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MoMA Goes beyond the Iron Curtain: The Eastern European Tour of *The Prints of Andy Warhol*

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Abstract: In 1990, three years after Andy Warhol's death and one year after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) organized the first one-man show of this pop artist in Eastern Europe. *The Prints of Andy Warhol*, although never shown at the MoMA in New York, traveled to the Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain in Jouy-en-Josas, France, the Národní Galerie in Prague, Czechoslovakia, the Staatliche Kunstsammlung in Dresden, the GDR, the Mücsarnok in Budapest, Hungary, and the Muzeum Narodowe in Warsaw, Poland. The current paper analyzes the cultural-political context of *The Prints of Andy Warhol*. It first discusses the place of both American pop art and Eastern Europe in MoMA's International Program (IP) and then explores the organizational challenges, art historical contents, and public reception of the exhibition. The paper concludes by examining the broader impact of *The Prints of Andy Warhol* on both the growing awareness of American pop art in Eastern Europe and MoMA's cultural diplomacy in this region after the fall of the Iron Curtain.

Keywords: MoMA; International Program; Andy Warhol; Eastern Europe; Cold War; pop art



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1. Introduction

American pop art, although well represented in Western Europe, was long hidden from the Eastern European's eye. According to art historian David Crowley, even if "the Soviet engagement with pop art was predominately antagonistic", the works of American and Western European pop artists were known to Eastern Europeans, "at least indirectly, through their reproduction in books and magazines" (Crowley 2015, p. 29). Rare opportunities to see pop artworks occurred for the "citizens of Moscow's satellites in Eastern Europe and former Yugoslavia" as well, albeit infrequently (Crowley 2015, pp. 29–31). The first Eastern European exhibition of American pop art featuring works by Jim Dine, Allen Jones, and Andy Warhol was held in Belgrade and Zagreb in 1966 under the patronage of the tobacco concern Philip Morris International (Djokic 2022). Three years later, the Smithsonian Institution organized *The Disappearance and the Reappearance of the Image* exhibition that included the works by Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Rauschenberg, Claes Oldenburg, and Andy Warhol and traveled to Romania, Czechoslovakia, and Belgium (Grigorescu [1969] 2020, pp. 332–34). Despite some rare occasions to encounter American pop painting in person, pop art did not reach the necessary level of "being a significant style" in Eastern Europe, and that is why during the Cold War there were "no large-scale international curatorial projects dealing with it" (Piotrowski 2017, p. 24).

Andy Warhol (1928–1987), an American pop artist of Czechoslovak descent, is considered today, together with French Impressionist artist Claude Monet and Spanish Cubist artist Pablo Picasso, as one of the three best-selling artists in the world, with turnover totals of USD 590 million, USD 539 million, and USD 494 million, respectively (Artprice 2022, p. 40). During the Cold War, however, the Eastern European public treated Warhol as "a drug-addled degenerate whose artwork celebrated consumerism" (Higgings and Germanova 2018). Warhol's personality was a bugbear to those Soviet critics of the 1960s and 1970s, such as Mikhail Lifshits or Irina Kulikova (Riff 2018), whose main intention was

always to denounce the Western avant-garde of those years as a “product of degenerate bourgeois culture” (Klavins [1988] 2020, p. 505). Under the influence of Soviet propaganda, Eastern European art curators were hesitant in formulating the critique of Warhol’s pop painting “in a situation where the value of art and the status of autonomous artworks” were threatened by the cultural policies of the communist regime (Piotrowski 2009, p. 257). At the same time, despite the “supposed impenetrability of the Iron Curtain” (Murawska-Muthesius 2002, p. 250), Eastern Europeans still had some knowledge about Warhol thanks to a plethora of periodicals, catalogues, artists, and critics who circulated between the East and West during the communist times. For instance, Warhol’s fan from Poland, Jach Przemek, wrote the following letter to the artist on 14 March 1980:

“Dear Sir and Master!

I have a great request to you, my master. I am a pupil from the X class of the school in Myslenice [. . .]. Since some years I have been interested in arts especially in paintings [sic]. I am fascinated by your pictures, graphics etc. [sic]. It is my heartily request to get from you some lignes written to me [sic]. It would be for you only a question of some minutes and to me an incredible joy. I have been reading a lot of your work in our books and periodicals. I am sending you in this letter some chosen articles. Permit me please to repeat my request once more and to send you my best greetings¹.”

In 1990, three years after Warhol’s death and one year after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) organized the first Warhol one-man show in Eastern Europe. *The Prints of Andy Warhol*, although never shown at the MoMA in New York, traveled to the Fondation Cartier pour l’Art Contemporain in Jouy-en-Josas in France (15 June 1990–9 September 1990), the Národní Galerie in Prague in Czechoslovakia (24 September 1990–17 November 1990), the Staatliche Kunstsammlung in Dresden in Germany (former DDR) (10 December 1990–27 January 1991), the Mücsarnok in Budapest in Hungary (13 February 1991–24 March 1991), and the Muzeum Narodowe in Warsaw in Poland (17 June 1991–28 July 1991)².

Based on the materials from the Museum of Modern Art Archives and the Andy Warhol Museum Archives, the current paper analyzes the cultural–political context of *The Prints of Andy Warhol*. It first discusses the place of both American pop art and Eastern Europe in MoMA’s International Program (IP) and then explores the organizational challenges, art historical contents, and public reception of the exhibition. The paper concludes by dwelling upon the broader impact of *The Prints of Andy Warhol* on both the growing awareness of American pop art in Eastern Europe and MoMA’s cultural diplomacy in this region after the fall of the Iron Curtain.

2. The Contours of MoMA’s International Program

Historically, the U.S. government has been far behind European countries in its efforts to support art at home and, especially, abroad (Gienow-Hecht and Donfried 2010). The lack of art professionals in American diplomatic institutions and the absence of a corresponding ministry dedicated to culture impeded the U.S. government from carrying out coherent art diplomacy initiatives that could serve broader American foreign policy interests (Curley 2019; Obadia 2019). In the words of art historian Michael Krenn, the U.S. government and American art lovers “were never able to discover a happy medium between art as art and art as propaganda” (Krenn 2005, p. 4). Whereas “contemporary art became part of the American dream” and a growing number of Americans started trading and collecting art in the aftermath of World War II, “promoting American art abroad was, however, much more difficult” (Dossin 2015, p. 8).

Out of all private art institutions that have been dealing effectively with the foreign dissemination of American art since the beginning of the Cold War, the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA) has managed to develop the most comprehensive agenda of international traveling art exhibitions. The MoMA, founded in 1929 by three wealthy ladies, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, Lillie Bliss, and Mary Quinn Sullivan, is the first U.S.

museum of modern art. It is more than just an ordinary museum: it is “the recognized omphalos of the world’s art capital” and “the focal point of everyone’s gaze and of all kinds of criticism” (Lorente 2011, p. 199). Even though MoMA’s twentieth-century international traveling shows have become a legend, its internationalization started much earlier than the Cultural Cold War did. A huge credit for the initiation of the international circulation of American modern art should be attributed to Nelson Rockefeller, son of one of MoMA’s founders Abby Aldrich Rockefeller. He was the first American philanthropist to build a bridge between American fine arts and the realm of U.S. arts diplomacy. In the 1930s, he participated in the creation of the Rockefeller Foundation’s Communications Group, which struggled to conceptualize the phenomenon of U.S. cultural diplomacy. In the 1940s, he served as Coordinator for Inter-American Affairs under President Franklin D. Roosevelt, which allowed him to launch a series of MoMA shows that traveled to Latin America to counter the Nazi influence there. Nelson Rockefeller had more complex ambitions than simply displaying to the world the quality of U.S. artistic production: he sought to use his philanthropic influence to support MoMA’s international initiatives of his choice to promote globally the virtue of American private arts patronage.

With this in mind, in 1952, Nelson Rockefeller suggested creating MoMA’s International Program (IP) to carry out private arts diplomacy programs through the international circulation of American modern art. He not only proposed this idea to MoMA’s board but also provided financial support from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. As IP’s treasurer and most active member, Nelson Rockefeller believed that the IP was a good initiative because it helped systematically promote the “greater international understanding” of American modern art while the U.S. government did not recognize “the need for this form of cultural exchange” (Franc 1994, p. 109). One year after IP’s creation, MoMA’s board established the International Council (IC) in 1953 whose primary purpose was to act as an advisory body for the IP and cooperate with other U.S. museums and patrons to foster the “interchange of ideas and the exchange of cultural materials which can lead to a greater understanding and mutual respect among nations”³.

Despite its being a private museum, the conjunction of paths between the U.S. government and the MoMA has not been fortuitous since the beginning of the Cold War. MoMA’s international strategy took the form of “a kind of a patriotic relay race, in which a private organization took over some tasks in the field of cultural diplomacy dropped by the White House” (Lorente 2011, p. 206). Through the mighty Rockefeller family, which had “the animating spirit of the modern art—international connection”, the museum has “learned early to meld art with international relations, largely because the Rockefellers at its helm were so immersed both in American foreign policy and in the workings of the modern art/museum” (Sylvester 2009, p. 98). Above all, MoMA’s board of directors and trustees stood close to the U.S. government (Paley 1979). Furthermore, as it was discovered in the early 1970s, the MoMA “received secret funds from the CIA, who conceived of the exportation of American exhibitions to Europe, Japan and Latin America, and to international art biennials as part of an offensive in the Cold War” (Lorente 2011, p. 208). CIA’s and MoMA’s advocacy for the New York School of Abstract Expressionism provided the definitive aesthetic for Cold War cultural policymakers (Saunders 1999). The MoMA and the CIA pursued one common political goal through the international promotion of abstract expressionism: they displayed this type of art abroad to win over “Western Europe’s unaligned left through cultural diplomacy” and demonstrate to America’s international friends and foes their “own abashed pride in the American way of life” (Jachec 2000, pp. 162, 211).

Even though the MoMA has long been committed to the international circulation of abstract expressionism (Guilbaut 1983), this does not mean that other American modern art movements were excluded from MoMA’s IP. What the MoMA exported during the Cold War was “a mixed bag of styles and movements, the result not only of political nervousness, compromise, and continual vigilante howling, but also of a common-sensical appraisal of European taste and opinion” (Caute 2003, p. 541). American pop art has always been present in MoMA’s IP, but has long remained on the periphery of wider public attention

(Varnedoe 1995). As art historian Pedro Lorente points out, pop art “soon became the best expression of the American Way of Life and it seemed even easier for it to be used internationally at the service of American cultural imperialism, because of its apolitical and hedonistic character” (Lorente 2011, pp. 209–10). Moreover, pop art was, as Lorente states, typical museum art marked by “easy comprehensibility to the general public and the large dimensions of the works, whose bright colors made amazing contrasts with the white walls illuminated by tracks of incandescent lights, according to the MoMA’s paradigm” (Lorente 2011, p. 210).

To define its attitude towards American pop art, the MoMA hosted the Pop Art Symposium on 13 December 1962. The press release issued on the eve of the event announced that the subject of the Symposium was “a source of lively controversy among artists, collectors and critics” and that the speakers intended to discuss the “aesthetics of the movement and its value as a meaningful comment on contemporary life as well as the problematic relationship of art to mass culture”⁴. The Symposium attracted several influential New York art critics, such as Henry Geldzahler, Hilton Kramer, Dore Ashton, and Stanley Kunitz. As it was MoMA’s first attempt to discuss the theoretical foundations and social application of American pop art, the Symposium’s panelists did not come to terms with the place of American pop painting in the U.S. twentieth-century art historical canon. Geldzahler defended pop art and argued that it was “a new two-dimensional landscape painting”, “an expression of contemporary sensibility aware of contemporary environment and growing naturally out of art of the recent past” (Selz 1963, p. 38). Kunitz, in turn, did not recognize pop art as highbrow art and claimed that it was “neither serious nor funny enough to serve as more than a nine days’ wonder” (Selz 1963, p. 45).

The relationship between the MoMA and Andy Warhol has never been easy. In 1956, Warhol offered his drawing *Shoe* for the permanent collection of the MoMA. The drawing was, however, rejected. The official letter sent to Warhol by MoMA’s first director Alfred Barr on 18 October 1956 motivated the refusal of the gift with the lack of “gallery and storage place” and the museum’s planning to exhibit it “only infrequently”⁵. Implicitly, Barr meant that Warhol’s gift was inappropriate for MoMA’s collection, as it more resembled a commercial advertisement of a shoe rather than a work of art (Barr 1974). The further history of MoMA’s acquisition of Warhol’s art remains vague. According to the museum’s website, it presently owns 266 works of art by Andy Warhol, including a portfolio of 17 *Shoes* initially rejected by Barr (The Museum of Modern Art 2023). The architect Philip Johnson and the art dealer Irving Blum made one of the earliest donations of the Warhols to the MoMA. In 1962, they donated the *Gold Marilyn Monroe* (1962) and the *Campbell’s Soup Cans* (1962), respectively. As the former director of MoMA’s Photography Department, John Szarkowski recalls: “This must have seemed a radically new, if not subversive work to most of Johnson’s fellow trustees at that date” (Varnedoe 1998, p. 14). In the early 1970s, Johnson made the second donation of the Warhols to the MoMA. It comprised three paintings (*Orange Car Crash Fourteen Times*, 1963; *Campbell’s Soup*, 1965; *Campbell’s Soup*, 1966) and six drawings (*Self-Portrait*, 1967; *Flash—22 November 1963*; *Campbell’s Soup I*, 1968; *Campbell’s Soup II*, 1969; *Electric Chair*, 1971; *Vote McGovern*, 1972) (Stern 2008, pp. 157–59).

Historically, MoMA’s IP did not contribute much to the international promotion of Andy Warhol’s pop art while the artist was alive. The MoMA never mounted Warhol’s one-man international shows, as it did with other pop artists, such as Robert Rauschenberg (1964, exhibition organized on behalf of the British Council), Jasper Johns (1968, 1986), Claes Oldenburg (1970), and Roy Lichtenstein (1987). During the Cold War, the MoMA included Warhol’s artworks only in its two group exhibitions, *Two Decades of American Painting* (1966–1967) and *Color as Language* (1975). The incorporation of Warhol’s work into these two exhibitions was marginal, as the MoMA chose a limited amount of Warhol’s artworks dedicated to narrow subject matters that did not give the international audience any comprehensive information on American pop art in general and Warhol’s pop art in particular. After Warhol died in 1987, nevertheless, the MoMA, seeing a rising global interest in the artist’s artistic legacy, decided to organize two posthumous international

exhibitions: the *Andy Warhol* (1989–1990) retrospective that traveled to Western European countries and *The Prints of Andy Warhol* exhibition (1990–1991) that traveled to Eastern European countries.

There are both cultural and political implications that stand behind MoMA's decision to organize *The Prints of Andy Warhol*. On the one hand, Warhol's death in 1987 was a hugely mediated event covered extensively in many U.S. and international mass media (Von Hohenberg and Scheips 2006). As a visible American cultural institution, the MoMA could not help reacting to Warhol's death by paying tribute to the artist. On the other hand, the end of the Cold War brought about structural changes to the system of international cultural relations. Eastern Europe was liberated from the ideological control of the Soviet Union and became integrated into the U.S.-led transatlantic cultural exchange (Duignan and Gann 1994; Kovrig 1991). The MoMA sought to enlarge the geography of its international circulating exhibitions beyond the Iron Curtain and chose Warhol, because of the mediated coverage of his death and by coincidence due to his Carpatho-Rusyn ethnical background, to be the first artist whose one-man show would travel to this newly opened part of the world. Thus, *The Prints of Andy Warhol* became MoMA's first show that specifically targeted the Eastern European region. The press release issued on 2 May 1990 names two reasons why the MoMA needed this exhibition project. On the one hand, the MoMA wanted to circulate Warhol's artworks in the countries whose publics had "a rare opportunity to see the actual works of an artist known in these countries mainly by reputation and through reproduction"⁶. On the other hand, the MoMA sought to reactivate its relations with the Eastern European museums after the end of the Cold War.

3. Between New York and Paris: Arbitrating the Political Geography of the Eastern European Tour of *The Prints of Andy Warhol*

Since the MoMA did not collaborate closely with the Eastern European museums during the Cold War, it did not know for sure if the exhibition tour of *The Prints of Andy Warhol* would run smoothly or not. Considering this fact, the MoMA asked the embassies of Czechoslovakia, Poland, the German Democratic Republic, and Hungary to the U.S. and the U.S. embassies to these countries, respectively, to provide diplomatic assistance to the exhibition tour. MoMA's IP director Waldo Rasmussen was in touch with the Czechoslovak (Mr. Jiri Setlik⁷), Polish (Mr. Janusz Luks⁸), German (Mr. Norbert Kobuch⁹), and Hungarian (Mr. Bela Szombati¹⁰) cultural attachés to the U.S., while also looking for the approval of the exhibition on the part of the U.S. diplomats who were currently on the diplomatic mission to Eastern Europe.

To adapt MoMA's exhibition project to the broader U.S. national interests in the Eastern European countries, Rasmussen initiated correspondence with the U.S. embassies in Prague, Berlin, Budapest, and Warsaw. All four embassies approved of MoMA's project but refused to offer financial support due to the lack of budget. For example, Cultural Affairs Officer of the U.S. embassy in Prague Mark Wentworth wrote to Rasmussen that, given the budgetary pressures from Washington D.C., the embassy did not have "much in the way of discretionary funding to support projects of this type"¹¹. Similarly, Press and Culture Counselor for the U.S. Embassy in Berlin Jaroslav Verner lamented to Rasmussen that financial assistance was "just not in the cards"¹², whereas Cultural Attaché of the U.S. Embassy in Budapest Joao Escodi regretted to inform Rasmussen that the embassy due to stringent budgetary limitations did not provide any "monetary contributions to the local exhibitors"¹³. Intense contact between the MoMA and the concerned U.S. embassies on the eve of the exhibition tour revealed MoMA's lack of knowledge about Eastern European museology and the fear of contradiction of Warhol's show of prints with U.S. diplomatic goals in this, largely unknown to the MoMA, part of the world.

As the U.S. embassies to Prague, Berlin, Budapest, and Warsaw refused to finance *The Prints of Andy Warhol*, one may wonder where the financial support for the exhibition came from. Paradoxically enough, the main sponsor of the show was La Fondation Cartier. Most probably, the Foundation agreed to assist with MoMA's show because it needed

some comprehensive exhibition to brand itself as an emerging actor within the Parisian art community back in the early 1990s. In fact, La Fondation Cartier, founded in 1984, enjoyed the reputation of an innovative and powerful French private art institution, like La Fondation Louis Vuitton today, and juxtaposed itself against the rigid art agenda of French modern and contemporary museums, such as, first and foremost, Le Centre Pompidou. In reality, the Foundation did not care too much about where *The Prints of Andy Warhol* would travel after its opening show in Jouy-en-Josas. By financing MoMA's exhibition tour in Eastern Europe, La Fondation Cartier sought to justify its high cultural status among the leading French art institutions, as well as reveal its potential to build successful cultural partnerships in the international scene.

Irrespective of MoMA's and Cartier's interests in *The Prints of Andy Warhol*, the Eastern European museums expressed much interest in taking part in an exhibition project so unusual for this region. Indeed, potential collaboration with the MoMA under the patronage of the Cartier Foundation gave these museums additional visibility and credibility in the post-Cold War art world, while integrating them into the Western system of art exchange. The correspondence between the MoMA and the Eastern European museums about the organization of the exhibition tour was extremely smooth. IP's Senior Program Assistant Marion Kocot sent four identical letters to the heads of the Národní Galerie, the Staatliche Kunstsammlung Dresden, the Mücsarnok, and the Muzeum Narodowe on behalf of IP's director Waldo Rasmussen. Kocot's letter presented the exhibition as the MoMA–Cartier joint project to be traveled to Czechoslovakia, Germany, Hungary, and Poland¹⁴. In this letter, Kocot simply informed the four museums under consideration about the MoMA–Cartier exhibition project. The last paragraph of Kocot's letter reveals that the MoMA did not doubt that the Eastern European tour would take place. The two concluding sentences said the following:

“On behalf of Riva Castleman and Waldo Rasmussen, I would like to say that we are delighted to have the opportunity to circulate this exhibition in Central Europe and are grateful to the Cartier Foundation for making it possible. We hope that you will confirm your interest in presenting the exhibition, and look forward to hearing from you soon¹⁵.”

This passage written by Marion Kocot is curious for two reasons. On the one hand, she says that the MoMA was pleased to have the opportunity to organize the Eastern European exhibition tour with the support of the Cartier Foundation. On the other hand, she asked the Eastern European museums to confirm their interest in the project yet unknown to them. Whereas the first sentence creates an impression that the tour is a *fait accompli*, the second sentence, however, suggests that the Eastern European museums had read MoMA's exhibition proposal for the first time and had not approved of it so far. The ambiguity of Kocot's concluding paragraph also demonstrates one important thing: it confirms the MoMA's centrality in the Western-centric network of modern and contemporary art museums. It also implies that, when undertaking international projects, the MoMA, first and foremost, seeks to fulfill its own strategic interests: while involving new museums in initiatives that are unusual for them, the MoMA not only provides good opportunities for its partners but also expands its proper global sphere of influence.

In total, La Fondation Cartier offered USD 200,000 for the Eastern European tour of *The Prints of Andy Warhol*. The official agreement between the MoMA and the Foundation announced that the Foundation's grant should be used to cover the organizational costs as well as the exhibition tour expenses, including the initial assembly and the final dispersal of loans; mounting and framing; photography; packing, and administrative expenses¹⁶. In addition, the Foundation was responsible for paying all expenses related to the production of the bilingual English and French exhibition catalogue and the related costs of photography and photographic duplication, layout, printing, and translating. On top of that, the Foundation was obliged to pay the exhibition's curator Riva Castleman the authorship fee of USD 4000 for the text material present in the catalogue. The MoMA did not bear any exhibition costs. Its role was confined to the mere organization of the exhibition and its

tour. The participating museums, in turn, were expected to pay the installation and local publicity costs, as well as the expenses involved in printing the translation of the original catalogue text in their native languages¹⁷.

By and large, the overall scope of *The Prints of Andy Warhol* was rich and ample. The exhibition checklist consisted of 90 prints, 51 of which came from MoMA's permanent collection, and 39 were borrowed from U.S. and foreign lenders, including Leo Castelli, Ronald Feldman, Tyler David Freidenrich, Judith Goldberg, Hermann Wünsche, Michael and Irina Zivian, and The Andy Warhol Foundation, as well as anonymous lenders (Castleman 1990). Content-wise, the exhibit shed light on Warhol's entire career as printmaker from the early 1960s till the artist's death in 1987. Thus, the 1960s prints showcased Warhol's early printmaking works that were hand-printed, produced in small numbers, and not intended to be published as uniform limited editions. Meanwhile, the 1970s prints represented Warhol's works released in limited editions, signed, and numbered, whereas the 1980s prints demonstrated Warhol's departure from serial printmaking towards the production of unique edition prints. Thematically, Warhol's prints included in the exhibition were dedicated to the artist's experimentations with color and composition. Some prints depicted one subject in multiple variations, such as *Shadows* (1979) or *Vesuvius* (1985). This technique was typical of Warhol's earlier prints as well. Other prints represented serial compositions with close subject matters, like *Ten Jews of the Twentieth Century* (1980) or *Reigning Queens* (1985). Alongside the thematic focus, Warhol's technique of printmaking itself was another focus of attention in *The Prints of Andy Warhol*. In this respect, the show aimed to emphasize core principles that stood behind the Warhol-style printmaking. As art historian Donna de Salvo suggests, through his manipulations of the printing process, Warhol "achieved one of the more ingenious revenge fantasies, transforming the printed surface into a playground for his imagination and embedding a sense of himself within the commonplace" (De Salvo 1997, p. 29). Otherwise speaking, Warhol managed to transform the act of printmaking into a metaphor for America with "its capitalism, its abundance, its industry, and, most important, its simultaneous and contradictory desire for innovation and uniformity" (De Salvo 1997, p. 29).

The catalogue of *The Prints of Andy Warhol* that accompanied the exhibition contained 120 pages and was bilingual, written in French and English. As mentioned earlier, Eastern European countries were not allowed to make changes to the original form of the catalogue. However, they had a right to issue the supplement that provided the exact translation of the catalogue material into their native languages. In addition to reproductions, the catalogue included one critical essay written by the exhibition's curator Riva Castleman. In her essay, Castleman gave a historical overview of Warhol's experiments with printmaking. She explained how Warhol mastered the printmaking technique throughout his career and which contributions he made to the global history of printmaking. In Castleman's opinion, Warhol's principal motivation was to become famous and rich. Printmaking was an excellent tool that allowed him to fulfill this goal. According to Castleman, "because his early contribution to art was so original, so abrupt in its demand to make people change their minds about what art was, it was never possible to ignore him" (Castleman 1990), even though his work did not always command the most serious attention from art professionals. Castleman argued that Warhol's pop art was more appreciated in Europe than in the U.S. because it evoked for many Europeans "the vital bravado they found in American movies" (Castleman 1990). At the same time, not all of Warhol's prints were limited to the popular culture subject matter, as the artist distinguished between the subjects that had immediate and positive recognition among the public and the ones that had a more intricate identity and complex sociocultural effects.

4. American Pop Art through the Eyes of the Eastern European Publics

The Prints of Andy Warhol attracted many visitors in all the destinations where it traveled. The exhibition attendance numbers were the following¹⁸: 60,000 visitors in Paris¹⁹, 80,280 visitors in Prague²⁰, 65,000 visitors in Budapest²¹, and 36,482 visitors in

Dresden²². We can analyze the critical reception of the show by close reading the local press from France, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and Germany.

In France, the first destination of the exhibition tour, the press reacted unanimously well to the exhibition. The articles published in the French press announcing Warhol's show at La Fondation Cartier had one important feature in common: they talked less about the exhibition itself and more about Warhol's pop art as such. Interestingly enough, instead of providing essential information about MoMA's project, French journalists reflected on Warhol's artistic legacy in general and his printmaking technique in particular. For example, Otto Hahn wrote about Warhol in *L'Express* (undated): "What made him a genius? It was his recognition that art is merchandise that can be duplicated indefinitely"²³. Hahn went on by claiming that Warhol's main idea in printmaking was serigraphic enlargement, which made it possible to reproduce the reproduction instead of creating and reprinting an original image. Hahn pointed out that Warhol believed that art was duplication and had the potential to be repeated indefinitely. This idea is a clue towards understanding why Warhol's point of departure "was always a banal image rendered sublime by enlargement, degradation and effacement" (ibid.). Jeanine Baron, on her part, wrote in *La Croix* on 26 June 1990 that Warhol's repeated and duplicated images lost their individual identity and no longer made sense because of the technique of repetition and duplication. At the same time, she claimed that prints were Warhol's unique method of playing "a game of abstract signs" and protesting the saturation of the mediated images (ibid.). Baron argued that "Warhol the star, the social climber, the polemicist, the opportunist, the sulfurous, provocative personality had little effect on Warhol the artist, whose intuition enabled him to go beyond pop art and to celebrate the urban universe in his own way" (ibid.). Echoing Hahn and Baron, Gilles Le Morvan wrote in *L'Humanité* on 27 June 1990: "Was Warhol a commercial artist? No more so than was César or Mathieu" (ibid.). In Le Morvan's opinion, of all the 1960s artists, Warhol most brilliantly illustrated the idea of ready-mades introduced by Marcel Duchamp.

In Czechoslovakia, the second destination of the exhibition tour, the press also gave reassuring feedback on Warhol's exhibition at the Národní Galerie. The Czechoslovak press, although rich in content and positive in tone, had a completely different focus of attention. Czechoslovak journalists were concerned with two rather special things. Firstly, due to Warhol's Ruthenian ethnic background, they tried hard to establish the link between American modern art and Czechoslovak cultural heritage. In other words, they wanted to demonstrate the contribution of Czechoslovak culture to the development of American pop art. Secondly, reflecting upon the Cold War legacy, Czechoslovak journalists sought to emphasize the ideological importance of MoMA's show in their country. They celebrated the exhibition as a symbol of a new era in the U.S.–Czechoslovak post-Cold War cultural relations. Thus, Petr Vilhelm wrote in the *Tvorba* (undated) that Eastern Europeans liked Warhol's art because by looking at it they could "take refuge" from their own world "filled with incomprehension and multidimensional existence"²⁴. For Vilhelm, Warhol was a typically American artist because he, like all Americans, liked the feeling of confidence and certainty. In a typically American straightforward way, Warhol took concrete objects and converted them into myths, legends, cults, or symbols. His works showed the essence of American post-war art that did not "disturb with hidden and suggestive meanings and plots" and was, therefore, "finished and complete" (ibid.). At the same time, from Vilhelm's standpoint, Warhol had some non-American features in his art. For example, through a close contact with his mother, he scrupulously adhered to the Ruthenian customs, like local folklore, language, or the Greco–Catholic religion. Warhol's immigrant background made him the "Byzantine American" who was "oscillating between the world of the bible and business" (ibid.).

Pavel Stratovsky of the *Pravo Lidu* shared Vilhelm's argument about the importance of Warhol's Czechoslovak background to his art. Stratovsky wrote on 13 September 1990: "Warhol conquered the United States, but not Czechoslovakia. In our country, as it was the custom, the success of ex-patriots was never allowed to be discussed" (ibid.). For

Stratovsky, such negligence led to the fact that only a few Czechoslovak artists and art historians became interested in his work. Stratovsky also wondered why Warhol had never visited the country of his ancestors and did not promote his art there. Contrary to Vilhelm and Stratovsky, Peter Kovac raised the issue of the political value of Warhol's art and the Prague exhibition. Reporting for the *Rude Pravo* on 28 September 1990, he suggested that, in Warhol's pop art, "even politics was drawn into American art, after the long period of the non-ideological Abstract Expressionism" (ibid.). Although Kovac's argument about abstract expressionism being apolitical could be judged as highly debatable, his whole sentence attributed a clear ideological value to Warhol's art and placed the Prague exhibition in the more global political context of the twentieth century. When summing up his article, Kovac noticed: "Some people will come to see the exhibition because it is from the United States, and others will come because Warhol is the idol of the Czech underground. But I prefer those visitors who will come to look first of all for good art" (ibid.).

In Germany, the third destination of the exhibition tour, the press reacted moderately well to Warhol's exhibition at the Kunstsammlung Dresden. The Eastern German press was neutral about the show and the artist: it did not express either positive or negative attitudes regarding the event. Most probably, the Eastern German public did not understand the Warhol exhibition emotionally because the country was undergoing fundamental political transformations after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Consequently, the Eastern German press did not offer much of a critical take on Warhol's show either. It, rather, provided its readers with the factual description of the exhibition, Warhol's biography, and the fundamentals of pop art. For example, Jens-Uwe Sommerschuh wrote in the December 1990 issue of the *SAX*: "Much has been written about Andy Warhol, but one should not be deceived by these writings. He was a hard-working aesthete. . . He was neither a visionary nor a genius"²⁵. Henrik Wels, in turn, reflected in the December 1990 issue of the *Dresdner* about the political function of Warhol's pop art by comparing Warhol's philosophy with the ideas of the German writer Bertolt Brecht. He suggested:

"As Warhol expressed it: "Brecht wanted everyone to think alike and I, too, would like everyone to think alike." But Brecht was thinking specifically of Communism. The Russian government achieved this by force. But here we have achieved the same result without any pressure from the government. Everybody looks the same and behaves the same way and that is how we seem to be developing" (ibid.).

As we can see, Wels cites Warhol's quote about Brecht and develops an argument about the ideological value of Warhol's pop art based on this quote. Through such a subtle stylistic method, Wels distances himself from the event about which he writes and demonstrates his reluctance to come to one specific conclusion about the significance of Warhol's show.

In Hungary, the fourth destination of the exhibition tour, the press wrote many positive articles about the exhibition and Warhol. The Hungarian press had one feature in common in their reporting on MoMA's Warhol project: they not only provided excellent historical accounts of Warhol's artistic legacy but also motivated their readers to go to the Műcsarnok Museum and see the exhibition. No media outlets in other countries of the Eastern European tour of the exhibition directly presented *The Prints of Andy Warhol* as an appealing cultural event worth visiting. Thus, Andras Kenessey wrote in the *Sajtófigyelo* (undated): "Nobody would contradict me if I said that, for us as well as for contemporary art, this show was at least fifteen years late"²⁶. With this phrase, Kenessey meant that Warhol's one-man shows had already been organized in Western Europe long before MoMA's Warhol shows of 1989 and 1990. Kenessey referred here to the 1970–1971 *Warhol* retrospective of paintings organized by the Pasadena Art Museum and the 1976–1977 *Warhol* retrospective of prints organized by the Kunstverein Stuttgart. Yet, in Kenessey's opinion, *The Prints of Andy Warhol* was an important exhibition because the Hungarian public had an opportunity for the first time ever to enjoy Warhol's art by looking at the originals rather than reproductions.

Similar to Kenessey, Marta Harangozo argued: “This exhibition made the tour of Europe and finally arrived here for us to meet with a really American art of an artist who created from the fallen-apart and composed from the lost-in-detail life” (ibid.). For Harangozo, this exhibition was a “miracle” because Warhol, besides having Eastern European roots, was a highly intellectual artist, “our contemporary yesterday” and “our messenger tomorrow” (ibid.). Marianna Mayer, like Kenessey and Harangozo, pointed out at the symbolical meaning of Warhol’s exhibition at the Műcsarnok. From her perspective, Warhol was one of few artists, among Brassai, Christo, Capa, Vasarely, and Tzara, who put the Eastern European region on the Western art historical map. In her article, Mayer circulated curious information about the opening of the Warhol show in Budapest. She wrote the following:

“Now, at last, for the first time in Hungary, we have a show in the Budapest Palace of Exhibitions, of the serigraphs of Andrew Warhola, pope of pop-art [...]. He fulfilled his childhood desire: he became famous in his life and almost a myth after his death. Proof of this is the fact that the Hungarians, who seldom go to art shows, filled the Palace of Exhibitions in the Heroes’ Square at the opening on February 13 (and days after that), driven by curiosity, snobbism or real interest to see this cross-section of Warhol’s œuvre; they buy the cheap ticket, and the wealthier also buy the expensive, handsome catalogue, the calendar illustrated by Warhol, the postcards and posters. Pop art makes its entrance—thirty years late—into the Hungarian homes (ibid.).”

Mayer’s reportage is a unique account of the Hungarian public sentiment towards the show. It reveals important information about how Hungarians perceived the exhibition and which feelings they experienced about it. At the same time, Mayer exaggerates when she says that, with this exhibition, Warhol’s pop art “makes its entrance into the Hungarian homes”. This exhibition was indeed Warhol’s first one-man show in Hungary. Nevertheless, the Hungarian public had become acquainted with pop art as an artistic movement long before *The Prints of Andy Warhol*. Among others, Hungarian pop artists, like Laszlo Lakner, Gyorgy Kemeny, Imre Bak, Endre Tot, Sandor Altorjai, Gyorgy Jovanovics, and Sandor Pinczehelyi, had developed their own appropriated versions of pop art already back in the 1960s (Feher 2016) and the 1970s (Timar 2002).

In Poland, the fifth and last destination of the exhibition tour, the press chose a strategy of laconic reporting on Warhol’s exhibition at the Muzeum Narodowe in Warsaw. On the one hand, some Polish newspapers published short editorials about the exhibition. The *Kurier Polski* reported on 25 June 1991: “WARHOL FOR THE DOG DAYS OF SUMMER—The plastic impression left by the ending artistic season—the retrospective exhibition of the prints by Andy Warhol we can attribute to a certain extent to his... Slavic ancestry”²⁷. In addition, the *Slowo Powszechne* wrote on 19 June 1991: “THE PRINTS OF ANDY WARHOL—Andy Warhol outshone more than one film star in the United States with his fame and popularity” (ibid.). The *Zycie Warszawy*, in turn, announced on 18 June 1991: “WARHOL SUPERSTAR—The first Andy Warhol (1928–1987) exhibition in Warsaw opened on the 17th of this month in the galleries of the Muzeum Narodowe and transcends the normal format of the season” (ibid.). On the one hand, several other Polish newspapers published rather brief authored articles about the exhibition. The *Rzeczpospolita*, above all, published on 18 June 1991 the article by Janusz Kowalczyk that presented Warhol’s retrospective of prints as an exhibition of the “well-known Campbell’s soups cans” and some other “lesser-known” Warhol’s artworks (ibid.). The *Polska Zbrojna*, on its part, published on 18 June 1991 the article by Maria Wollenberg-Kluza that presented the Warhol exhibition as a unique show revealing “the creative path” of the “King of Pop Art” (ibid.).

5. Conclusions

All in all, *The Prints of Andy Warhol* was Warhol’s first one-man show that traveled to the geographical region where the artist’s family had been historically from. In the context of the social reforms that embraced Eastern Europe in 1985–1993 (Arnoux 2020;

Chmielewska et al. 2023; Esanu 2021; Galliera 2017; Kemp-Welch 2017), it proposed to America's new allies an attractive form of transatlantic cultural cooperation under the new international world order. Despite being a target of the U.S. policy of cultural domination (Guilbaut 1983), from the Eastern European perspective the exhibition was nevertheless regarded as a “window on an unfamiliar world” and a “sort of liberation from socialist realism”, thus going together with the idea of the “mythologization of the West as the utopia of freedom” (Bazin et al. 2015, p. 17). In addition, *The Prints of Andy Warhol* had a mission to spread American cultural values to the newly opened region and close the cultural gap between the artistic tastes of the Western and Eastern European publics that had long stayed on the two opposite sides of the Iron Curtain and had suffered from the lack of comprehensive transatlantic cultural exchange programs. In this respect, the exhibition contributed to the subsequent development of local narratives of pop art in Eastern Europe, with Katalin Keseru's *Variations on Pop Art* (Keseru 1993) and Sirje Helme's *Popkunst Forever* (Helme 2010) being the two most successful attempts to “delineate a local version of Pop Art” (Feher 2015, p. 123) in the post-Communist Hungary and Estonia, respectively.

In addition to creating awareness about American pop art in the region of Eastern Europe, *The Prints of Andy Warhol* brought direct benefits to the MoMA itself. The exhibition laid the foundations for MoMA's future collaboration with the Eastern European art museums in the post-Communist era. In the aftermath of this exhibition, the MoMA began sending some of its traveling shows to the select countries of Eastern Europe. For example, the museum organized a remarkable *Mutant Materials in Contemporary Design* exhibition at the National Gallery in Prague in 1996 and the *Cindy Sherman* retrospective at the Ludwig Museum in Budapest in 1998. Moreover, the MoMA intensified collaboration with Eastern German art museums. In 1991–2004, Berlin became one of the most popular destinations for MoMA's traveling shows. Thus, in 1995, the museum showed the *American Photography from MoMA* at the Kunstbibliothek Berlin and the *Cy Twombly* retrospective at the Nationalgalerie Berlin; in 2002, it organized the *Mies van der Rohe* show at the Altes Museum Berlin; and in 2004, it mounted the *Masterworks from the Museum of Modern Art* exhibition at the Neue Nationalgalerie Berlin, which was, quite symbolically, the very last event on the agenda of MoMA's Cold-War-style IP that ran actively from 1951 to 2004 (Kimmelman 1994). Since 2004, instead of organizing international shows, MoMA's IP has been devoted to connecting the MoMA to an international network of artists, scholars, and institutions. In the words of MoMA's IP current director Jay Levenson, “while the traveling exhibition program was a remarkable success, over time it began to seem like a less effective way of reaching the parts of the world that had been the special interest of the IP—the countries outside of North America and Western Europe that were not as well connected to the international museum scene” (Horschak 2010). As part of the Contemporary and Modern Art Perspectives (C-MAP) research program, MoMA's IP has published an anthology on modern and contemporary art and theory from the region (Janevski et al. 2018) and has undertaken several staff exchange initiatives with art professionals from Eastern Europe in multiple areas, including curatorial, conservation, registration, exhibitions, and archives.

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Notes

- ¹ Jach Przemek, Letter to Andy Warhol, 14 March 1980, The Andy Warhol Museum Archives, Pittsburgh.
- ² The photos of *The Prints of Andy Warhol* exhibition are available for consultation in the MoMA Archives Image Database (MAID). Available online: maid.moma.org/#/list?searchTitle=the%20prints%20of%20andy%20warhol (accessed on 1 November 2023).
- ³ Press Release, 1 April 1954, Press Release Archives, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. Available online: www.moma.org/shared/pdfs/docs/press_archives/1815/releases/MOMA_1954_0036_35.pdf (accessed on 1 November 2023).

- 4 Press Release, 6 December 1962, Press Release Archives, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Available online: www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/press_archives/3084/releases/MOMA_1962_0143_138.pdf (accessed on 1 November 2023).
- 5 Alfred Barr, Letter to Andy Warhol, 18 October 1956, Reprinted in Comenas (2014).
- 6 Press release, 2 May 1990, Press Release Archives, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. Available online: www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/press_archives/6765/releases/MOMA_1990_0016_16.pdf (accessed on 1 November 2023).
- 7 Waldo Rasmussen, Letter to Jiri Setlik, 18 July 1990, International Council and International Program Records, I.A.4142, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
- 8 Waldo Rasmussen, Letter to Janusz Luks, 18 July 1990, International Council and International Program Records, Folder I.A.4144, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
- 9 Waldo Rasmussen, Letter to Norbert Kobuch, 18 July 1990, International Council and International Program Records, Folder I.A.4143, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
- 10 Waldo Rasmussen, Letter to Bela Szombati, 18 July 1990, International Council and International Program Records, Folder I.A.4143, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
- 11 Mark Wenworth, Letter to Waldo Rasmussen, 20 July 1990, International Council and International Program Records, I.A.4143, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
- 12 Jaroslav Verner, Letter to Waldo Rasmussen, 11 July 1990, International Council and International Program Records, I.A.4143, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
- 13 Joao Escodi, Letter to Waldo Rasmussen, 20 July 1990, International Council and International Program Records, I.A.4143, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
- 14 Marion Kocot, Letter to Jiri Kotalik, 17 May 1989, International Council and International Program Records, I.A.4142, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
- 15 Marion Kocot, Letter to Werner Schmidt, 22 June 1989, International Council and International Program Records, I.A.4143, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
- 16 Agreement Between the MoMA and la Fondation Cartier, Undated, International Council and International Program Records, I.A.4150, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
- 17 Waldo Rasmussen, Letter to Jiri Setlik, 18 July 1990.
- 18 The exhibition attendance numbers in Warsaw are lacking from the archives.
- 19 Publicity Report, Undated, International Council and International Program Records, I.A.4177, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
- 20 Publicity Report, 25 January 1991, International Council and International Program Records, I.A.4181, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
- 21 Publicity Report, 8 April 1991, International Council and International Program Records, I.A.4183, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
- 22 Publicity Report, Undated, International Council and International Program Records, I.A.4157, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
- 23 Press Clippings, International Council and International Program Records, I.A.4177, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
- 24 Press Clippings, International Council and International Program Records, I.A.4181, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
- 25 Press Clippings, International Council and International Program Records, I.A.4157, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
- 26 Press Clippings, International Council and International Program Records, I.A.4183, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
- 27 Press Clippings, International Council and International Program Records, I.A.4158, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

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