious avant-gardism. The students tried their hand at experimental films, including one that could almost pass for a '60s work by Warhol: "We got on a street car in costume, down in the heart of Oakland, and rode out to the campus, and then we had a guy out there who rolled out the red carpet off the streetcar, to walk on, while somebody else was on the sidewalk shooting."

A classmate described that project, done on a lark by the entire junior year class, as "a very controversial film in its day . . . one of the first underground films." The movie began like one of the Surrealists' "exquisite corpses," with each student contributing ten seconds of footage. To add color, the P&Ds placed gels in front of their projector, anticipating the light effects Warhol devised for his Exploding Plastic Inevitable productions in the mid-1960s. Warhol himself played a notable role in the film.

Around 1965, when Warhol left behind his vast success as a Pop painter to take up radical filmmaking, the move seemed to come out of the blue, but in fact it had deep roots in his college years. Tech instructors were struggling to keep up with their charges' newfound cinephilia: The students had founded a Film Arts club, meant to produce a new movie each year, and had begun weekly screenings of "experimental motion pictures" such as the brand-new *Beauty and the Beast* by Jean Cocteau, one of Warhol's lifelong

heroes. Their art-history text, way ahead of its time, made the astonishing claim that the venerable, static arts of sculpture and painting were inexorably losing ground to "the more dynamic dance, music and drama in a development which has come . . . to find its most satisfying synthesis in the colored talking motion picture." This was pretty much what Warhol was thinking, some fifteen years later, when he officially quit painting for film and managing the Velvet Underground. "Andy was the one who pushed [art] to all conceivable limits. . . . So there was nothing else he could do but go on to rock and roll and movies," as one early supporter put it.

Music was also important at Tech—Pearlstein and Warhol both took piano lessons there—and even the most recent, most aggressively modern compositions were being explored. A gang of students went so far as to turn an old college instrument into the latest in cutting-edge "prepared" pianos, which had just been pioneered by the radical composer John Cage: "[We] tore all the pads off, put thumbtacks and stuff like that in."

If all this sounds too forward-looking for a bunch of Pittsburgh art students, they would have learned to look that far ahead at that long-forgotten local gallery called Outlines, where Warhol got his first big dose of advanced art ideas even before he started Tech. That was where no less a figure than Cage himself had appeared, first while Warhol was still in high school and then three times when he was in college. Warhol said that he remembered meeting the composer, who remained an important role model for decades. In the 1960s, one of Warhol's most ardent defenders saw Cage at the root of his art and persona. Philip Pearlstein remembered that he and Warhol went to a Cage lecture at Outlines that meant a great deal to him, and its hard to imagine how Warhol could have become the dedicated avant-gardist he was if that gallery had not been around. Outlines aimed "to give Pittsburghers modern art whether they like it or not," according to one doubter in the local press, and Pearlstein tells us that he and Warhol and their crew frequented the place, which was still getting big media coverage in their junior year.

Outlines opened in 1941 as the brainchild of a local twenty-one-year-old named Betty Rockwell, always described as a "socialite" in the papers. During its six-year existence, at one time in a space near Warhol's home, the list of events held at Outlines is stunning, more daring than at almost any other venue in the country. As one P&D described it, this "gallery of tomorrow" might as well have been a branch of the Museum of Modern Art. It showed an astonishing range of modern artists, including Alexander Calder with his *Circus* and the first solo show of Joseph Cornell, later a pal

of Warhol's. Outlines's cutting-edge offerings in photography featured such giants as Beaumont Newhall, Berenice Abbott and Henri Cartier-Bresson. The gallery also showed Paul Klee, whose influence on the young Warhol has always been obvious; Cocteau, whose gay aesthetic became crucial for Warhol; and even Duchamp, the central figure behind Warhol's entire approach to art making. Betty Rockwell owned a signed and dedicated copy of Duchamp's deluxe *Boîte-en-valise,* a collection of all his works reproduced in miniature. The *Boîte* was one of several Duchamps that Warhol collected during his early Pop years.

Just as notable, given Warhol's later practice in Pop Art, was a show Rockwell did of silkscreens that declared the technique an especially democratic "direct painting medium"—an idiosyncratic position that Warhol went on to uphold almost polemically in his own silkscreen "paintings."

Warhol's later ideas about film also got their first impetus at Outlines, which screened all kinds of mainstream and art movies, including premieres of experimental films by Cornell and an early screening by the underground pioneer Maya Deren, who Philip Pearlstein remembered as sporting the first afro he'd ever seen. Numerous visits by Parker Tyler, one of the first major thinkers on Hollywood, might have been the source of Warhol's later interest in stardom, making it less the childlike "obsession" it often gets billed as than a genuine intellectual fascination.

Outlines's program of feature films, which ranged from *Metropolis* to *Duck Soup* by way of Paul Strand's *The Wave,* could have been taken from the syllabus for any history of film survey today—just what Warhol needed, later, to move the medium forward. In fact, his interest in early Hollywood could have had more to do with the programming at Outlines, where those films were shown as serious art, than with his childhood moviegoing. The avant-garde collision of Hollywood movies with experimental film, which Warhol first experienced at Outlines, became his trademark as a filmmaker.

In the fall of 1947, when money troubles led Outlines to close, Warhol entered his junior year at Tech and started his move up to star-student status: For the first time, he got more A grades than anything else. "He was talented, there was no question about that—the faculty knew that, as did all the students," said a classmate who remembered Warhol excelling even in a G.I.-filled class that was especially driven and potent. A number of instructors were so impressed by their pupil that they held on to his work, a compliment that even the best art students don't often get.

The year didn't begin all that auspiciously, however, as Warhol struggled

to finance his degree. One story says that his mother decided to cut off the funds, but the college's own estimate of Warhol's costs show that his father's bequest could simply have run out: Tuition had gone up in his sophomore year and so did the cost of living. A professor at Tech remembered that Warhol couldn't join in campus partying because he worked after school to get money for food, and Warhol's brother Paul was annoyed when Warhol refused an offer of $75 for a painting that he'd priced at $90, an extravagant sum for student work at the time: "I says, 'Andy, why can't you use common sense, as bad as we need the money?'" Betty Asche Douglas, who was equally hard up, remembered how the two would scrounge for scraps of fine paper thrown out by the richer students in the architecture department. But Warhol somehow managed to keep going, probably with emergency funding from Tech. He even dropped the more career-friendly notion of majoring in art education and declared instead for a degree in Pictorial Design.

When Warhol signed on for a major that combined fine and commercial art, it was a pairing that held special promise. At just that moment, in Pittsburgh and beyond, there was a live polemic pulling the two fields together.

Already while Warhol was in high school Outlines had organized a lecture called "The Advance Guard in Advertising," given by Tech's prominent art teacher Robert Lepper. The gallery also showed actual magazine illustrations, mounting solos for Saul Steinberg and William Steig—both crucial influences on Warhol's commercial career—plus an "Artists as Illustrators" survey that included such masters as Picasso, Matisse and Calder.

The Carnegie Institute, for its part, had opened a show on magazine art just when Warhol was beginning Tech's junior-year classes, and Warhol went to it. Homer Saint-Gaudens, in charge of art at the Carnegie, opined that "we are apt to make too much of a distinction between commercial art and fine art. When a commercial artist is good he becomes a fine artist." Saint-Gaudens focused special praise on the star illustrator Joseph Christian Leyendecker, an artist whose Arrow Shirt ads, featuring gorgeous jazz-age dandies at ease together, are now seen as early emblems of gay companionship. They would have meant more to Warhol than to many other visitors.

A Pittsburgh review of New York's "National Exhibition of Advertising Art"—a show Warhol himself was in a few years later—said that the survey reflected "the trend towards modern art in national advertising. . . . Surrealism and abstract techniques, or a high degree of stylization, seem to

achieve both better art and better advertising than do more conventional paintings."

In the face of all this, how could Warhol have stayed *unconvinced* that lowly illustration had potential as credible fine art, and vice versa? Almost all the work that Warhol went on to make was built around the promising tension between those poles. He figured out that you could help sell your commercial work by making it seem more fine, and make your fine art more radical by cross-breeding it with the commercial. Even two decades later, the noted film critic Jonas Mekas was still arguing for the idea that "there is no art, that everything is craft"—with his friend Warhol and his Brillo Boxes as Exhibit A.

Despite the influence of Outlines and the Carnegie art museum, and for all Warhol's growing reputation at Tech, his own work as a junior continued being more adept than radical—more based on finding a signature style than on coming up with the brand-new ideas about art that his later greatness was all about.

He finally began to lose his Daumier loopiness, still visible in some short story illustrations he did that year. He replaced it with his famous "blotted-line" technique, which became his secret weapon on New York's commercial scene in the 1950s. It took the smooth pen strokes of a conventional drawing and made them skitter across the paper in a series of dots and dashes that only just defined the subject at hand, like "embroidery done with coarse, slightly hairy twine," as a later client described it. (See color insert.) The new technique was based on a fractured, lightning-bolt line made famous by the artist and illustrator Ben Shahn, an admitted hero of Warhol's who everyone recognized as the source of his style. According to one classmate, "he developed a variation on that Ben Shahn line and it became the Andy Warhol line."

Warhol and his crowd knew Shahn's work from any number of magazines and from several Carnegie annuals, as well as from Shahn's blockbuster MoMA survey in 1947. By the following year, *Look* magazine had named him one of the country's ten best artists, just the kind of coverage certain to grab Warhol's attention. In Warhol's version of Shahn, however, the older artist's hand-drawn line, angular and angstful, gets turned into something more romantically distressed. Its hesitations don't feel like the result of raw emotion and pain; they feel like a nostalgic fade into the past, as though the world were being looked at through a softening scrim.

To execute one of his "blots," Warhol would start by making a standard drawing, then hinge it with tape to another sheet of paper that could fold down overtop. Next he'd retrace the lines of his original drawing in heavy wet ink, inch by inch, bringing down the hinged sheet each time he added more ink. The top sheet would blot up the pooled, surplus ink from below, so that it copied the drawing Warhol had started with and became his finished work. In this final blotted image, the clean outline drawing from the bottom sheet got broken down until it barely traced a contour. Unlike Shahn's crisp work, a Warhol blot seems strangely distanced and mechanical, like an old picture that's been copied and printed so many times its lines have begun to break down.

Warhol once told a friend, "I always wanted to see how my work would look if it was printed," and his blotted line is often billed as the first sign of his later fascination with mass production and the artist as machine. But it's not that simple: After all, Warhol's blotting technique actually involves more old-fashioned hand labor than the original sketch would have done. At least at first, Warhol doesn't even seem to have blotted any drawing more than once, a labor-saving strategy that you'd think would be part of the point. There are dozens of early blotted images of his so-called musical sprites, but with few if any repetitions among them. Pretending his production was industrial was always an artistic conceit. In New York in the early 1950s, the artisanal labor of blotting got so tedious that Warhol was paying assistants to do it. In the 1960s, even Warhol's Pop silkscreening remained closer to cottage labor than to true machine production.

There's a tale or two accounting for the birth of Warhol's new technique. One genesis story, told by Warhol's teacher Robert Lepper, says that Warhol's poverty forced him to use cheap newsprint for his art, and that made his ink drawings go all blotty. Another legend says that once upon a time, when Warhol was sketching with friends in a local restaurant, he blotted his ink drawing with a napkin and, eureka, discovered his signature line. Warhol himself didn't invoke the restaurant story when he thought back on the origin of his line: He talked about how he had "hated" the way his own line looked when he drew, and about some kind of blotting task they were given in class "and then I realized you can do an ink blot and do that kind of look, and then it would look printed somehow."

Warhol's new blotted works must have been what earned him the $20 prize for "progress" that he won at the end of his junior year.

A strange thing has happened over five decades of Warhol fandom: In an unneccessary effort to make him more palatable as a "master," some surprisingly conservative enthusiasts (and investors) have downplayed his radicalism, advancing instead the notion that underneath his avant-garde surface stood a talented traditional craftsman and aesthete. That's why his blotted-line drawings still have such a following, even though they don't come close to his truly transformative work of the 1960s and beyond. His blotted line may have been skilled and appealing, but it wasn't new and it was just a technique. It did not really involve the kind of thoroughgoing Bauhaus—or Dada—rethinking that was held up as the ultimate model at Outlines and Tech.

A first hint of a more aggressive creativity was visible in a piece that Warhol and Pearlstein did together for a drama student's play at a Tech "Arts Night" in May of '48. It was "a huge proto–Pop Art backdrop of the prices for candy bars and ice cream cones [painted] in a graffiti-like manner," Pearlstein said, meant to set the scene for a drama about a Brooklyn street corner. The one surviving photo shows that at least part of the backdrop also included real newspapers, taped up, as well as trompe l'oeil paintings of newspapers, prefiguring Warhol's later use of the daily paper as the subject and source of his very first Pop paintings.

Also that spring of 1948, the two friends tried out advanced politics. The activist Kesslers, along with massier Russell Twiggs, got Pearlstein and Warhol to join the thousands of Pittsburghers who signed a petition supporting Henry Wallace, a far-left New Dealer who had announced his presidential candidacy in Pittsburgh the previous November, when he also appeared before crowds of supporters at Tech. He had a poster designed by Ben Shahn himself, and one Tech student remembered that Shahn's leftist politics made him acceptable as part of the avant-garde. His early work in the new medium of silkscreen associated him with the most socially conscious art, which had adopted the medium before others did. That association may have lingered as part of silkscreen's appeal for Warhol, a dozen years later. The red-baiting *Pittsburgh Press* attacked Wallace as a communist, and on April 7 it went so far as to "out" his local followers by publishing all the names that were on the petition—Pearlstein's parents were not happy to see their son's name in print.

Warhol often gets described as apolitical, which isn't right. During his college years, a preference for the modern itself counted as a left-wing stance. All the modern art that Warhol loved was being pilloried as a dastardly communist plot at just the moment he was first coming to terms with it. Pittsburgh itself had always been a political hotbed—on Warhol's

first day of college a massive miners' strike had earned banner headlines—and from his Wallace moment onward the artist gave quiet but consistent support to the same kind of solidly leftist causes that his heroes like Shahn also backed. In 1972, Warhol designed a poster for the Democrat George McGovern that was based on prototypes by Shahn, including the 1948 Wallace poster. A lot of Warhol's best art has always been read as having left-wing, even anticapitalist leanings, and plenty of his comments express clearly liberal ideas: "They guess that there are between 300,000 and two million people living on the streets in America. This country is so rich. And I think I see more homeless people on the street every month. How can we let this keep happening?" His archives are crammed with decades' worth of thank-you notes from progressive organizations he supported.

Summer breaks had always been fruitful times for Warhol: In 1946 he'd done the huckster drawings, in '47 he'd been at Horne's and now, in '48, Warhol, Pearlstein and another few friends were allowed to rent a carriage house ("the Barn") on the grounds of an old mansion owned by the college. They used it as a studio, to sharpen their skills and produce portfolio-worthy personal work. Pearlstein refers to having wasted time "fooling around with abstraction." Warhol "practiced his modern dance movements," as we see him doing in lovely photos shot in the Barn, and generally worked on assuming a visibly artistic persona. "We had a lot of people in and out: friends. We had a little chamber orchestra which came when we first moved in," remembered one of the Barn-ers. He described that "really incredible" moment as "the most influential period in all of our lives . . . we all decided that summer to be painters."

By the time classes began again in the fall, it looks like the Barn crew had done some notable maturing. Warhol moved out of the family house, at least for a while and maybe with a classmate, to the now-demolished Mawhinney Street, putting him directly across the road from the Carnegie museums, as they then were, and in fact inside the expanded art museum as it now stands—a lovely thought, given that he is by far the most important product of that institution. Warhol and Pearlstein both returned to college ranked in the top 10 percent of Tech students. Warhol began his duties as art editor of the student literary magazine, called *Cano*.

Cano was an ambitious little publication—its stories were ever so existential and its editors quoted Ayn Rand. It was also pretentious—its title is Latin for "I sing," from the first line of Virgil's *Aeneid*. Warhol used his position on

the masthead there to place his first-ever published illustration. It filled the cover of the November 1948 issue with an orchestra of goofy, round-faced string players, now known to Warhol scholars as "sprites." They seem to derive from the crowd of musicians in Max Weber's *Wind Orchestra,* which won an award at the Carnegie annual in Warhol's sophomore year and was mentioned in local coverage, but Weber's look was transformed by the first notable outing of Warhol's new blotted-line technique.

The sheer crudeness of the cover's drawing gives it a dose of aggressive outsiderism, thanks to all the folk art Warhol saw at the Carnegie museum and in Balcomb Greene's classes. It also gives it a link to the messy new Abstract Expressionism that was just then taking off in New York: Within a couple of years, the painter Larry Rivers, a rising star at the time, was doing dotty-blotty drawings of figures that were explicitly inspired by Jackson Pollock's abstract lines and that look very like some of Warhol's *Cano* figures. An advanced, modernist edge also creeps into the cover in the way Warhol repeats almost the same figure fifteen times and lets them get cropped by the page—call it seriality lite, with a dash of Paul Klee or even a soupçon of John Cage. Warhol's orchestra cover gave a first prefiguration of the repetitions that became his Pop Art signature almost fifteen years later. At this early point, however, Warhol actually made each head rather different, even though blotting would have made it easy to repeat them. This is still a classic theme-and-variations approach, rather than the unceasing duplications of Warhol's Pop era.

If Warhol wasn't at his most daring in his work for *Cano,* compared to some other work he did at Tech, that may have been a symptom of a deep ambivalence about putting your art at the service of other people's texts, as "mere" illustration. All P&Ds assumed they'd make their living doing commercial work—Tech said it aimed to "build a solid foundation for their professional career in pictorial design, industrial design, or art education." But it was always so that they could then go home and make fine art at night, according to Betty Asche Douglas. At Tech, she said, "being an illustrator was almost like a bad word: 'Don't call me an illustrator!'—that meant that you didn't have anything to say." The word "illustration" had been excised from the department's name as far back as 1933, and by the late '40s the best P&Ds considered their illustration teacher, the newly arrived Howard Worner, "the joke" of the school. Worner returned the compliment, at least where Warhol was concerned, by telling cruel stories about him within a few years of his graduation.

It's clear that any timidity that Warhol may have started out with at Tech, as the youngest guy in the class, soon got replaced with quite startling self-possession, even arrogance. Warhol "wasn't the best at taking a problem and solving it within the confines of an assignment" is how Worner later voiced his displeasure, diplomatically. "If he had been running a tailor shop and [you] went in for a pair of pants, you'd come out with a lovely coat."

Roger Anliker, a special friend of Warhol's among the Tech instructors, remembered how "Andy did what he damn well pleased; he got approval by being impossible." This iconoclasm led to tension between him and the senior faculty member Robert Lepper, who had a heavy presence in the last two years of the art program at Tech. He described Warhol as "provocative and controversial," saying that he already had a bad reputation by the beginning of junior year, when they first met: "I knew him as a timid little boy who was often in academic difficulty. . . . Andy was regularly proposed for 'drop' from the institution for failure to maintain 'standards.'"

In his earliest interviews about Tech's most famous alumnus, Lepper couldn't recall having had any "direct contact with his mind," and Warhol later returned the compliment by claiming that he barely remembered his teacher. Warhol "probably" got a B in his course, Lepper vaguely recalled, because his part-time job at Horne's "probably" made him miss class. In fact Warhol got three A grades and only one B across the four terms of the course.

As Warhol's celebrity grew, Lepper's memories somehow got clearer and more varied. Directly after Warhol's death he went as far as saying, "I should have flunked the bastard" and "If anybody had asked me who was least likely to succeed, I would've said Andy Warhola. What a guesser I am." But just weeks later he was already amending that to "Andy will go down in history in the same league as Alexander Pope, William Hogarth, Toulouse-Lautrec and Goya—as a social critic."

When he taught Warhol, Lepper was in his early forties, a Tech alumnus who'd already been on the faculty for almost twenty years. A compulsive smoker, he was "the color of tobacco stain" with a bristly mustache and thick glasses that gave him a walrus look—at least in a caricature of him by Warhol. As an artist, he specialized in machine-age subjects that blended Fernand Léger and a bit of Art Deco, in paintings and sculptures that haven't aged well.

Lepper "radiated enthusiasm" for Bauhaus-style modernism, according to one student, but himself had a degree in lowly illustration. Eager, maybe, to establish his intellectual credentials, Lepper had designed a knotty four-semester course on Pictorial Design that was mandatory in the last two

years of Tech's art program. Despite its straightforward title, the new class stressed "the artist as social participator and collaborator" and was built around advanced texts like John Dewey's *Art as Experience* and Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture*. "I was concerned with sources of conception, with ideas," Lepper said, reflecting the ambitious new "critical-thinking" pedagogy that Tech's president, Robert E. Doherty, was putting in place, and that to this day plays a role in American education.

The first year of the course consisted of a series of five or six tricky pedagogical exercises, or "problems"—President Doherty's favorite term—that were meant to provide basic training to a young artist's eye and mind, but were expressed in a way that went right over the head of many students. "Andy didn't understand anything he said; I would interpret for him," remembered Pearlstein.

The second, more practical year was taken up with mock-commercial and illustration assignments that had to be turned around quickly, as practice for future professional deadlines. The workload was massive and Warhol pulled all-nighters to get it all done. Because his brother's little kids were too much of a distraction on Dawson Street, he often labored in a makeshift studio in the cellar of the Pearlstein home—one of the city's new modernist houses, as it happened, made of poured concrete.

Lepper assigned a problem about portraying heads and hands, and Warhol addressed it with such panache that a classmate spent $30 to buy his solution, an image of an estranged couple in bed that has a daring erotic and neurotic charge and that one Tech instructor declared "immoral." Like the "Paul's Case" suicide painting, Warhol's bed painting manages to twist and surpass the brief he's been given—as Warhol reliably does for the rest of his life in art.

As part of Lepper's effort to "enculturate" his charges, as he put it, in their final year he had the class read and illustrate the controversial new novel *All the King's Men,* which traced the rise and fall of the Southern demagogue Huey Long and had just won the Pulitzer Prize for Robert Penn Warren—who Warhol photographed years later, when Warhol was just hitting it big with Pop Art and could revel in the attention of the giant he'd read in college. Warhol's vibrant, Shahn-inspired drawings for Lepper capture the story's angst and aggression and some of its pathos. In one, crowds are enthralled by an orator's rant. In another, Warhol makes hands and fedoras as expressive as eyes and lips. The drawings were so good they were exhibited in the college halls and retained as examples of fine student work. Looked at closely, they also reveal that Warhol was using news photos as sources for his figures, as was still considered shocking at Tech and in much

of the art world. It's no wonder that Balcomb Greene kept his own use of photographs secret, even though—or because—he'd declared photography to be "unparalleled in the social effectiveness of its story and . . . its documentary quality makes the effort of the social realist painter negligible." Photographic sources were controversial even in the work of Ben Shahn, and Warhol's own (covertly) photo-based drawings look ahead to the (polemically) photo-based Pop that became his trademark.

Lepper's lessons foreshadowed other sides of Warhol's future. A major component of his course was the so-called Oakland Project, "The Study of a Social Organism," which asked each student to go out into the college neighborhood and dig deep into its social significance and structures. The idea was that art should intersect with the normal world around it—with the "social flux," as Lepper put it—and that was a notion that became central to everything Warhol did once he hit his stride in Pop. If the details of Lepper's teachings weren't strictly speaking necessary to Warhol's later development—other influences were also at work—they played a part in preparing him for it. Lepper does deserve credit for Warhol's lifelong conception of art as a series of "problems" that need to be solved, with whatever tools, techniques and images he found at hand.

The creative height of Warhol's college years, aside from that lost blood-on-snow painting, seems to come at about the same time as his encounters with Lepper—but not because of them. Beginning in the summer of '48, in the Barn, Warhol started to make a number of "personal" works that included what can be called his Nosepicker series: They portray that title's action in everything from nasal close-up to full-figure view. One Tech instructor remembered Warhol attaching actual Kleenex to the surface of one picture. The series is bratty and droll and also fairly extreme, even to twenty-first-century eyes; it must have come off as deeply aggressive back then. By that point, however, the entire art department already knew that this was becoming Warhol's M.O.: "He was going to be himself, no matter what. You could laugh, you could cry, you could cuss him out—you could do whatever, and he could just totally ignore you if he chose to."

Late in his life, and in his tall-tale telling, Paul Warhola brushed away the nasty subject of the Nosepicker paintings with a story about the constant nasal excavations of his own children, and how Warhol's pictures were meant to be cautionary, so his kids "could see how they looked." But that can't explain the most daring work in the series: a painting that did indeed begin life as a normal little boy wearing shorts but was soon reworked into

a full-frontal of a young man with a shock of blond hair and an adult's chest hair, completely naked except for a pair of girlish Mary Janes on his feet. There's no way that anyone who knew Warhol could have read the painting as anything other than a brazen self-portrait by an unrepentant homosexual, the pinky finger up his nose being a stand-in for a middle finger raised in general defiance.

The series did a lovely and very Warholian job of combining an in-your-face figurative subject and a scratched and tortured surface that had all the radicalism of an up-to-date Abstract Expressionist technique. *The Broad Gave Me My Face But I Can Pick My Own Nose* is the name that Warhol is supposed to have chosen for at least one of the works in the series, and that must have added to its bite as a naughty reworking of some banal saying such as "The Lord gave me my fate but I can pick my own road."

The result turned out to be intolerable for the Pittsburgh art world, although probably gratifying for Warhol and his crew. In February 1949, or so the story goes, one painting from the series—usually identified as the one that's a close-up on the nosepicker's face and hugely distended nostril—is supposed to have caused a commotion when it was rejected from the annual exhibition of the Associated Artists of Pittsburgh, which had just named Balcomb Greene as its Man of the Year.

The Nosepicker legend tells of a fierce debate among the celebrity jurors for that 1949 A.A.P. show, including the German expressionist George Grosz and the Russian constructivist Alexander Archipenko, but also the self-taught American Regionalist and communist Joe Jones. The story goes that Grosz went head to head with Jones to get the Nosepicker painting included in the show, but lost the battle and had to settle for putting in a much tamer Warhol.

Warhol seems to have got a kind of consolation prize when his offending painting was included, six months later, in a graduation show of Tech students' work that Warhol's friend Leonard Kessler helped organize at the Pittsburgh Arts and Crafts Center. One classmate described the "curiosity seekers who flocked to the Center, many specifically to view Warhol's previously outlawed painting," but piles of period documents don't even hint at the work itself or the fuss.

Whatever the scandal around Warhol's senior-year work, and despite rumors that he lacked the mandatory Phys. Ed. credits from his first two years—actually, his transcript shows him passing all four semesters—Warhol was deemed worthy of graduation. His photo doesn't appear among the graduating students in the college yearbook, so it could be that his fate

was still in doubt when it was laid out. But on June 16, 1949, in the vast, Orientalist spaces of the so-called Syria Mosque in Oakland, Warhol was one of forty-seven P&Ds awarded their degrees, as a member of the largest graduating class Tech had ever fielded.

What next? According to John Warhola, his little brother first applied to teach art in the Midwest. When his portfolio wasn't well received, "he was very upset and that's when he said, 'Well, I'm going to New York.'"

Warhol had already been there once or twice a year while he was at Tech, riding the night bus or train with Pearlstein and other friends who took snapshots—which survive—around the city's museums. He even told friends the unlikely story that on one of those trips he'd played chess with Marcel Duchamp. Whether that happened or not, it matters that it was a tale he deemed worth telling, in a world where most art students wouldn't have considered Duchamp an obvious hero.

He would have known other tales of New York, both inspiring and cautionary, that might have touched off his strong feelings about the metropolis. Late in 1947, the Tech English teacher Gladys Schmitt, who taught the terrifying Thought and Expression class that almost sank the freshman Warhol, published a novel that was about "a creative person" who moves to New York and suffers "the hazards of perfection," as a rave review in the local paper put it. Warhol got Schmitt to autograph a copy for him, and kept the volume for the rest of his life. The novel's young protagonist is an undernourished, poverty-stricken, ghostly pale and oversensitive neurotic who haunts the Carnegie Institute's library and art museum as well as Schenley Park, and is utterly at odds with daily life in Pittsburgh. "I would like to be famous. . . . So that everybody would love me," says the character. Enrollment and then success in the arts at Tech leads the character to stardom in Manhattan. The parallels to Warhol's own life and attitudes are uncanny, and he must have seen them as such—even if the character in question happens to be a girl, and her vocation is drama rather than art.

And then there was this promising passage, from Gore Vidal's 1948 novel of gay life: "It seemed that from all over the country the homosexuals had come to New York as a center, a new Sodom; for here, among the millions, they could be unnoticed by the enemy and yet known to one another. . . . The thousands in New York were either the strong and brave or else the effeminate and marked, people who had nothing to lose by being free and reasonably open in their behavior."

Warhol's final, deciding New York trip came when a bunch of his crowd

headed there during Tech's Easter break in 1949. Their old friend George Klauber had invited Pearlstein and Warhol to share his apartment in Brooklyn, all three of them in one bed, which yields the delectable image of the straight and straitlaced Pearlstein sandwiched between his two new-minted gay friends.

Klauber also invited his two guests to use the contacts in the Rolodex of his boss Will Burtin, the cutting-edge art director of *Fortune* magazine and head of the same Art Directors Club that went on to give prizes to Warhol a few years later. According to Pearlstein, Klauber helped him and Warhol show their portfolios to art directors around town, and Warhol claimed that he'd cajoled a promise of future work out of Tina Fredericks, art director at *Glamour,* who did, in fact, give him assignments the following fall.

Warhol visited the Museum of Modern Art, where he got to take in "The Exact Instant," a pioneering show of photojournalism that foreshadows his own later use and production of newsy photos. In the short run, however, he might have gotten more out of another MoMA show that had been organized by Will Burtin himself. It presented the "most advanced trends" in advertising art, according to a rave in the *New York Times*. The review praised ads and illustrations that were "superior to a lot that passes pretentiously as 'fine' art." It spotted the strong influence of the elite avant-garde—Piet Mondrian, Hans Arp, Joan Miró and Paul Klee—on celebrity ad men such as Paul Rand, William Golden and Ben Shahn, whose famous and very Warholian "orchestra" image for CBS was given a big chunk of the *Times* page. It's hard to imagine a show, or a review, more perfectly suited to feed Warhol's hopes and ambitions, or to be better bait for his move to New York.

Julia Warhola and her older sons weren't keen on the idea of losing their innocent Andy to the big, bad city. His mother cited the cautionary tale of a certain "Bogdansky" of their acquaintance, a Rusyn artist who had tried the same move and ended up dying in poverty. "Andy says, 'I'm going to New York,'" his brother Paul remembered. "And she says, 'You are not going to New York. You get yourself a job here, working. I'm not letting you go. You're too young to go to New York.'"

It took some wheedling from Pearlstein to overcome the family's doubts: "They knew my father, who, like them, made a living as a huckster. . . . So Andy's brothers and I had a meeting, and they decided that as I was several years older, and an army veteran as well, that I would be able to look after him, but they would let him go only on the condition that he and I would live together." Balcomb Greene, in favor of the venture, set the boys up with

a three-month sublet on New York's Lower East Side in the home of one of his cofounders in the American Abstract Artists group, away on a fellowship with his artist wife.

Packing their worldly goods into paper shopping bags—a goofy, cheapskate idea of Pearlstein's—the pair trotted off to Pittsburgh's grand Art Deco bus station, a miracle of modern streamlining, where they boarded the all-night Greyhound to New York.

. . . as a new New Yorker.