

“That Screen Magnetism”: Warhol’s Glamour

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1. Grammar / Glamour

There is hardly a single text about Warhol that doesn’t use the word “glamour.” Likewise, one constantly hears that he was “fascinated”—by this and that, but very often (again) by glamour. But there is also hardly any mention of what that means: glamour. One exception that turns out not really to be an exception is a comment by the Factory’s poet Gerard Malanga, who describes the impression that Edie Sedgwick made on Warhol as follows: “She could be very easily molded. She had the one ingredient essential to be a star—glamour. Glamour is aura. The person who possesses aura becomes beautiful. Andy was deeply fascinated with glamour on this level. He had an eye for it.”¹ Glamour is what a star has to have—aura—which turns into beauty: one vague notion is explained by another. Now, one could say that vagueness is part of the phenomenon with which we are dealing. Accordingly, there is also hardly any text about glamour that doesn’t start with the concession that it is a phenomenon which is not fully explicable and is inaccessible to discourse.² Of course, this denial of explicability is due to the fact that

1. Quoted in Victor Bockris, *Warhol: The Biography*, (New York: Da Capo Press 2003), p. 221. For one more example among many, listen to art historian Robert Pincus-Witten recalling “verbal” Andy, being asked what it *was* that he was after, finally dropping the magic word: “He had one motivating idea. Absolutely central . . . He was interested in the idea of glamour. Glamour fascinated him. It’s inefable . . . At last, a key phrase got blurred out: ‘I’m interested in *glamour*.’” Interview with Pincus-Witten, New York, 1978, in Patrick Smith, *Andy Warhol’s Art and Films* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press 1981), p. 458. For further evidence, see *The Warhol Look: Glamour Style Fashion* (Pittsburgh: The Andy Warhol Museum, 1999).

2. The latest example is Stephen Gundle, *Glamour: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 2: “glamour is notoriously difficult to define.” My own thoughts about this topic are part of a study in progress on the history and poetics of “fascination.” They owe much to the extensive investigations on glamour by Tom Holert, who provided me with the first opportunity to spell out some of them at a symposium he organized in Zurich. See Tom Holert and Heike Munder eds., *The Future Has a Silver Lining: Genealogies of Glamour* (Zurich: JRP-Ringier, 2004), a book published on the occasion of the eponymous exhibition at the Migros-Museum für Gegenwartskunst Zurich. I would also like to thank Isabelle Graw for her encouragement to pursue the subject and for our exchanges about it, Benjamin Buchloh for the invitation to his Warhol conference at Harvard University, and Adam Butler for more than polishing my English.

glamour is a notion that stems from the realm of magic and witchcraft, the realm of unexplainable occurrences that deal in wonder rather than explicability. In the discourse of magic, “glamour” refers to a spell, an enchantment, and, more specifically, to strategies of optical deception. As one writer put it in 1721, cited by the OED in its entry on “glamour”: “When devils, wizards or jugglers deceive the sight, they are said to cast *glamour* o’er the eyes of the spectator.”³ The word *fascination*—which happens to be another one of Warhol’s favorites—also stems from magical discourse, and was often used in the same way: although it was originally used in discourses on witchcraft to describe the magical power exerted by means of eye-contact (in particular the evil eye), “to fascinate” also meant to cast a glamour or spell over someone’s eyes. Thus, the idea of blindness is inscribed in the very use of these two terms (glamour, fascination)—no wonder that we encounter blind spots in their analysis.

But with regard to glamour, etymology also turns out to be an unexpected source of encouragement, since *glamour* comes from the word *grammar*, although this derivation is linguistically considered to be a corruption. The connection between a standard set of linguistic rules on the one hand and a magical spell on the other hand becomes more plausible if you consider that there have always been books teaching the rules of magic, like the French *grimoires* (a word that again stems from *gramaire*). In a similar way, the old English *gramarye* referred to grammar and learning in general, but since erudition became associated with occult practices, the word was also used to designate “occult learning, magic, necromancy.”⁴ So there is some reason to hope that knowledge (and especially bookish knowledge) and glamour are not a priori incompatible.

Not surprisingly, the blind spots generated by glamour don’t seem to pose a major problem for the kind of cultural criticism that places the critic at a safe distance from her subject and disassembles the “context of delusion” (*Verblendungszusammenhang*) as blinding everybody but herself. From this safe distance, glamour appears to be the result of calculated magic, used by the culture industry as means of manipulation. Listen to Adorno: “When a film presents us with a strikingly beautiful young woman [the German original has *Glanzmädchen* here, which is more accurately translated as “glamour girl”] it may officially approve or disapprove of her, she may be glorified as a successful heroine or punished as a vamp. Yet as a written character [*Schriftzeichen*] she announces something quite different from the psychological banners draped around her

3. Quoted in the entry GLAMOUR, *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., 1989.

4. “GLAMOUR [Originally *Sc.*, introduced into the literary language by Scott. A corrupt form of GRAMMAR; for the sense see GRAMARYE (and *F. grimoire*), and for the form GLOMERY.]” (OED) As to the reasons of the conflation of grammar and glamour, see one of the OED’s examples for the use of the word GRAMARYE which quotes the poet and critic James Russell Lowell, referring to the Middle Ages: “All learning fell under suspicion, till at length the very grammar itself (the last volume in the world, one would say, to conjure with) gave to English the word *grammar* (enchantment), and in French became a book of magic, under the alias of *Grimoire*.” *Among My Books*, I, 1887, p. 96 (the shortened quote in the OED refers to the edition of 1873).

grinning mouth, namely the injunction to be like her.”⁵ Let me just state for now that this description certainly does not apply to the glamour of, for example, Edie Sedgwick, and that Warhol's—and maybe our own—fascination with her can hardly be considered to be a reading of an injunction, or any banner draped around her mouth.

But neither the surrender to one's own bedazzlement (which overemphasizes the inexplicability) nor the demystification of manipulative calculations (which overemphasizes the grammar) seems to be enough to grasp the specificity of glamour. However, both qualities targeted by these approaches—the “je ne sais quoi” on the one hand, the grammar on the other—seem to be at stake in twentieth-century glamour, and they are still prevalent today. On the one hand, glamour is considered a numinous quality, something one has or has not—a gift, and it's hard not to say “from the gods”; in this regard, glamour resembles what Max Weber describes as “charisma.”⁶ On the other hand, lifestyle and fashion magazines relentlessly try to teach us how to get it, how to work on one's own capacities to be dazzling by following a certain script (or fashion or diet or make-up method) which they claim will make us “similar” to the stars we admire.

I want to argue that the Screen Tests carried out in the Factory by Warhol and his collaborators between 1964 and 1966 should be considered as an approach to glamour that accounts for this duplicity. Please note that I consider the Screen Tests themselves to make the point here—which allows for my own discourse to be parasitical on these visual arguments, which are both effective in producing bedazzlement (“to deceive the sight . . . to cast *glamour* o'er the eyes of the spectator”) and constitute deft analyses of the grammar of these effects. (I am aware of the use of several oxymorons here: glamorous analysis, visual argument—but that is exactly the point.) So the following comment on the Screen Tests acknowledges that they deliver fragments of a “grammar” of glamour, yet they insist on the fact that something exceeds the formula, and it is precisely this tension that I want to elaborate.

5. Theodor W. Adorno, “The Schema of Mass Culture,” in *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, ed. J.M. Bernstein (New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 94. The connection to sameness as the main feature of culture industry is a recurrent one in Adorno's remarks on “glamor” [*sic*], which he most ardently condemns in his article “On Popular Music” in *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science*, vol. IX (New York: Institute of Social Research, 1941), pp. 17–48: “The term glamorous is applied to those faces, colors, sounds which, by the light they irradiate, differ from the rest. But all glamor girls look alike and the glamor effects of popular music are equivalent to each other” (p. 29). The claim that “[a]ll glamor is bound up with some sort of trickery” is confirmed by tracing its initial function back to the false promises of fulfillment through consumption in advertising (*ibid*).

6. See Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organizations*, trans. A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (New York: The Free Press, 1947), p. 358: “The term ‘charisma’ will be applied to a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are [*sic*] not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader. In primitive circumstances this peculiar kind of deference is paid to prophets, to people with a reputation for therapeutic or legal wisdom, to leaders in the hunt, and heroes in war. It is very often thought of as resting on magical powers.” Weber's notion of charisma has of course already been applied to the collective appeal of the star in Richard Dyer, *Stars* (London: BFI, 1978), and subsequent studies.

Of course, with regard to Warhol's Troys, Warrens, Marilyns, Lizzes, and Jackies, it can be—and has been—claimed that a “theory of fame” is already at work in the celebrity pictures.⁷ The early silkscreen prints preceded and partly overlapped with the Factory's film-making in general and the takes of the Screen Tests in particular. But the Screen Tests, along with the very early films, extend this visual analysis to the media conditions of the motion—or rather, *emotion*—picture, which combines photographic indexicality with movement. In the twentieth century, the notion of glamour became intrinsically connected to the enhancement of charms by technical media, namely photography and cinematography. Thus its analysis as a form of optical magic was not to be limited to painting and print. Besides, the silkscreen reproduction of circulating images of celebrities questions our relationship as viewers to those who already *are* public icons. The Screen Tests focus on the process of *becoming* an image and of abiding the being of one—and what's more, this process is not only located within the gray area between public, counter-public, and private that existed in the Factory, but also extends to the Not-yet- and even the Not-even-wanting-to-be-stars.

This leads to another crucial distinction that is at stake here, the one between personal glamour and media—or mediated—glamour. It too can be retrieved from Warhol's own *Philosophy*, under the names “aura” (his own, in this case) and “screen magnetism”:

Some company was recently interested in buying my “aura.” They didn't want my product. They kept saying, “We want to buy your aura.” I never figured out what they wanted. But they were willing to pay a lot for it. So then I thought that if someone was willing to pay that much for it, I should try to figure out what it is.

I think “aura” is something that only somebody else can see, and they only see as much of it as they want to. It's all in the other person's eyes. You can only see an aura on people you don't know very well or don't know at all.

And after some observations about his own aura being invisible to his Factory accomplices while apparently strikingly out there for a visitor, he concludes:

When you just see somebody on the street, they can really have an aura. But then when they try to open their mouth, there goes the aura. “Aura” must be until you open your mouth.⁸

7. For a reserved attitude towards this “stereotypical” reading in favor of a theory of relationships, see Wayne Koestenbaum, *Andy Warhol* (New York: Viking/Penguin 2001), p. 93.

8. Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol (From A to B and Back Again)* (1975; New York: Harcourt, 1977), p. 77. Warhol's own comments are of course not to be taken as the final say with regard to the phenomenon discussed here. Thanks to their own performative style, they contribute to the subject matter, as they tend to participate in the effect they describe.

Let's keep this last aspect in mind when we deal with the Screen Tests as *silent* movies, but also notice that even the personal aura involves aspects of staging and of distance as a recipe for mystery.

So if "aura" is in the eye of the beholder, Malanga might have been right to attribute to "Andy" the quality of having "an eye for it." Yet with regard to Warhol's dedication to glamour, his description fails to point out that the visual media do not just register or reproduce some preexistent glamour; they are actually involved in its production. As Warhol knew, the "eye" that one needs to foresee mediated glamour is the eye of the camera. Let me quote once more from *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*:

Beauties in photographs are different from beauties in person. It must be hard to be a model, because you'd want to be like the photograph of you, and you can't ever look that way. And so you start to copy the photograph. Photographs usually bring in another half-dimension. (Movies bring in another whole dimension. That screen magnetism is something secret—if you could figure out what it is and how you make it, you'd have a really good product to sell. But you can't even tell if someone has it until you actually see them up there on the screen. You have to give screen tests to find out.)⁹

What Warhol addresses here once more in occult terms—"that screen magnetism"—is the secret of invisible forces that can only be seen by the eyes of a camera (a quality that is thus slightly different from the more immediate charms of an "aura"). If there is something about beauty that only cameras know, a secret and unspeakable knowledge that defies human know-how and predictability and that can only be figured out through tests, the setting of the Screen Tests may be perceived as the unlikely site of "occult learning" or *gramarye*. And if you find this connection incompatible with the desire to find a "product to sell," don't forget that alchemy was more than anything an attempt to find a formula for producing gold. So let's have a closer look at both the test site and the results, the "grammar of glamour" delivered by the Screen Tests.

2. "Stillies"

Warhol described the Screen Test setting as only involving one to one recording, in much the same way as he spoke of his experiments with tape recorders as "trying to figure out what was happening—and taping it all," as he puts it in *POPism*.¹⁰ But as we know from the epistemology of the sciences, there is no such thing as a neutral test site. Even in the sterile, minimalist setting of the Screen Tests, glamour is staged as the result of a certain *mise-en-scène*. Indeed, as I will argue, it is exactly this minimalist setting that allows the spelling out of the

9. Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, p. 63.

10. Andy Warhol and Pat Hackett, *POPism: The Warhol Sixties* (1980; New York: Harcourt, 1990), p. 291.



Stephen Shore. Warhol Filming Nico for Screen Tests. 1966. © Stephen Shore.

technical, intersubjective, and cultural factors that define the grammar of glamour—without denying its spellbinding effects.

A static Bolex 16mm camera; a 100-inch black-and-white film roll that amounts to 2.8 minutes of recording (in sound speed, although no sound is recorded); a spotlight; often (but not always) a background screen; and someone in front of the camera and someone behind it, at least to switch it on—this is all it took Warhol to take a Screen Test.¹¹ A point of dissimilarity with conventional screen tests is of course that there is no specific role or script for which to audition. This is also a major difference to the eponymous longer films, such as *Screen Test #2* (1965), in which the transvestite Mario Montez is presented as doing an audition for the role of Esmeralda in a remake of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. Here the test situation is drastically intensified by the violating interpellation of an invisible but audible counterpart outside the frame: while the camera remains on Montez's face, we hear writer Ronald Tavel, Warhol's scenarist at the time, spurring "Miss Montez" to qualify for the role not only by repeating certain unladylike words ("Mouth 'diarrhea' exactly as if it tasted like nectar"), but to finally lift her skirt—and to thereby reveal what does not exactly fit the female part.¹² Yet

11. For a more detailed account, see the introduction by Callie Angell to her excellent catalogue *Andy Warhol Screen Tests: The Films of Andy Warhol Catalogue Raisonné* (New York: Abrams /Whitney Museum of American Art, 2006), pp. 12–19. Indications of particular Screen Tests by the abbreviation "ST" plus number throughout this essay refer to this catalogue.

12. For a deft analysis of the ambivalence of enablement and interpellation in the test situation with regard to *Screen Test #2*, see Douglas Crimp, "Mario Montez, For Shame," in *Regarding Sedgwick: Essays on Queer Culture and Critical Theory*, ed. Stephen M. Barber and David L. Clark (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 57–70.

it should not be overlooked that early on in the Screen Test period, Warhol declared his intention to use some of these takes for a film called *Thirteen Most Beautiful Boys*—and who would not want to be chosen for such a thing, or to become the “superstar” of some other Warhol movie? And as the inclusion of more than thirteen Screen Tests in *Thirteen Most Beautiful Boys*, *Thirteen Most Beautiful Women*, and *50 Fantastics and 50 Personalities* proves, exclusion has taken place and choices have been made—if often with opportunistic reasons to please an announced guest or possible promoter. As rumor and testimony have it, people were disappointed not to be among the chosen few, so competition was clearly a factor in the test setting.¹³

Of course, the aimlessness of the test situation becomes a means of generalizing the condition of being tested, maybe the most disturbing and powerful device of the whole procedure, not just for the ones who had to pass it.¹⁴ The reduction of the test situation to the paradoxical instruction to “pose or perform as yourself” empties it even of the paltry residue of a narrative, whereas such Warhol films as *Blow Job*, *Eat*, or *Kiss* (all made in 1963) offer the participants at least a few, slight distractions from their being filmed. When I sum up the instructions for the Screen Test as being “pose or perform as oneself,” this refers to one of the inconsistencies in the results and probably in the setting. On a formal level, the Screen Tests vary with regard to how much the sitters observed the requirement of not moving, and moreover, of trying to not even blink while bearing their nearly three-minute long ordeal—thus anticipating themselves less as movie stars than as “stillie” stars, to use a term that was employed in the Factory. “Stillie” proves particularly apt for those Screen Tests where the test person indeed attempts not to move—like “Helmut,” for example, who succeeds strikingly well (ST 136). So the specificity of the Screen Tests

13. See Angell, “Introduction,” p. 15. For a retrospective first-hand report which is particularly revealing with regard to ideas of initiation, selection, and more generally in-crowd membership inside of the Factory see Mary Woronov, “Screen Tests,” in *Artillery Killer Text on Art 1*, no. 2 (November 2006), <http://www.maryworonow.com/meet/artillery/screentest.html>. (This is an excerpt from Woronov’s *Eye Witness to Warhol: Essays* [Los Angeles: Victoria Dailey, 2002].) One of the Screen Tests of Woronov also made it into a recent selection of *Thirteen Most Beautiful . . . Songs for Andy Warhol’s Screen Tests*, a DVD produced by The Andy Warhol Museum, with music by Dean Wareham & Britta Phillip, Plexifilm 2009.

14. As Wayne Koestenbaum has written: “These tests are not aptitude tests but existence tests: *Are you visible?*” See “Andy Warhol: Screen Tests,” *Artforum* XLII, no. 2 (October 2003), p. 166. Film’s intricate involvement in the *dispositif* of the test was diagnosed early on and clear-sightedly by Walter Benjamin in his famous essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility,” a piece for which in many regards Warhol’s Screen Tests seem to provide a visual update, although the latter seems to outperform the former concerning the dialectics of technological re-enchantment (see my sketchy comparison of Benjamin’s notion of “aura” with Warhol’s in footnote 37). With regard to testing, Benjamin emphasized that “[t]he film actor performs not in front of an audience but in front of an apparatus” (still presuming a director behind it and possibly intervening), while at the same time he asserts that “[a]ny person today can lay claim to being filmed.” Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility” (Second Version [1935]), in *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 2008), p. 30.



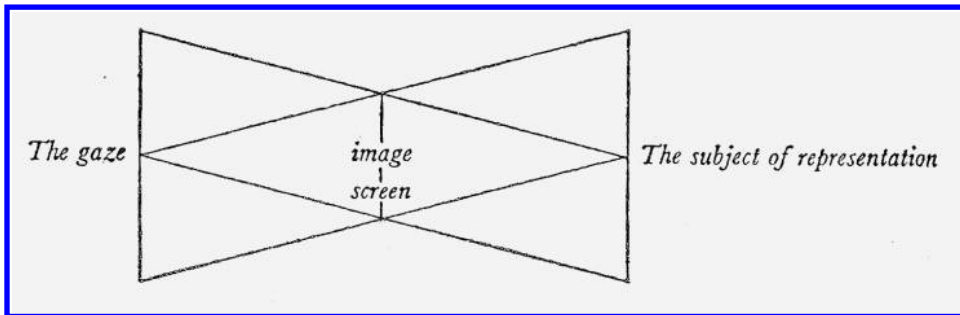
Andy Warhol. Screen Test: Helmut. 1964. © 2010 The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA, a museum of Carnegie Institute.

as “conceptual hybrids,” to use Callie Angell’s formulation,¹⁵ is based on the intermedia effect of using photographic features for film: while the film rolls on, the quality of the photographic medium of freezing the subject in front of the camera is delegated to the subject herself. This of course implies a nod to the media history of the static pose, most notably to the long times of exposure in early photography that required the sitter’s extended immobility; but of course one may also think of the sitting for a painted portrait. With regard to this intermedia effect, the Screen Tests have a predecessor in the frozen theatricality of the *tableau vivant*, the staging of paintings by immobile yet living beings that draws its effect from a similar tension of movement and arrest (Warhol himself actually considered marketing the Screen Tests as “Living Portrait Boxes” at one point).¹⁶ In some of the (later?) Screen Tests, however, both the camera and its subjects start to move. Maybe the less strict application of the “stillie”-principle allowed for somewhat more expressive performances, or some of the test takers simply started to misbehave and *act* rather than just *pose*.

So, what is actually tested here—as a pre-condition for “screen magnetism”—is not just the capacity to turn oneself into a living picture; rather, it is the capacity to bear the gaze of the camera, eye to eye, without any distraction, let alone an escape into a pre-scripted role. The constellation of seeing—yet maybe

15. “Balanced on the borderline between moving and still image, part photography and part film, part portraiture and part performance, the Screen Tests are conceptual hybrids, arising, like much of Warhol’s work, from the formal transposition from medium to another.” Angell, “Introduction,” p. 14.

16. *Ibid.*



The scopic field as diagrammed by Jacques Lacan.

being blinded by the light—and being seen which is at stake here recalls Jacques Lacan’s famous distinction between the eye that sees and the gaze to which we are subjected. This offers the rare occasion to refer to one of the notorious diagrams Lacan uses to visualize these dialectics in a discussion of glamour, of all places (which by now and with regard to its “grammar” should seem less misplaced).

From the position of the test person—“the subject of representation”—the task is to successfully “isolate the function of the screen and play with it,” as Lacan puts it. “The screen is here the locus of mediation.”¹⁷ But let me remind you of Lacan’s famous report of one of his own moments of being subjected to a gaze—not that of a camera, but of a sardine can, floating on the sea, while he was participating in what was for him a luxury boat trip (and was work for the fishermen he was accompanying): “It floated there in the sun, a witness to the canning industry, which we, in fact, were supposed to supply. It glittered in the sun. And Petit-Jean said to me—*You see that can? Do you see it? Well, it doesn’t see you.*” (“*Elle ne te regarde pas,*” as the more ambiguous French original has it—“it pays you no regard”).¹⁸

As this anecdote reminds us, then, it is not always possible and one is not always able to fit oneself into the picture, to adapt to the gaze, to play with the screen, and in any case the imperative to do so might impose considerable pressure onto the subject. Accordingly, the accounts we have by several test subjects differ—from “feeling like a star” and “exhilarating” (Ethel Scull) to “staring at the camera, after a while, your face starts to disintegrate” (Sally Kirkland).¹⁹ One reason why the takers experience the setting in such opposite ways is inscribed in

17. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book XI, The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (1964; New York: Norton 1978), p. 107.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 95.

19. Ethel Scull stated that being filmed by Warhol allowed her to “just relax in front of a camera, be myself, express myself in any way I wanted,” as quoted in Caroline A. Jones, *Machine in the Studio: Constructing the Postwar American Artist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 220. Sally Kirkland’s statement is quoted in *Andy Warhol: A Documentary Film*, directed by Ric Burns, USA, 2006. The gratitude of Pincus-Witten and writer Ted Berigan for Warhol’s gift to take a screen test of them, and thereby the occasion to dwell in narcissism, is documented in Smith, *Andy Warhol’s Art and Films*, p. 154.



Warhol. Screen Test: Bob Dylan. 1965. © 2010 The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA, a museum of Carnegie Institute.

the very setting: on the one hand, it relies on the abstraction of the gaze—since they are not meant to be castings, they lack a defined *telos* and thus also a clear definition of *what kind of* or *whose gaze* to which one is actually being subjected. On the other hand, the sitter is exposed to the very manifest eye of the camera. This situation creates a vacuum to which the test people react very differently. Some seem to “pass” the test in the sense that they manage to play with the function of the screen and use it as a tool for their own self-modeling. The gaze they seem to deal with is the one of the camera, maybe extended to Warhol and the factory. This last aspect is important because it might imply a certain pressure not to be glamorous in a predictable or “square” way (which we should not underestimate, as Lacan’s attempt to hang out with the fishermen reminds us).

Susan Sontag, for example, was tested several times. In one of the takes, she is pretty young and seems slightly bemused, but then quickly adjusts her performance to the intuition that there is not only one “correct” pose, or that this “correct” pose might neither be available nor desirable for her as an intellectual but that, however, there might be individual *glamorosities* to be acted out. Thus, rather coquettishly, she tests whether her own way might work. Bob Dylan seems to be undecided whether to participate in or to oppose the situation, and actually left the room—only to come back again. In fact, given the panorama of participants who make the 472 Screen Tests a “Who’s Who”—and, “Who’s No Longer”—of the New York ’60s art and underground scene, it comes as no surprise that one finds nothing there but differences and singularities.²⁰

20. A general remark about verbal comments on the Screen Tests: Filling up the silence, emptiness,

3. "Abblitzen"

But let me have a closer look at the test subjects who succeed in playing with the situation of being looked at and, more specifically, those who chose—and were apparently given the stage—to act like a star. Not surprisingly, one of the sitters who seems already to be able to work with her image is the professional model "Baby" Jane Holzer, who definitely bears the traits of what Daniel Harris has aptly called "the model's unexplicable unfriendliness."²¹ As he convincingly argues, this effect of intimidation is all the more impressive when the fact of being seen is already staged within the image, when we as spectators can see that the model is seen but the model seems to be immune to this desiring gaze and capable of rebuffing both spectators, the one in and the one outside the picture. In this respect, Harris is certainly correct when he states that "the ultimate form of glamour" is "the glamour of rejection,"²² a statement that radicalizes Warhol's emphasis on mysteriousness and distance: "'Aura' must be until you open your mouth."

In German, there is a very telling expression for the gesture of brushing someone off: "*jemanden abblitzen lassen*," which is to say, to have him or her "flash off" in pretty much the same way as a lightning rod works. This concept allows us to conceive of such a rejection as being a kind of *reflection*, in the optical sense of the word. The glamour of rejection seems to rely not only on the capacity of being a screen for somebody else's projections, on the capacity to bear this projection and to anticipate oneself as the image one becomes in the eye of the beholder, but, with respect to the metaphor of *abblitzen*, one could claim that it is precisely this self-image that functions as a means of rebuffing and deflecting both the spectator's and the camera's gaze—much in the way that Perseus, who certainly knew how to play with the function of the screen, tricked Medusa by using a shiny shield to avoid her unmediated look.

To further qualify this idea, I would point out that in many cultures, the eye of the camera is also considered to be an "evil eye," since it is believed to take not only one's picture, but also one's soul.²³ This belief—as with the many versions

and plain mystery of the faces with reports, rumors, network knowledge, and oral history about the Factory is one possible way to make sense of (and even partly demystify) the portraits as well as their sitters. Strangely enough their "aura" seems to be immune against these "voice overs." This again points to the psycho-technological setting and media practice in the production of this appeal, which does not necessarily rely on the personal glamour of the test person.

21. Daniel Harris, *Cute, Quaint, Hungry and Romantic: The Aesthetics of Consumerism* (New York: Da Capo Press 2000), p. 210.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 213. Another critical discussion which I can't engage here would have to deal with Harris's dramatization of his observations towards the problematic statement that "the ultimate audience of glamor is the homosexual, the gay designer, photographer, and makeup artist who is entirely immune to feminine sensuality and hence judges the latest 'It' girl's stylishness as if our Cheryl Tiegess and Christie Turlingtons were mere pieces of furniture upholstered in flesh" (*ibid.*, p. 230).

23. See Siegfried Seligmann, *Die Zauberkraft des Auges und das Berufen. Ein Kapitel aus der Geschichte des Aberglaubens* [Reprint of the 1922 Hamburg edition] (Den Haag: Couverteur [no date]). For a more detailed account of the historical and structural relationship between fascination and the evil-eye belief, see my article "Blick zurück: Faszination als 'Augenzauber,'" in *Es trübt mein Auge sich in Glück und Licht: Blicke in der Literatur*, ed. Kenneth Caloon, Eva Geulen, Claude Haas, Nils Reschke (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2009).



Warhol. Screen Test: Salvador Dalí. 1966. © 2010 The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA, a museum of Carnegie Institute.

of belief in the evil eye in general—conveys a fundamental fear of being looked at.²⁴ Now, the widespread use of amulets and pictures to deflect the evil eye points to the apparent need for protection. That this logic of the amulet relies on the idea of counter-fascination becomes most apparent in the widespread use of the eye-motif. But let me also mention the *fascinum* employed in Roman antiquity, which had the form of the phallus, if only to hint at some of the implications of the power and desire that are at stake here. If the glamour of rejection implies providing a picture of oneself to rebuff the other's look, while at the same time giving the other something to see, then this image is indeed taking on the function of the amulet: it is a *fascinum*. “Playing with the function of the screen” indeed becomes a game of enchantment and counter-enchantment here.

The dialectics of fascination and counter-fascination also make it possible to further specify the function of the pose, not only in the Screen Tests: as an anticipated affirmation of the spell of the camera's gaze, the pose might also be considered to constitute an attitude of protection, comparable to a transparent mask.²⁵ Some posers emphasize this attitude by looking back into the camera in a deliberately hexing style: this seems to be the case in one of the Screen Tests of

24. A more secular version of this fear manifests itself in the notion of the camera as weapon, as employed by Mary Woronov to describe the experience of her first Screen Test: “Next to the muzzle of a gun, the black hole of the camera is one of the coldest things in the world.” Woronov, *Screen Tests*.

25. For an in-depth analysis of the pose see Craig Owens, “Posing,” in *Beyond Recognition: Representation, Power, and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 201–17, which is also one of the rare texts that explicitly acknowledges Lacan's theory of vision to be “a theory of scopic fascination (*fascinum* = witchcraft, sorcery)” (p. 211).



Warhol. Screen Test: Beverly Grant. 1964. © 2010 The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA, a museum of Carnegie Institute.

Beverly Grant (ST 123), which Callie Angell in her catalogue raisonné describes as a silent movie-like reenactment of Medusa.²⁶ Yet one of the four made of Salvador Dali, in which he is staring back with wide-open eyes (ST 68), makes a good case here as well. Another one, filmed (maybe as a tribute to the master of Surrealist distortion) with the camera upside down, shows him playing with a silver, glittery handbag or cigarette case, clutching it as if it were an apotropaic object (ST 67).

4. *Glamour / "Glamour"*

But there is more posing going on in the Screen Tests: it is no wonder that both professional models, such as Holzer and Donyale Luna, and Factory "superstars" such as Edie Sedgwick clearly quote the mimetic and gestural repertoire of Hollywood—or, more generally, "old school"—glamour. Or consider the luxurious exhibition of oral activities, such as smoking, eating a Hershey's bar, chewing gum, and lasciviously brushing one's teeth—playful adaptations of the signals of desirability employed in advertising as well as in glamour photography. Its mere quotability exposes this repertoire as a set of coded attitudes—we are back to "grammar" here.

And yet, these performances cannot be reduced to assimilation, since those glamour codes also prove to be quotable in a wrong or queer way, more or less disfigured. Such displays of displaced and exaggerated codes are of course characteristic of gender parody and drag (and it's hard not to think of Mario

26. Angell, *Andy Warhol Screen Tests*, p. 86.



Warhol. Screen Test: Jane Holzer (Toothbrush).
1964. © 2010 The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh,
PA, a museum of Carnegie Institute.

Montez's erotic involvement with a banana in *Harlot* when you see Jane Holzer brushing her teeth [ST 147]). So the camp attitude, as an aesthetics of reception that uses the apparently heterosexual (yet latently homosexual) scenarios of the classical Hollywood cinema for queer identifications, is here turned into an aesthetics of *production*—a production that enables alternative sexualities and body images to take part in the spectacle of glamour as well.²⁷ In this regard, the Screen Tests are part of Warhol's larger project, which culminates in films like *Harlot* (1965) or *Chelsea Girls* (1966) using the visual strategies of Hollywood, yet establishing his own underground version of it, made in the Factory.

Moreover, the aberrations of the glamour repertoire in the Screen Tests—whether misquotations or accidents—demonstrate that being at least slightly different is also a necessary means for creating the surplus inherent to the production of glamour (now in the emphatic sense of a “je-ne-sais-quoi”). Accordingly, many of the alternative glamour performances manage to produce the effect of aloofness and mystery, while also of course establishing new standards of glamour. The individualistic, slightly orientalizing appropriation of the star repertoire by Edie Sedgwick makes a good case here (ST 306), as it does for what might be called the

27. Susan Sontag's definition of camp as an attitude of reception and appropriation of mainstream imagery has provoked much criticism within Queer Studies. Yet it seems helpful to distinguish between a “sensibility” that “sees everything in quotation marks . . . not a woman, but a ‘woman’” and understands (other people's) “Being-as-Playing-a-Role” on the one hand, and the active use of exaggeration as denaturalization in self-conscious role playing (as in queer parody) on the other. Sontag, “Notes on Camp” (1964), in *Against Interpretation* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1969), pp. 275–92, n. 10.



Warhol. Screen Test: Edie Sedgwick. 1966. © 2010 The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA, a museum of Carnegie Institute.

glamour of imperfection (think of the by now famous scar between her eyes, nowadays certainly no obstacle to mainstream glamour). And when Ingrid Superstar, moving her head and fingers in changing positions, performs a kind of amateurish mimetic vogue (ST 333), the idea of (mis-)quotation seems to be at work as a rather self-conscious style—a style on which Warhol commented retrospectively:

Ingrid was just an ordinarily nice-looking girl from Jersey with big, wide bone structure posing as a glamour figure and a party girl, and what was great was that somehow it worked . . . It was so funny to see her sitting there on the couch next to Edie or, later, Nico and the International Velvet, putting on makeup or eyelashes exactly the way they did, trading earrings and beauty tips with them. It was like watching Judy Holliday, say, with Verushka.²⁸

In the first place, this statement confirms the concept of alternative glamour. But what follows it reveals another, somewhat less flattering distinction, namely between old versus new glamour, Hollywood versus Underground (if not “camp” vs. “cool”: Judy Holliday is an actress known for dumb blond types who had her high times in the 1940s, before her career was damaged by suspicions of anti-American activities, while the fashion supermodel Veruschka at the time clearly signified someone way-out—if only for her appearance in Michelangelo Antonioni’s film *Blowup* in 1966). However “funny” the situation might have been for those involved,

28. Warhol and Hackett, *POPism: The Warhol Sixties*, p. 122.



Josef von Sternberg. The Scarlet Empress. 1934.

the comment should be sufficient to remind us that even alternative glamour produces new differences between and maybe hierarchies of “high” and “low.”

Now, while some of the sitters of the Screen Tests, by using established and thus recognizable codes, can be shown to participate in the production of glamour, it is important to point out that Warhol—if we take him to be the substitute for the filmic auteur of the Screen Tests—is also applying elements of a “grammar of glamour.” His use of certain operations of “optical magic” (in both settings and screenings) actually *bestows* glamour on the test subjects. To illustrate this point and locate it in the film history of staging glamour, I will make a detour to a film by Josef von Sternberg. Although almost all of the movies that the grand master of glamour worked on with Marlene Dietrich deliver an abundance of relevant illustrative material, a particularly choice example is provided by the wedding scene in *The Scarlet Empress* of 1934, with Marlene Dietrich starring as Catharine II.²⁹

The wedding scene stands out, firstly, because of its extensive and nearly exclusive use of close-ups, which follows a dominant succession of long- and medium-long shots of Sternberg’s ever opulent *mise-en-scène* (involving “a supporting cast of 1000 players,” as the opening credits note without obvious irony). Secondly, it drastically decelerates narration in favor of the spectacular—thereby

29. A box-office failure in its time, the sixth of Sternberg’s seven collaborations with Marlene Dietrich became a camp classic—“most unfortunately,” according to Robin Wood, author of the leaflet text that accompanies the DVD in *The Criterion Collection* (2001), who misunderstands that if *The Scarlet Empress* became a camp icon, it is not despite, but *because* it is “a profoundly serious work.”

applying a stylistic device that Jack Smith, an ardent admirer of “V.S.,” has celebrated as his specialty: “*visual* revelation,” as opposed to verbal explanation by means of story and dialogue (which were often criticized for serving as mere pre-text in Sternberg’s movies).³⁰ Accordingly, the arrest of narration is amplified by the dispensation of words in favor of music (the solemn singing in the church), which relates the scene to the only recently vanquished era of the silent movie; moreover, due to the minimal movement of Catherine’s face the wedding sequences also approach Warhol’s notion of the “stillies.”

On the visual level, the wedding scene reveals that part of the “grammar” of photographic and Hollywood glamour is the use of certain signifiers, which usually include opacity, gloss, glitter, or, of course, silver as a means of reflecting the gaze, as well as a certain gauziness, which marks out the glamorous person as inhabiting another sphere. A whole bunch of these signifiers come together here, enhanced of course by the setting of imperial pomp: Marlene Dietrich’s nearly white face—a whiteness that in Sternberg’s films rarely conceals the fact that it is artificially enhanced—is veiled.³¹ In the next still, the veil is lifted, but even without this signifier of opacity, the face is staged as a suggestive mystery. Moreover, on top of the lustrous splendor, the empress is surrounded by candles that shroud her head with quasi-transcendental light, much like halos in the iconography of saints. And of course, alongside regal imagery, the iconography of saints is the tradition that is most influential for the codified aspects of pre-photographic and pre-filmic media glamour. (Apropos halo and gauziness: in more mundane situations, smoking a cigarette is a recurrent element in the iconography of glamour—not only providing smoke, but also a remotely phallic object with which the subject shares an intimacy, thereby enhancing the effect of distance between her and the spectator.)

All of this contributes to the elusiveness of the face, and yet there is a suggestion of a certain readability, of a deciphering of her emotions.³² The viewer has good reason to speculate that Catherine is moved, given that she is about to

30. Jack Smith, “A Belated Appreciation of VS,” *Film Culture* 31 (Winter 1963–64), pp. 4–5, reprinted in *Sternberg*, ed. Peter Baxter (London: British Film Institute, 1980), p. 57. Interestingly, feminist criticism of Sternberg’s fetishizing staging of Dietrich has partly developed from the same starting point, most prominently in the classic, yet disputed reading of Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” *Screen* 16, no. 3 (1975), pp. 6–18. More recent theoretical approaches to gender performances in film might be more likely to read Smith’s statement that “Dietrich was [Sternberg’s] visual projection—a brilliant transvestite in a world of delirious unreal adventures” as a compliment (*ibid.*).

31. For an in-depth analysis of the historical techniques and semiotics of whitening faces see Richard Dyer, *White: Essays on Race and Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1997), in particular chapter three, “The Light of the World,” which scrutinizes the role of lighting in photography and film with regard to its normative (and thus discriminatory) effects, including the “natural” appeal of unblemishedness and virginity.

32. Although Catherine’s face does convey an idea of her emotions, hers is not the expressive face which substitutes for voice in the silent movie. As to the “readability” of faces in silent film, everything has already been said of course by Norma Desmond, the ex-diva striving for re-glamorization in the days of the “talkie” in Billy Wilder’s *Sunset Blvd.* (1950): “We didn’t need dialogue—we had faces!”



Sternberg. *The Scarlet Empress*. 1934.

be married to an unloved but powerful imbecile in the presence of her obviously more attractive lover (whose image I include here, if only to demonstrate that in Sternberg's films, not only the women are beautiful—although the men tend to show a slight lack of signifiers of glamour).

What this example demonstrates is that the glamorously staged face—while certainly not appearing to have any “psychological banners” (Adorno) attached to its mouth—is not completely “unreadable,” but rather produces the effect of a *floating significance*. And of course it is perfectly clear that this is also the result of some “active glamorizing” on Sternberg's part. The production of the glamorous face implies much more than putting the qualities of the object (mainly of women of a particular kind of beauty) in perspective with technical procedures. A certain basic beauty may be a precondition, but the auratic appeal is the result of a precise *mise-en-scène*. As the application of technical effects tends to distract attention from itself, it creates the illusory moment that is often referred to as forms of “magic” and “enchantment.” This is the field of intersection between the production of glamour and the older discourse of the photogenic (*photogénie*), which was also considered to be a quality of the camera that allowed it to transform an object into something “wondrous” (René Clair): something that—although technically produced—transcends mere technicality as well as explicability.³³

33. With reference to theorists and practitioners of *photogénie* such as Louis Delluc and René Clair, Ian Aitken explains the notion as “a latent power within the moving image,” which “was based on the camera's ability to poeticize the ordinary and prosaic through the use of framing, light and shade, and directional movement.” Aitken, *European Film Theory and Cinema: A Critical Introduction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), p. 82. While usually assuming technical mediation as



*Sternberg. The Scarlet
Empress. 1934.*

Although it comes as no surprise that Sternberg himself was perfectly aware of the grammar involved in the production of glamour, it is somewhat striking to see the title “The von Sternberg Principle” accompany an article for the October 1963 issue of *Esquire*, as if designating the piece as a *grimoire*. Here, Sternberg describes the ungraspable essence of glamour in a by now familiar way as the ability of an image both to *evoke* a sexual desire of the (naturally, female) object and simultaneously to *deflect* (or rather infinitely postpone) it. Although Sternberg draws heavily on the rhetorics of enchantment in order to describe this effect,³⁴ he leaves no doubt about its main “principle”: there is no magic without a magician.

[W]ith very few exceptions, glamour is not created by a woman desirable as she might temporarily be, but by a craftsman with superb control, who can manipulate lights, camera, his chosen subject and his

well as the inherent quality of the object to be its condition, discourses on *photogénie* tend to entrust the auteur with the vision and intuitive ability to bring about this effect—a displacement of the mystery towards the “genius” behind the camera which can also be observed in discourses on glamour (as showcased in Sternberg’s self-descriptions). That *photogénie* is often said to be unexplicable and to defy any rational conceptualization or rules of production (and thus any kind of “grammar”) is another common feature with definitions of glamour.

34. “Glamour is the quality of being provocative, tantalizing, entrancing, fascinating, ravishing and bewitching, all these implying vibrating and twisting the beholder’s emotional wiring.” Josef von Sternberg, “The Von Sternberg Principle,” *Esquire* 359 (October 1963), pp. 90–97. The article was originally published with Frank Bez’s photographs of Jill St. John, Yvette Mimieux, Carol Linley, Natalie Wood, and Jane Fonda, and is reprinted in Baxter, ed., *Sternberg*, pp. 52–55 (p. 53, quotes refer to this reprint).

perceptiveness until an aggregate is achieved that can no longer be broken down into any of the components that have been so skillfully fused. Technically, glamour consists of the chiaroscuro, the play of light on the landscape of the face, the effect of the background, the composition, the planting of mysterious shadows in the eyes to conceal the vacancy, the aura of the hair, and to capture all this in a fleeting moment of grace.³⁵

Note that “grace,” this gift of the gods, is thought to be received by the artist in this case, and not from the “graceful” sitter. Despite the more prosaic reduction of glamour to technical craftsmanship and fabrication, the initial emphasis on male authorship in the creation of female appeal already seemed to announce an additional ingredient of genius surplus—which follows as expected: the successful endowment of a creature with this “superb quality” along the lines of “The von Sternberg Principle” requires “more than technical proficiency”; it requires an exceptional director or photographer.³⁶

Given the deliberate conception that underlies Sternberg’s practice of “old school” glamour, the comparison to Warhol’s Screen Tests might seem far-fetched, since they appear to be the result of a withdrawal of authorship and intervention, as well as of a refusal to embody personally the look behind the camera or even “model” the sitter. And yet, as I would like to argue, it is precisely the effect of floating significance, described with regard to *The Scarlet Empress*, that Warhol bestows upon his sitters, using different, yet partly similar, means. Let me just mention the obvious features, foremost among them being the black-and-white aesthetic that has become a signal of remoteness and nostalgia for the cinema’s high times of glamour. This also holds true for the soundlessness of the Screen Tests, which among other things takes us back to the era of silent movies: if “aura’ must be until you open your mouth,” muteness certainly doesn’t do any harm to media(ted) glamour either. The focus on the face as a site of the emergence of “screen magnetism” is by no means a culturally neutral choice, but in addition, the facial close-up undergoes a refashioning in the Screen Tests: if in *The Scarlet Empress*, as well as other fiction films of the “classical” Hollywood kind, the glamorous face is often used to hold up the story, in Warhol’s “living portraits,” this arrest is made absolute. The application of any hermeneutics of the face is further complicated by the paradoxical arrangement of the photographically arrested pose for the recording of a motion picture. The “stille”-principle contributes to a blurring of the boundaries of the physiognomic, the pathognomic, and mimetic features, on the one hand, and of the dichotomy of involuntary affect and performance, on the other.

The lighting, which Sternberg considers to be so crucial in these matters, is

35. Ibid., p. 54.

36. Ibid., p. 55.

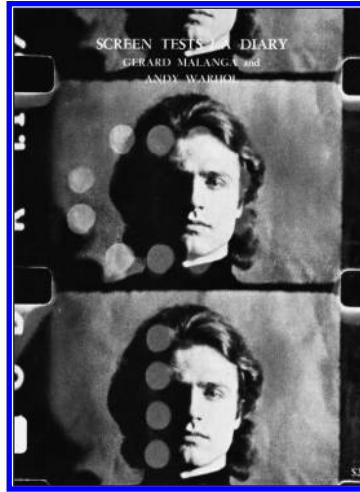


Sternberg. The Scarlet Empress. 1934.

more sophisticated in some of the Screen Tests than in others, but it generally favors contrast above grayscale. In most cases, it contributes to the whiteness of the exposed features, which either expands to the whole face or creates a stark contrast with the shadowy parts. If this overexposed whiteness makes the face a site of projection, a screen for the desires and fantasies of the viewer, Warhol, unlike Sternberg, doesn't leave it at this, a fact that finally leads me to the mode of filmic projection: the *screenings*.

Thanks to the integration of the film roll's leader into the actual screening of the takes, the test persons appear out of and disappear into whiteness, with transitional moments where they fade in and out, gauzily dissolving into whiteness. Somewhat unexpectedly, this Brechtian, anti-illusionist operation of showing the materiality of the film actually emphasizes the immateriality of the person's image and contributes to his or her appeal of other-worldliness. Another detail that follows the same logic and displaces the production of glamour onto the film material: the white dots caused by the perforation of the film's serial number that flash up at the beginning and end of the film. Glimmering and momentarily obscuring the face, they turn themselves into signifiers of filmic glamour—no wonder that Gerard Malanga picked these frames for the cover of *Screen Tests: A Diary* (ST 200).

Clearly, the most important factor with regard to the screenings of the test material is that Warhol sticks to the same decelerated speed that he already employed in *Kiss, Eat, Blow Job*, and other early movies (and which Jonas Mekas considered to be his best filmic idea). Thanks to the use of silent-film speed to project the



Cover of *Screen Tests: A Diary*, by Gerard Malanga. 1966.

sound-film material (sixteen or eighteen instead of twenty-four frames per second), the running time of the approximately three-minute-long takes is stretched to four minutes six seconds or four minutes thirty-six seconds. The use of this slow-motion also turns out to favor illusionism, however fragile it may be, since once more the somnambulant appeal of the sitter transcends the Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt* (“estrangement effect”) that derives from the quasi-scientific dissection of even the slightest movement and the constant reminder that we are watching a film.

Thus, several of the procedures employed in the Screen Tests contribute to the distance and remoteness that prove to be essential to the grammar of glamour. As close as the camera and therefore the viewer get, the portrayed person is anything but at hand.³⁷ The tension between the utmost proximity and given-

37. Interestingly, the notion of “aura” applies here also in the notoriously nebulous sense in which Walter Benjamin appropriated this occult notion: “What, then, is the aura? A strange tissue [*Gespinst*, a word which connotes both “figment” and “ghost”/ *Gespent*, B.W.] of space and time: the unique apparition of a distance, however near it may be.” “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility,” p. 23. Although in this essay Benjamin famously states the “destruction” of the aura by technical reproduction, he also notes the “last retrenchment” of the artworks’ cult value to be in the “human countenance”: “It is no accident that the portrait is central to early photography In the fleeting expression of a human face, the aura beckons from early photographs for the last time” (p. 27). As to the relation of personal glamour to media glamour and the impact of technique on the latter, note that in Benjamin’s 1931 essay “Little History of Photography” (in *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, pp. 274–98), where the notion appears for the first time, the “aura” of early photography is neither ascribed solely to the camera nor to its object, but rather to their exact congruence: “For this aura was by no means the mere product of a primitive camera. Rather, in this early period subject and technique were as exactly congruent as they become incongruent in the period of decline that

ness-for-inspection of these faces on the one hand and the appeal of detachment, immateriality, and loneliness on the other hand makes for a somewhat spooky experience.³⁸ The Screen Tests are not the first works to combine occult interests with a scientific interrogation of subject matter, and among the many visual traditions that they invoke, ghost photography certainly has its place. In particular, the stiller versions of the “stillies,” the “living portraits,” also remind us of the ghostly qualities of the star, since, last but not least, both ghosts and stars have to bear our projections.

5. *Being Visible: Seeing and Being Seen*

If both Sternberg's and Warhol's staging of their stars now appear to be acts of generosity, let's not forget about the aspect of torture in this procedure. In “The von Sternberg Principle,” “Svengali Joe”—as the director is nicknamed for reasons that become obvious in what follows—reports his experience that “[a]lthough women like to be photographed in any conceivable situation, there are some poses they are asked to hold, apparently with effortless nonchalance, which are not only incomprehensible to them but which are tantamount to being strung on a rack.” He also recalls “Marlene's complaints, while she submitted to fitting into my vision of her, that for nothing in the world would she care to undergo such torment as she thought was being inflicted on her. She did not object to the transformation, but neither did she relish it. Of course, in her case the glamour had to be maintained in motion, not on being made to appear ravishing in a few posed photographs.”³⁹ Yet *The Scarlet Empress* is not only a result of such psycho-physical terror; the film can also be seen as a reflection on glamour's darker sides, as it tells the story of Catherine's involuntary

immediately followed” (p. 283). The divergence of subject and technique which Benjamin puts down to both the “enlightened” optics thanks to more efficient lenses *and* to the bourgeoisie's loss of prestige after 1880 is compensated by photographer's attempts to “simulate” the aura, “using all the arts of retouching, and especially the so-called gum print” (p. 283). The conscious and artificial use of signifiers of aura thus anticipates and contributes to the “grammar” of glamour photography and film. Besides, Warhol's flirt with elements of outmoded techniques demonstrates the more general process of auratization of older media that accompanies the arrival of new ones.

38. This effect is emphasized when the Screen Tests are projected onto a screen as opposed to the digital presentation used in several museum exhibitions recently. The spectral immateriality of the filmed person which unfolds into the visual space literally penetrates the spectator, who on her part might overshadow the image.

39. Sternberg, “The von Sternberg Principle,” p. 52. In his memoirs, Sternberg generously credits women with the talent “by nature” not only to endure, but actually to enjoy the “possibly mortifying experience of being reorganized in the course of incarnating my vision,” a compliment which is all the more poisoned as he has already related this pleasure to masochism at this point (*Fun in a Chinese Laundry* [New York: Macmillan, 1965], p. 120). “Svengali” is a character in George du Maurier's 1894 novel *Trilby*, a pianist, teacher, and mesmerist (as well as an antisemitically depicted Jew) who transforms the artist-model Trilby into a singer by putting her under hypnosis. Artistically, the relationship is one of absolute dependency, because Trilby is unable to perform without being mesmerized.

subjugation to the spectacle of political representation. Partly because of her beauty, Friederike/Catherine is chosen and forced to endure the complete and often violent refashioning of her identity (including, as with the Factory's Superstars, changing her name). Moreover, this transformation takes place in a country that first enters her childish imagination as a site of torture.

If Sternberg thus reminds us that looking glamorous can be hard work,⁴⁰ this also recalls the fact that the lack of an explicit director's "vision" in the Screen Test setting does not imply that it is a site of sheer self-determination—and thus brings us back to the question of whose or what kind of gaze to which the sitters are reacting. Remember the comment by Malanga—who also happens to have characterized the Screen Tests as "studies in silent sadism"⁴¹—on Edie Sedgwick: "She could be very easily molded."

The fundamental unpredictability of whether Warhol's camera eye will enable its subjects to play with "the function of the screen" or whether they will turn out to be the ones who are played is made manifest in one of the two tests of the writer Ann Buchanan (ST 33)—a test that is also a prime example of what it might have meant for Warhol to pass this test, since he told a reporter that Buchanan's Screen Test was his favorite one: "She did something wonderful marvelous . . . She cried."⁴² While this may be held as an easy proof of sadism, either on the part of Warhol personally or the test setting, a closer look at Buchanan's Screen Test defies such a simplistic conclusion. Since she is indeed staring into the camera without blinking, her tears may well be provoked by this fixed stare and the glaring light. We don't witness her sobbing, there is no compulsive movement, but rather a slow transformation of her image into a crying icon—and thus indeed the re-enactment of a religious miracle, which confers on her performance the ultimate glamour. No chance of locating the gaze that acts upon her transformation.⁴³ Of course, the fact that it is unclear whether her tears are the result of affect, optical physiology, or some kind of performance contributes to this effect. Despite the floating significance of this face, the con-

40. For an in-depth examination of "glamour's concealed labor" see Matthew Tinkcom, *Working Like a Homosexual: Camp, Capital, Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), p. 84. As Tinkcom argues, "Warhol's films showcase stars as effects of labour," which extends to the work required of the audience (as exemplified by Warhol's marathon staging of the Empire State Building as his first "star") (p. 87). In his perspective, the subversive aspect of Warhol's alternative glamour production results from the exposure of its "failure," thereby exhibiting the inner contradiction of Hollywood glamour as such: "What if one recorded the efforts of exertion and failure as much as one embraced the conventional success and the standardized product?" (p. 89).

41. Quoted in *Andy Warhol: A Documentary Film*, Ric Burns, USA, 2006.

42. Warhol in an interview for the *New York Herald Tribune*, January 10, 1965, quoted by Angell, *Andy Warhol's Screen Tests*, p. 45.

43. It is tempting to relate this question to Lacan's comment about the icon as a screen which mediates a heavenly gaze, a "go-between with divinity": "What makes the value of the icon is that the god it represents is also looking at it. It is intended to please God. At this level, the artist is operating on the sacrificial plane. He is playing with those things, in this case images, that may arouse the desire of God." *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book XI*, p. 113. However, this substitution does not allow for more than a reformulation of the problem, since we then have to ask for the name of the father which substitutes for "God."



Warhol. Screen Test: Ann Buchanan. 1966. © 2010 The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, PA, a museum of Carnegie Institute.

notation of martyrdom is unavoidable. But if we are tempted to take this as evidence of a downright subjugation taking place at the test site, watching Buchanan's second Screen Test might change our mind. She—still visibly wet from her tears—“fixes the camera with a moist, wide-eyed gaze and then very slowly crosses her eyes.”⁴⁴ It's hard to imagine a more sophisticated resistance to the imperative of bearing the camera's gaze by distracting and deflecting it, since squinting is employed here as another means of counter-fascination.

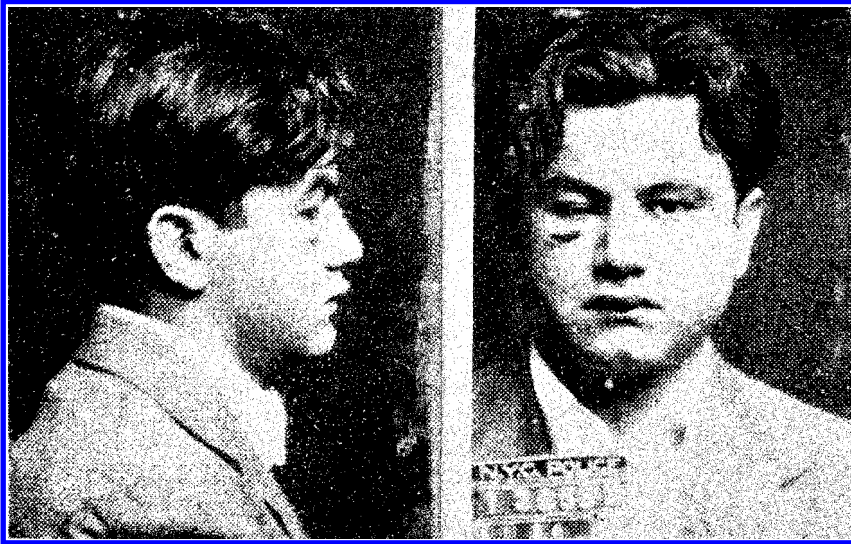
Yet, I don't want to end my—however blinded—account of Warhol's literally fascinating visual analysis of “screen magnetism” without a more explicit indication of its darker side. Since one of my speculations about the Screen Tests was concerned with the question regarding to whom the sitters attribute the camera's gaze, I would like to mention the description of Warhol's Bolex as a “sentinel camera” by a regular visitor of the Factory.⁴⁵ Others associate the Factory's photo booth with a confessional.⁴⁶ Moreover, the actual similarities of the Screen Tests to photo-booth pictures evoke the objectifying quality of the mug shot. As Roland Barthes remarked when discussing the (im-)possibility of a “neutral” photograph: “the Photomat always turns you into a criminal type, wanted by the police.”⁴⁷ So among the possible historical

44. Angell, *Andy Warhol Screen Tests*, p. 45.

45. Parker Tyler, “Dragtime and Drugtime; or, Film à la Warhol,” *Evergreen Review* 11, no. 46, (April 1967), p. 28.

46. See Mark Francis, “Still Life: Andy Warhol's Photography as a Form of Metaphysics,” in *Andy Warhol Photography* (Zurich and New York: Edition Stemmler, 1999), p. 20.

47. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (1980; London: Vintage, 2000), p. 12.



Warhol. *Thirteen Most Wanted Men (detail)*. 1964.
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placeholders for the look embodied by the Factory's cameras (a look supported by other omnipresent recording media), we come across surveillance, confession, and registration—all of them procedures of power that Foucault demonstrated were based upon the willingness of subjects to exercise their own self-discipline and adapt to social and biopolitical norms.⁴⁸

However, things start to oscillate again if, thinking of the mug shot, one remembers that *Thirteen Most Wanted Boys or Women* also echoes the title of Warhol's reproduction of the mug shots of *Thirteen Most Wanted Men* for the 1964 World's Fair. And if "most wanted" refers, in Richard Meyer's words, to "the circuitry set up between the image of the outlaw and Warhol's outlawed desire for that image . . . and for these men,"⁴⁹ then its reuse in the "Best-Of" selections of the Screen Tests implies the further replacement of a criminalization with sexual-

48. For an incisive investigation of Warhol's modes of production under "post-Fordian conditions" in the Factory and their complicity with the biopolitical dimension of the emerging "celebrity culture," see Isabelle Graw's essay in this volume. Graw's perspective also allows for a more apt reformulation of the common criticism that Warhol "exploited" the Factory workers for his own sake. This reproach has also been complicated by Matthew Tinkcom who reminds us that nobody was "coerced" (in Tally Brown's word) into doing something. But the immaterial and emotional investments in this enterprise require an even more complex notion of "work" than the one that he offers by opposing "labor" to camp forms of "work," which tends to overemphasize the enabling qualities of the latter. See Tinkcom, *Working Like a Homosexual*, p. 98.

49. Richard Meyer, "Warhol's Clones," in *Negotiating Lesbian and Gay Subjects*, ed. Monica Dorenkamp and Richard Henke (New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 105.



Warhol. *Thirteen Most Wanted Men (detail)*. 1964.
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ization, circuiting the facial politics of the mug shot with publications like the *Celebrity Register*, which was first published in 1959.

Being recorded, subjected, eroticized, glamorized: being made visible has many facets in the Screen Tests thanks to a test setting that is both oppressive and enabling and to performances of subjects who are both obedient and resistant, often at the same time. Despite the test setting's undeniable complicity with normative regimes of seeing and being seen, with regard to the outcome of the experiment (and as in all of Warhol's serial works), the notion of "failure" is replaced by variation or difference. Moreover, of all the Screen Tests I have seen, there was not a single one that didn't convey a particular kind of beauty of the subject, however the test subjects themselves may have perceived the situation. Now, if beauty—as "screen magnetism"—is in the eye of the camera, the Screen Tests make sure that it is also in the eye of the beholder, and thus of the spectator who is placed in the camera's position when looking at these faces. Yet the dialectics of proximity (as emphasized by the close-up) and distance (as an effect of exposed mediation) allow for neither identification nor objectification. In the encounter with these faces, the otherness of the other is both shared and protected from any hermeneutics that might suggest readability. As viewers, we may in a certain way share the experience of the sitter for some extended minutes, but this participation takes neither the form of empathy nor superiority. If we see moments of the pleasure, we enjoy it *and* are excluded from it; if there is sadism, we are sadists *and* get a sense of

the torture of being looked at. So if there is undeniably a form of mutuality between the subject and the object of the gaze here, it falls short of reciprocity.

This, of course, is also a consequence of the fact that we ourselves are being looked at when looking at the Screen Tests. The viewing situation is characterized by the fact that the constellation of seeing and being seen is constantly oscillating here. If the Screen Tests are bedazzling, at moments even hypnotic in their own right, it is because the screen—both in the Lacanian and the cinematic sense—is penetrated by looks from both sides of it without ever suggesting the illusion that it can be dissolved, that the eye that sees and the gaze that is looking back can ever match. You may call this effect of misrecognition magic or not, but it is certainly something that exceeds the idea of a grammar, even the grammar of glamour.