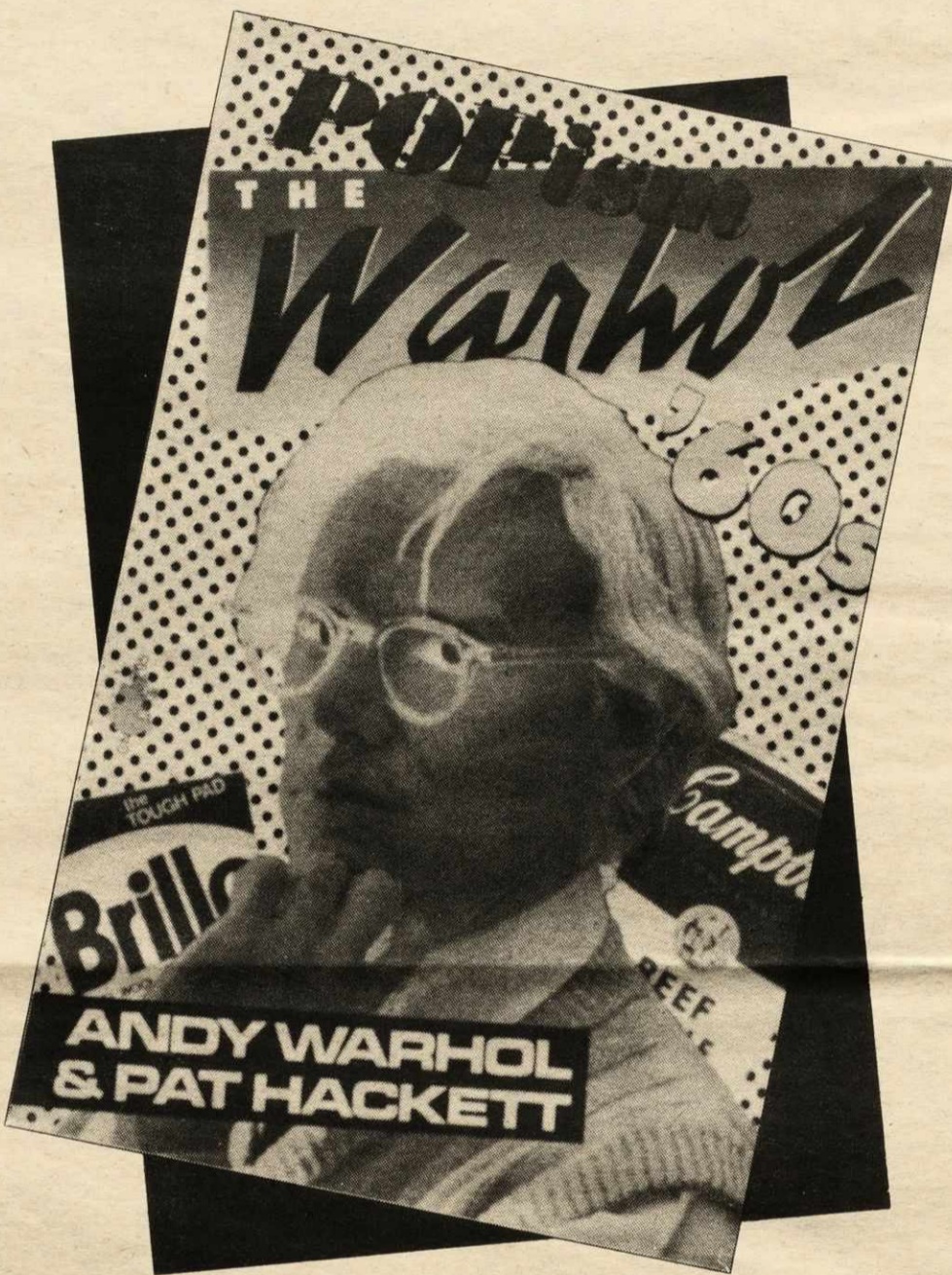


Andy Warhol: what the 60's were really like



Popism—the Warhol Sixties
by Andy Warhol and Pat Hackett

Review by R. F. MacDonald

By now, any dispute as to the legitimacy of Andy Warhol's art is as pointless as his art itself. Warhol's status as a pivotal figure who initiated a certain attitude towards art and life is confirmed in this chatty and delightful book. *Popism* consists of practically no theory, no moralizing, and no pedantics; rather, it is made up of the essence of what everybody really wants. Yes, who went to what parties with whom and when.

It all starts ever so innocently. Our hero Andy is a struggling artist working in advertising while churning out sub-abstract expressionist canvases. We get a fairly intimate look at the New York art scene in the very early sixties just as pop art rears its silly head. Then, of course, Warhol becomes its foremost practitioner.

The fun really starts when Andy decides to reduce everyday life to "Pop" standards. Everyone becomes famous for fifteen minutes, and they are all well-represented in this memoir.

To go any further would require a short dispensation upon "Pop" and all its niceties. We are sent running to Susan Sontag who managed to launch a career defining this mess in "Against Interpretation":

"The way of Camp, is not in terms of beauty, but in terms of the degree of artifice, of stylization."

I wish I had said that, but we all can't be purveyors of trash culture, can we? Perhaps another quote will help, this one from *Popism*:

Back to the book. It's compulsively readable so it really rips along. There's lots of people who

were famous for something that no-one seems to remember the reasons why, and they're all here in *Popism*.

If you want to know what the sixties were really like, read this. Then again, if you want to know just how trashy Western society is read this book.

"Show business kids fascinated me even more. I mean, Judy Garland grew up on the MGM lot! To meet a person like Judy whose real was so unreal was a thrilling thing. She could turn everything on and off in a second."

Hey, ever see "Meet Me in St. Louis"? Aren't you lucky.

What we're dealing with here is a complete stylization of life itself (ever wonder where the word "lifestyle" came from?). In some ways "Pop" was a reaction to the overly profound exigency of the fifties; you know, existentialism, abstract expressionism, the bomb, etc.

The solution was to reduce everything to absolute frivolity. The everyday became elevated, redundancy became important and the mass market delivered *Objets d'art*. Ahh, those were the days.

These days Andy Warhol does celebrity portraits (saw him in the daily with Wayne Gretsky recently). He doesn't need to trivialize so fervently any more because the mass media does it for him.

It is the ultimate in democracy, everything can be understood instantly while everyone is famous, at least for a while.

Sycophants are everywhere, in every sector—our Prime Minister, the "National Enquirer", Norman Mailer—who not only trivialize but have vulgarized the legitimate and legitimized the vulgar. The list goes on and on.

Lunch with the artist/clown: Jim MacSwain

by Chris Armstrong

This Friday's **Lunch With Art** presentation at the St. Mary's art gallery was a unique multi-media production by local artist and performer **Jim MacSwain**.

With film, clowning, and pre-taped narration, Jim constructed a show that was nothing if not eclectic. If I had to pinpoint some sort of unifying element, I would have to say that the theme of the show was . . . Jim MacSwain.

Now, in many cases, the artistic/autobiographical attempt just degenerates into a sort of self-satisfied back-patting session, which is about as fun to watch as Muscle Beach. However, the things Jim had to say in his show were universal, at least to anyone who has found themselves questioning any of the more repressive conservatisms of Maritime society.

Through film and dramatic narration, the audience glimpsed the roots of Jim-the-artist and Jim-the-clown in staid, hardwork-

ing Amherst. From this solid, respectable breeding ground of solid, respectable citizens had come . . . what? A radical 'urban renewer', who, during the course of Friday's performance, proposed to carve Maritime Mall down to 3 stories and paint it with vines after excavating its sterile concrete courtyard to produce a more hospitable park-like setting.

Yes, out of beautiful Amherst, built on the bellies of starving third-world children (maybe his political imagery was a little excessive), came that same maniac who recommended the speedy removal of the Sebastopol monument, ubiquitous guardian of lower Barrington -- calling it an eyesore -- that same berserk crusader for beautification who detailed his horticultural plans for the area while potting a plant on stage as Jim-the-clown.

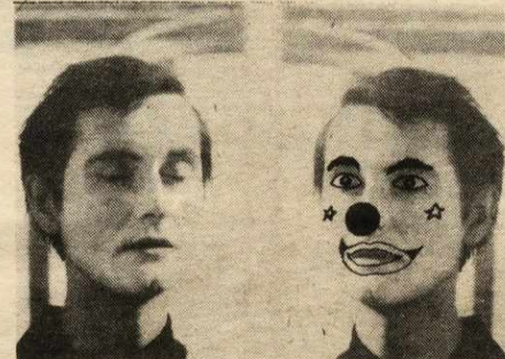
But don't go away yet, the CBC has just started to roll the cameras as Jim-the-clown roams

around the gallery, pinning 'first prize' ribbons next to many of the paintings, while a tape of Jim-the-artist's voice details with Leacockian humour a story familiar to many Canadian artists -- a tale of woe and rejected Canada Council grant proposals that might aptly have been titled 'My Artistic Career'.

The career of James MacSwain has been by no means uninteresting. He has worked in a wide range of media, from painting and ceramics to puppets and film. Nor were all of the grant proposals rejected. Jim admits to a 50-50 record in that arena, having gained funding for such projects as "The Popular Walking Tour" and the "Shadow and Puppet Show" in Goosebay, Labrador.

It is by no means unusual for strange things to be happening at the SMU art gallery at around 12:30 on most Fridays.

Last year's **Lunch With Art** season saw humorous skits, mime, puppets, reggae and classical per-



formances come to the gallery, and the 1984 season promises no less. On February 3rd, traditional music from two very different cultures will be presented by John Galloway and Mary Innes. January 27th is lunchtime theatre, with Noel Coward sketches by the SMU dramatic society. And if you're looking for a noontime break this Friday, the gallery will be hosting two of New York's finest -- namely, the cello and piano duet of Daniel Steinitz and Gary Portadin. They come fresh from a series of three recitals in

New York, where they were greeted with general acclaim and standing-room only audiences. Definitely a concert not to be missed.

As if all this weren't enough, the **Lunch With Art** future holds performances by songwriter/guitarist **Rick Sheppard** and a *cappella* singing group **Four the Moment**. And if you want to keep track of all this wonderful free entertainment, CKDU Dal Radio will be announcing every performance in advance, so stay tuned.