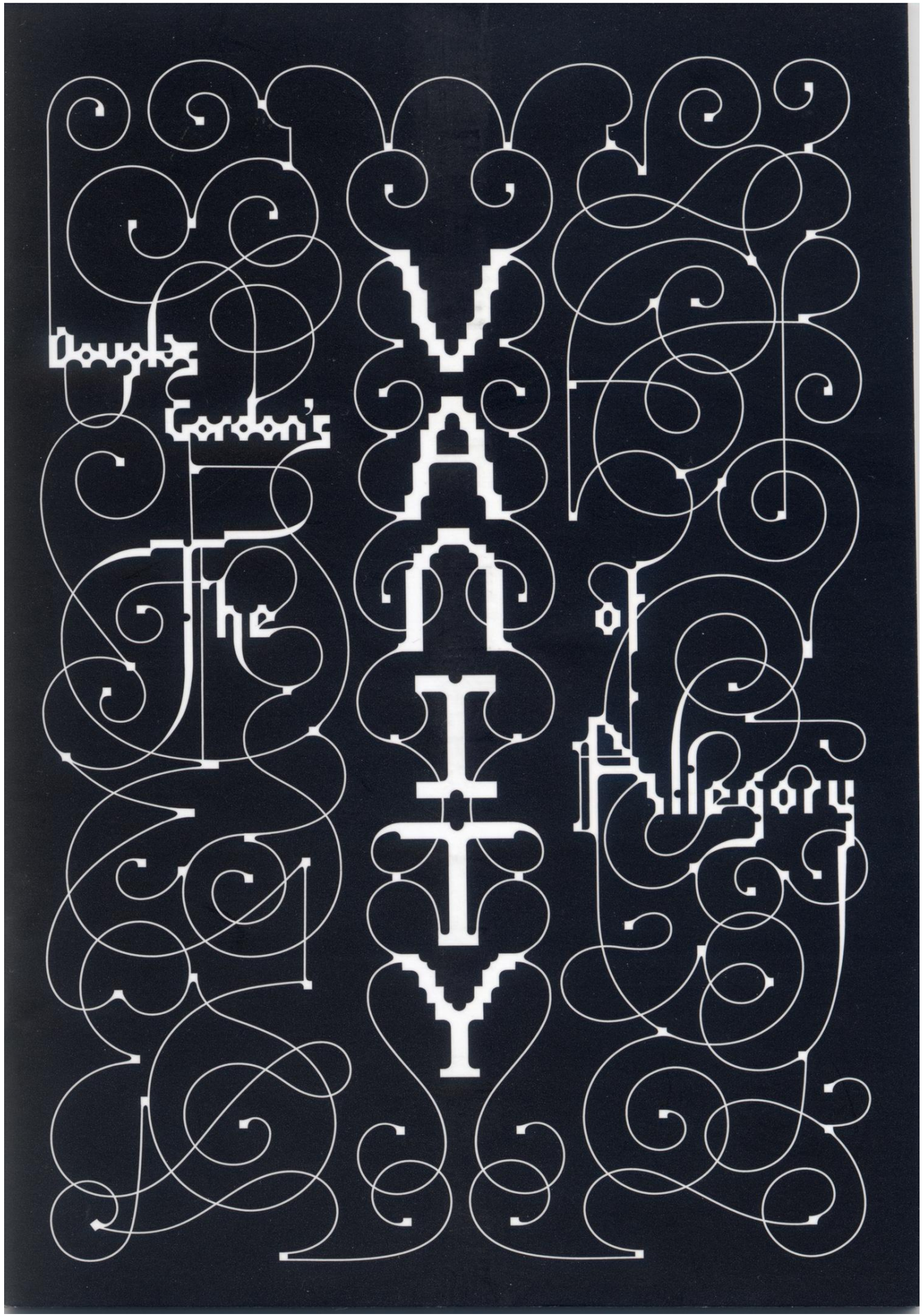


Douglas Gordon's *The Vanity Allegory* (Exibition Checklist), Deutsche Guggenheim, 2005

The Vanity of Allegory also features "Fragile hands collapse under pressure" (1999), which is a byproduct of a special project for which you commissioned a wax effigy of yourself from the Musée Grévin in Paris. Since 1999, you've been taking photographs of yourself alongside your wax double every year on the same day. Could you tell us more about this project? What actually happened to the hands?

It's a project I'm doing with my gallery in Paris, Yvon Lambert . I told Yvon that I wanted a wax model, and he said, let's go to the Musée Grévin and have their people do it. It's meant as a very straight reversal quotation of Oscar Wilde , where Dorian Gray can live life with no change because the painting takes everything. As soon as I started this project, things started happening to me. I fell, and now I have this scar on my head; I had an operation on my back; I have another scar here [points at his cheek]. I kept falling down. So: the wax figure is flawless, while I'm the one being ravished – the exact opposite of the Dorian Grey thing.

Douglas Gordon, Fragile Hans Collapse under Pressure, 1999

So, to document this, you have your picture taken every year?

I'm supposed to do this. Let's say: yes, it's good for the idea.

And what about the hand?

Well, there are others. But this one in the show is the "fragile hand."

Which fell off?

No, it didn't even go on. What they do is this: they use a sculptor to form the head, but the hands are made with a cast. It's a weird and nice thing: for the head they take an artist, so it's an interpretation. The hands are casts so realistic that they even have your fingerprints on them. It's kind of bizarre. So when I had my hands done, they said, oh, Mister Gordon, we're sorry, your hands were so fragile that they collapsed under pressure [looks at his rather big hands]. They don't look very fragile to me [laughs]. So I kind of liked the joke. But, you know, the first finger to fall off was my ring finger, which happened just as I was having this break-up with my girlfriend. I like to read this as a sign. But then the next finger will be this one [holds up his little finger], so the hand will be like this [makes a blessing gesture]. Pax. It's the nearest I get to the Pope, when my pinky finger falls off.


EARTH TO EARTH
ASHES TO ASHES
DUST TO DUST

EARTH TO EARTH

ASHES TO ASHES

DUST TO DUST

HERE IS A WORK that enacts the core concepts of the *vanitas* tradition—it is shaped from the humble materials it names. Discussing the still-life genre, the critic Norman Bryson observes that in the Reformation, "access to the transcendent is exactly blocked and prevented: transcendental truth does not belong to the realm of the visible; it cannot be simply pictured." He goes on to say, "The constative statement 'all is vanity' can only be performed by an image which, paradoxically, is itself a vanity, a bauble … the sacred can only be glimpsed—through a glass darkly—through the medium of a fallen world."

The phrase in Lawrence Weiner's work has its roots in the *Genesis* account of the fall of Adam and Eve. But the specific words come from the funeral rite in *The Book of Common Prayer*, which commends the dead to burial "in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ." Weiner may have a similar optimism, as his works have survived various incarnations in different mediums.

Do you know the story of Perugino?
Well yes, it's said to be a disguised self-portrait of the painter.

That's one story, but there's a new story: it's a fake. If you look at the image in the exhibition, it's the mirrored image of the real thing. That's the key: the original Perugino, which is not even here, is the main work in the show. At first it was a problem not to have the original in the show, and we had to find a solution. Then I was happy the problem arose, because the solution, I think, is even more poetic than the real thing. Now, when people look in the mirror of the cinema at Deutsche Guggenheim, they can see it somewhere in the distance like a mirage of a fake. With a mirage of a fake, you know: when you take two negatives, it makes up something like a positive, you could almost believe that the real thing is somewhere in the ether. So that was the keystone work. And then, in a practical sense, I was very near Nancy Spector's office, so I would pop up and we would chat and she would make some suggestions and I would make some suggestions. And so, slowly but surely we pulled the exhibition together

ONE OF SEVERAL portraits of St. Sebastian by Perugino, the version at the Hermitage is remarkable for the artist's signature on the arrow piercing the saint's neck. St. Sebastian, looking up to heaven, is supremely unconcerned by this attack. And the image is more concerned with the saint's sensuality than his suffering, making it worthy of the tradition that portrays Sebastian as a gay icon.

It's less well known that this saint was also linked to the Black Death, which was symbolized by arrows in the early Renaissance. Such a combination of allusions gave Sebastian new significance in the 1980s with the emergence of AIDS and its devastating impact on the gay community.

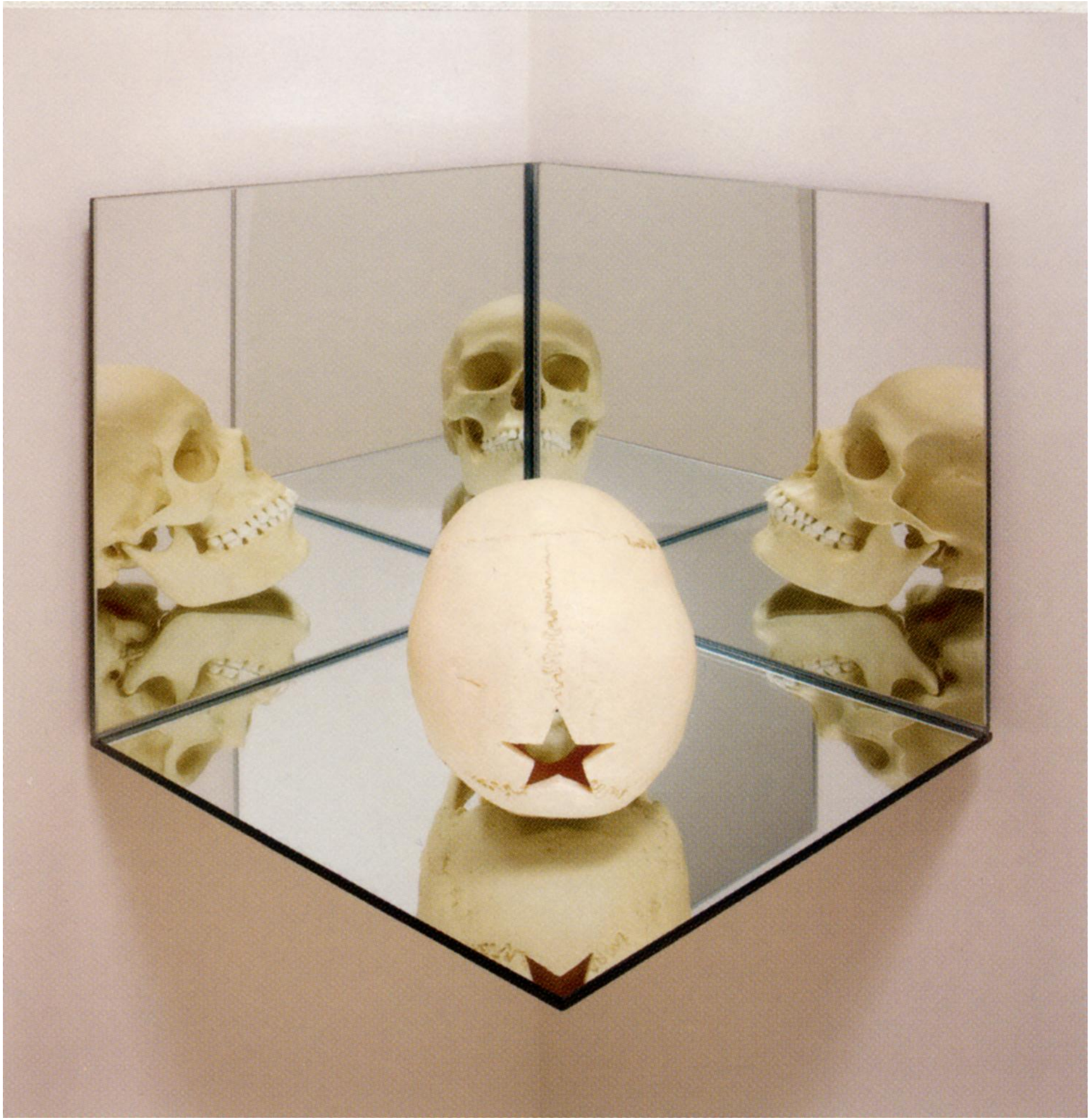
The signature on the arrow–"Petrus Perusinus pinxit"–could be an allusion to the story that Perugino survived the plague early in his life. The arrow goes much further, though, to become a blatant assertion of the artist's power to create and control an image. The painter executes this image ambiguously, using an instrument of death as the vehicle for perpetuating his name. As an artist whose frescoes in the Sistine Chapel were painted over to make way for Michelangelo, Perugino knew well the fragility of reputation.

Your work "Proposal for a Posthumous Portrait" (2004) seems quite morbid. It shows a carved skull embedded in a mirrored case. At the same time, it refers to a classical Vanitas motif. What fascinates you about the transitoriness of being?

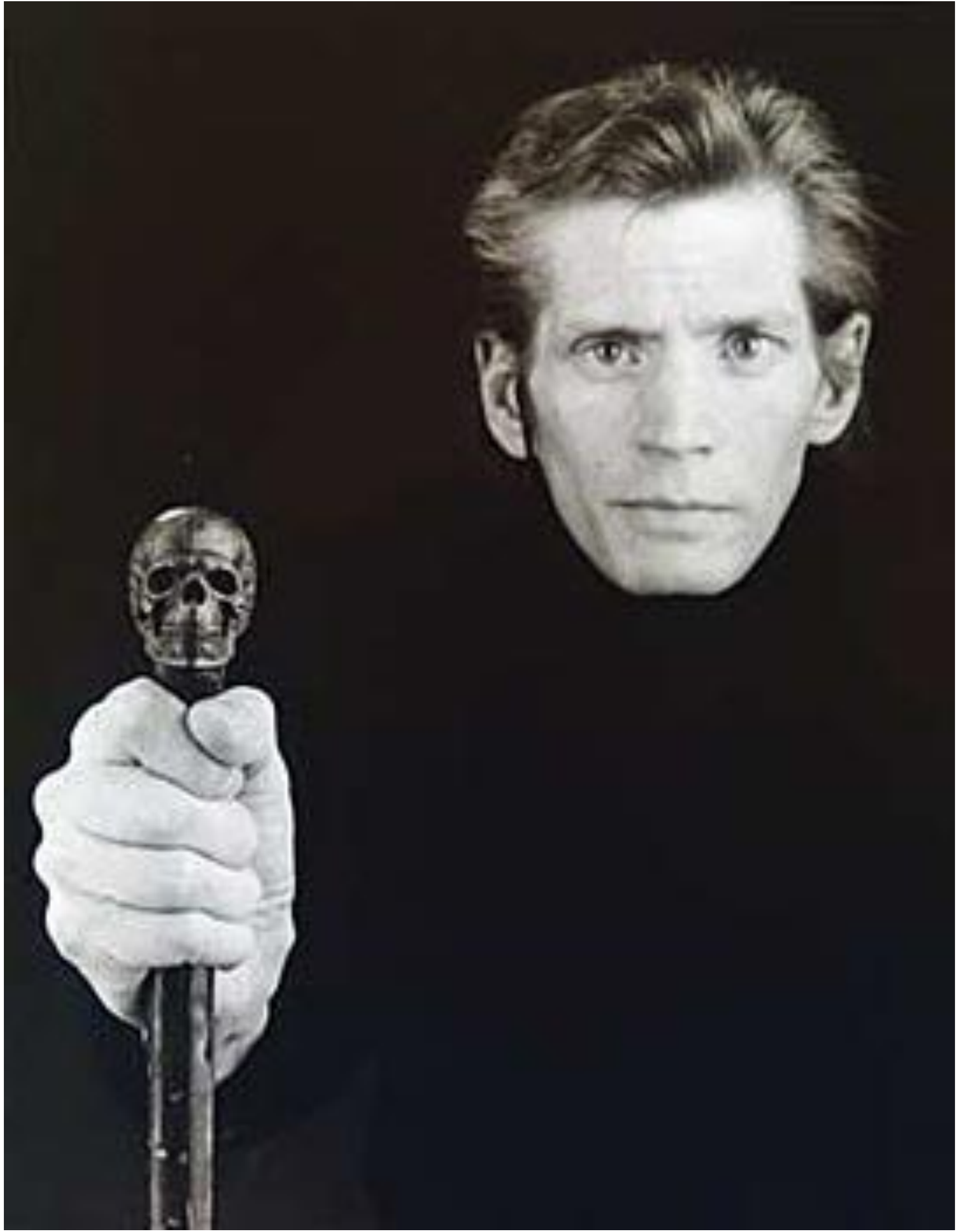
If you think that's morbid, you should see some of the other things [laughs]. The ***Proposal for a Posthumous Portrait*** is a reference not only to Vanitas, but to Duchamp . Because the star carved in the back of the head is measured exactly from the photographs of Marcel Duchamp with the star-shaped tonsure. There's another piece that's not in the show – we discussed it, and came to the conclusion that it would make a very different type of show. It involves buying a skull, a real one, for every year of my life, 38 in all, and making a trepanation into the skull, one star shape for each year. The first one would have one, the second two, the third three, and so on. And by the time I'm fifty years old, it will become very difficult to have a skull with fifty stars. Imagine, when I get to be an old man and I'm very fragile, then my little birthday present to myself is going to be extremely fragile. So you could say that my interest in defeating death is inevitably some kind of vanity.

ART FROM NECESSITY. Marcel Duchamp first seems to have shaved his head in 1919, in Buenos Aires as part of a treatment to counteract hair loss. The act, however, is too laden with meaning for someone like Duchamp to ignore its potential. What might have been a treatment for baldness quickly became the occasion for a series of collaborative portrait-photographs of the artist by his friend Man Ray. "Collusion" may be a better word than "collaboration," but even here the deliberate confusion begins: the photographs are attributed to Man Ray, but there is a clear preparation of the self that must be credited to Duchamp as he assumes a series of identities.

It is fitting that this *Tonsure* captures one of Duchamp's first physical transformations or aliases, since the act of shaving the head to create a tonsure was a rite that marked the layman's entrance to the clerical world. It's thought that the tonsure had its origins in the Ancient Roman custom of shaving the heads of slaves, which was adopted by monks to demonstrate their obedience to Christ. It signifies the shedding of all worldly loyalties.



[redacted] MUMMY DUST TO make me old. To shroud my clothes, the black of night. To age my voice, an old hag's cackle. To whiten my hair, a scream of fright. A blast of wind to fan my hate. A thunderbolt to mix it well. Now begin thy magic spell.



ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE WAS to die from AIDS only a year after this self-portrait was made. The image's composition–the photographer's disembodied face floating in black space, mirroring the small skull that leads him forward–suggests he is possessed by death already.

Susan Sontag wrote, "I once asked Mapplethorpe what he does with himself when he poses for the camera, and he replied that he tries to find that part of himself that is self-confident." There is bravado in his self-portraits–loose happiness in the earlier images, complex honesty in his sadomasochistic poses, and theatricality in all of them. In this image, the traces of illness and their toll on the photographer's flesh are visible. But there is also defiant energy, a youthful curiosity confronting the gloom. It is Mapplethorpe's insistence on looking that gives this photograph its power.

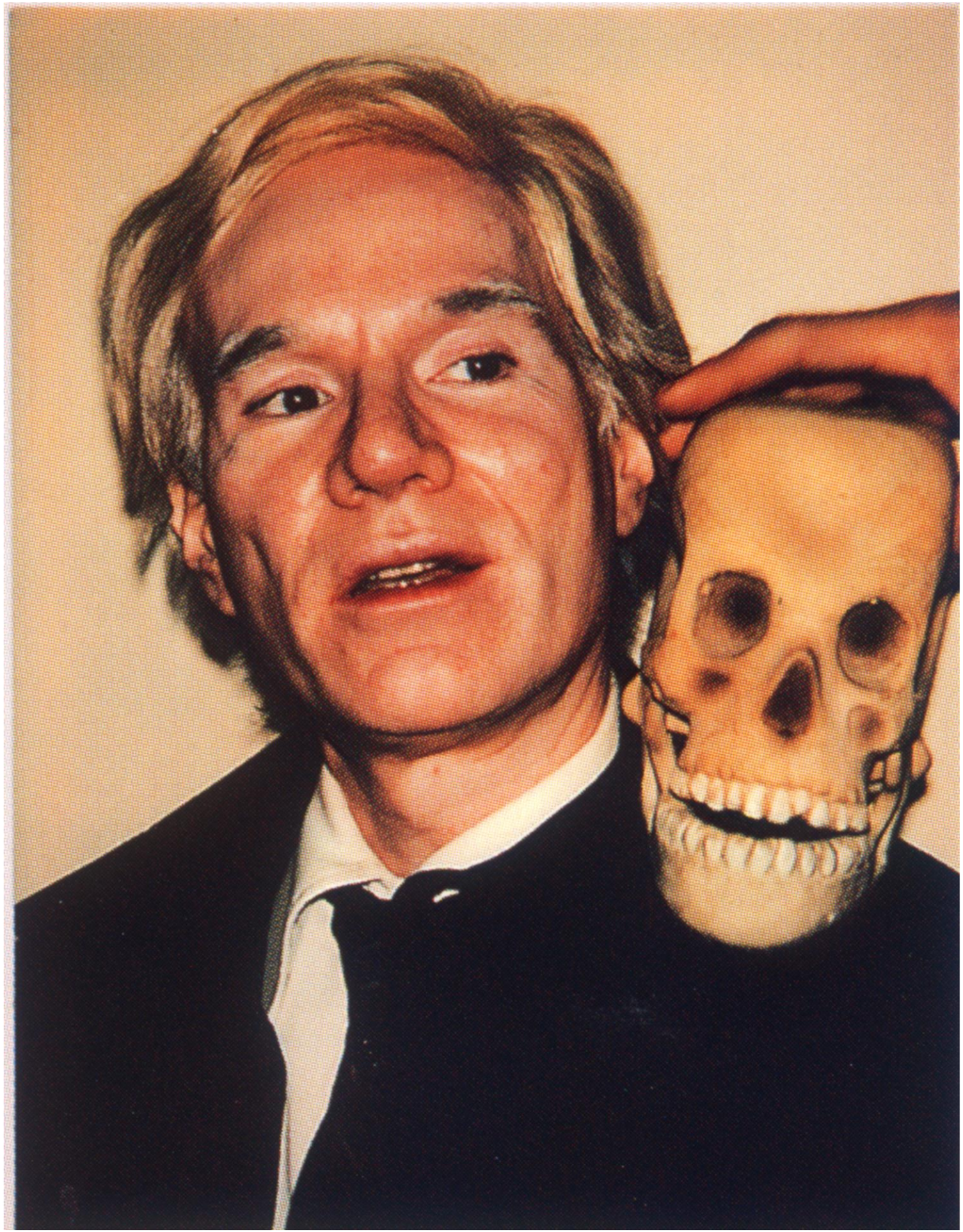
VANITY OF VANITIES, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all *is* vanity.... The thing that hath been, it *is that* which shall be; and that which is done *is* that which shall be done: and *there is* no new *thing* under the sun.... *There is* no remembrance of former *things*; neither shall there be *any* remembrance of *things* that are to come with *those* that shall come after. Ecclesiastes 1: 2–11

Man that is born of a woman *is* of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. Job 14: 1-2

For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away. I Peter 1:24

We're sailin', sailin', sailin' sailin'
Down a black, black river
And I plunge right in
And I plunge right in

Patti Smith, "Godspeed"



THERE IS A MORE oblique gloss on drag in this image of Warhol with a grinning skull on his shoulder. Dressed in a suit, shirt, and tie, the artist toys with self-portraiture. For once, death looks shallow, just another overly familiar hanger-on.

Photo courtesy The Andy Warhol Foundation, New York

Jeff Koons, Louis XIV, 1986

A Renaissance painting next to a Jeff Koons sculpture: How will the audience bring this together?

I don't think it's a problem. You know, the works represent themselves as well as they represent the time they were made. And we were very careful which Koons to use, we wanted that one and not, for example, Michael Jackson or the Pink Panther. Next to the Perugino, that could be tricky. I think we made a careful choice.

KOONS DESCRIBED THE statuary he created in the mid-'80s as being "about art leaving the realm of the artist, when the artist looses control of the work. It's defined basically by two ends, one would be Louis XIV: that if you put art in the hands of an aristocracy or monarch, art will become reflective of ego and decorative, and on the other end of the scale would be Bob Hope: that if you give art to the masses, art will become reflective of mass ego and also decorative."

It is easy to imagine Louis XIV commissioning a portrait of himself as Apollo driving the chariot of the sun across the heavens. Saint-Simon claimed, "Louis XIV's vanity was without limit or restraint." But the philosopher was too contemptuous to acknowledge that Louis realized the political impact of such images. The critic Robert Hughes rejected Koons's attempts to represent his private life with Cicciolina or the political aims of his work, saying: "If Jeff Koons's work is about class struggle, I am Maria of Romania."

SUNDAY, MARCH 8, 1981—Düsseldorf

At the cocktail party at Hans Mayer's house last night, there were a lot of people I'd done portraits of who I didn't recognize, so I thought they were potential new portraits. *(laughs)* Oh God, no wonder people think I'm out of it.

...

SATURDAY, MAY 30, 1981

I had a long philosophy talk with Brigid and we both decided that maybe time had passed us by. When I saw myself in those home movies we took on the Cape last weekend I hated myself so much. Every simple thing I do looks strange. I have such a strange walk and a strange look. If I could only have been a peculiar comic in the movies, I would have looked like a puppet. But it's too late. What's wrong with me? I look at Vincent and Shelly and *they* look normal. And I don't look good in cowboy boots anymore. I don't think. I think I'll get sneakers. I'll have Jay take me over to Paragon to get some.

Photo courtesy The Andy Warhol Foundation, New York

"LIFTING BELLY IS a language"–Gertrude Stein

The origins of the word "drag" as a reference to transvestism and cross-dressing lie in Polari, or Palare, a gay slang used in '50s and '60s Britain to communicate without attracting police attention. As many gay men worked in the entertainment industry, including circuses, the language incorporates many Romany, or Gypsy, words. Essentially born as a disguise, Polari went aboveground in the late '60s and early '70s. Examples of it, for instance, can be found in Morrissey's "Piccadilly Palare" on the album *Bona Drag*– *"So bona to vada ... oh you! Your lovely eek and your lovely riah."* ("So good to see ... oh you! Your lovely face and your lovely hair.") Alex and his droogs in *A Clockwork Orange* speak a language that seems to cross Polari with *Finnegans Wake*, or drag with high modernism: "Yarbles, Great Bolshy Yarblockos to you. I'll meet you with chain, or nodz, or britva, any time, I'm not have you aiming tolchoks at me reasonless. It stands to reason, I won't have it."

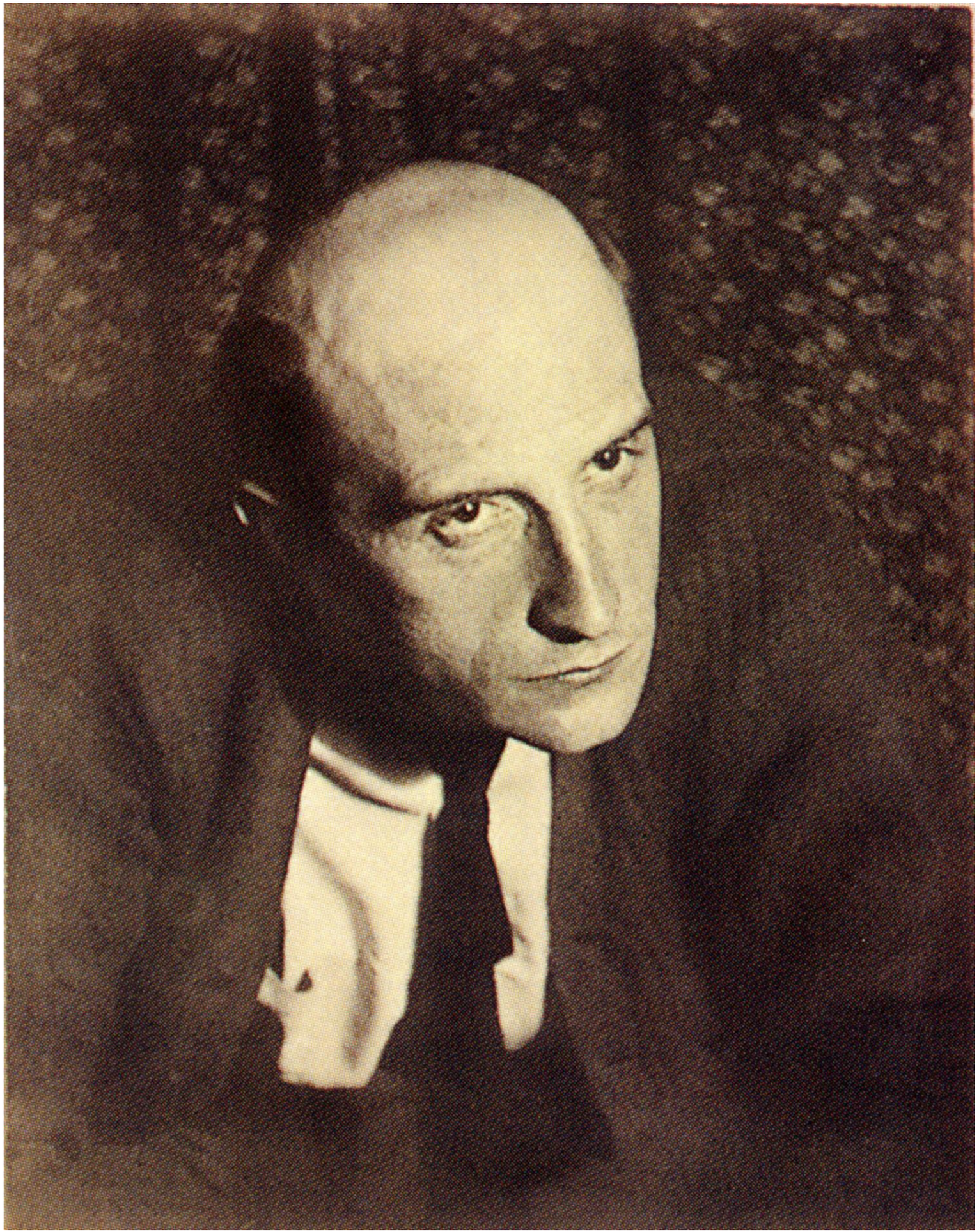
Photo courtesy The Andy Warhol Foundation, New York

MYRA HINDLEY IS the darkest persona here. Notorious for her part in the "moors murders," which involved the death of five children in mid-'60s Manchester, she issued the following statement in 1994: "I was wicked and evil and I behaved monstrously." The killings became part of the popular imagination in Britain. The Smiths song *Suffer Little Children* recalls Hindley's victims. Fellow prison inmates whispered, "Suffer the little children to come unto me," as she walked by.

Hindley complained that the mug shot of her that was reprinted over the years branded her as evil. The intensity of Hindley's stare in that image is unforgettable. Perhaps this is what has turned her into a myth: the embodiment of the bogeyman, the ultimate nightmare for parents and children.

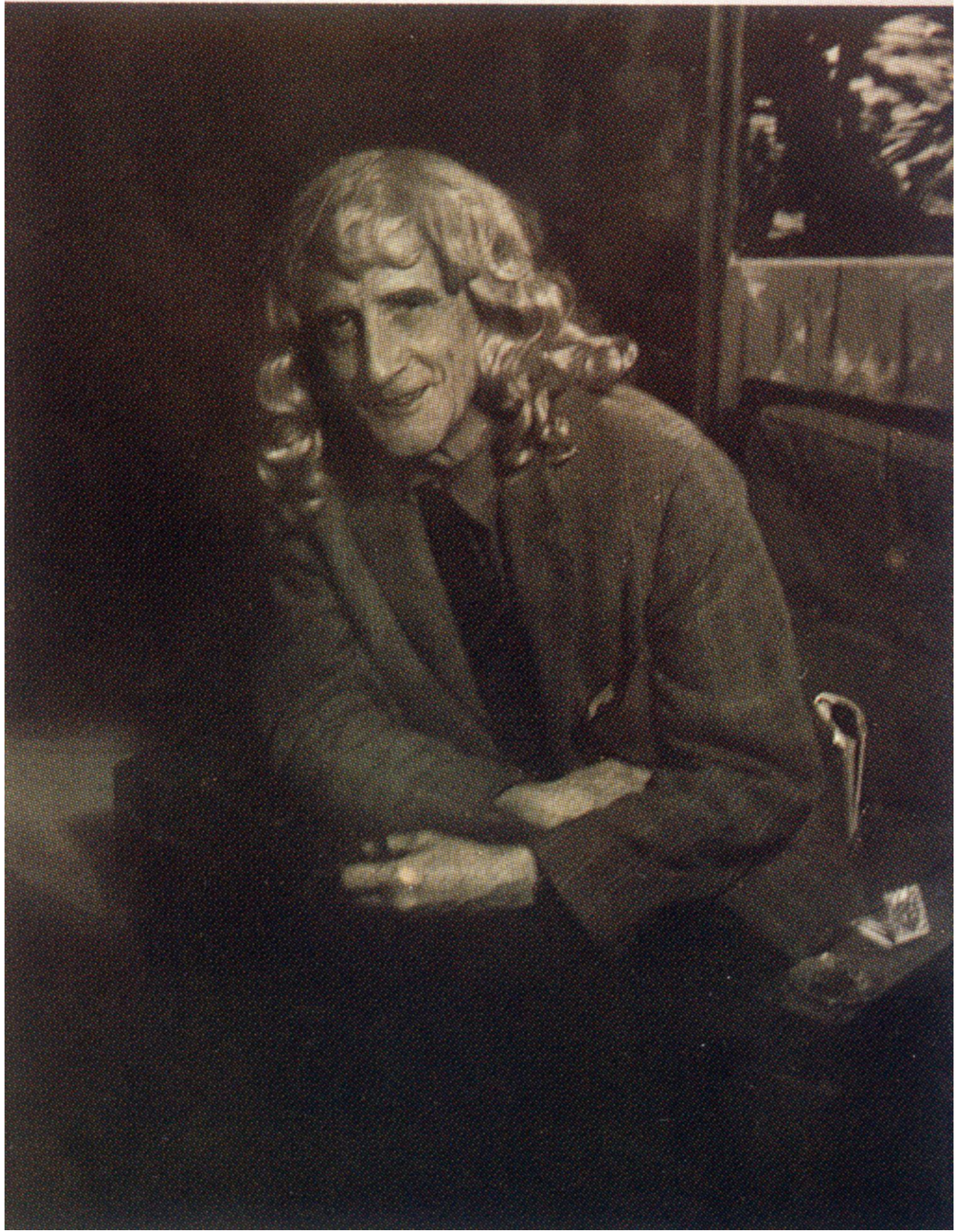
In a carousel of names and identities, it is inevitable that Hindley's darkness leaches out, infecting her companions.

We may be dead and we may be gone
But we will be, we will be, we will be, right by your side
Until the day you die



DUCHAMP HAD A monastic quality that the tonsure highlighted. This image, however, is less mischievous than the earlier portrait. The artist's head now appears almost totally shaved. The lighting is expressionist and there is determination, even violence, in Duchamp's eyes as he leans into the foreground. Religious references are absent–the image projects power and energy. With hindsight, it also works as an early template for various twentieth-century types: the intellectual, the survivor, the collaborator.

On a more practical level, though, this more extreme haircut reminds us–at roughly the same time Duchamp is beginning to explore a new identity as Rrose Sélavy–that a shaved head is useful when wearing wigs. Rrose first surfaces as the copyright name on a readymade, *Fresh Widow*, in 1920. Man Ray's photograph *Duchamp as Belle Haleine* (1921) may be her first portrait. By 1921 another photograph is clearly signed by hand: "Lovingly, Rrose Sélavy alias Marcel Duchamp." In an interview, Duchamp remarked that the purpose of the new identity was "to have fun. I have a lot of respect for humor, it's a kind of safety net enabling us to pass through all mirrors."



THE HISTORY OF Duchamp and Man Ray's collaborative portraits seeps into this apparently casual image. Duchamp is not in full drag; he appears simply as a middle-aged man in a sports coat holding a pipe and wearing a wig. Yet, the hair—more Mary Pickford than Marilyn Monroe—pulls us back to the '20s and the earlier photographs. Duchamp's smile reminds us that the game isn't over, and the Polaroid snapshot captures the ghostly apparition of Rrose as she momentarily takes possession of her alter ego.

But what about Man Ray? The photographs of Duchamp as Rrose are such powerful manipulations of the artist's image that they appear to be self-portraits. The photographer, on the other hand, is reduced to the status of facilitator. So successful is Duchamp's dismantling of the self in these images that we barely notice the vanishing of Man Ray.


Vatican Condones Discrimination A
ainst Homosexuals

THE ARTIST T. J. WILCOX remarked of this work: "Robert Gober's posing as a bride in the newspaper is such a brilliant and subtle way to insert himself and his belief system into the larger context of the everyday world. It's moving that as a gay person you could wish just to be taken for granted as a bride and thrown out with the trash."

For Gober, this work not only achieves the democratic and ephemeral state of yesterday's newspapers, but also alludes—through the choice to pose as a bride—to the ghost of Marcel Duchamp. If the origins of the word "allegory" lie in the Greek "*allos-agorein*," or "other-speaking," then Gober's image speaks of multiple "others." As ever, though, his choice of newspaper as medium draws us down to earth: today's issues can become, as Wilcox points out, tomorrow's trash.


last
SELAVAY
ROSE
SNEEZE
NOT

THIS IS A PHOTOGRAPH of Duchamp's 1921 readymade known as *Why Not Sneeze Rose Sélavy?*–an assemblage of marble cubes resembling faceless dice, a thermometer, and a cuttlefish bone gathered in a small birdcage. Duchamp produced the work at the request of his friend Katherine Dreier for her sister, Dorothea, who disliked it and returned it to her. The readymade remains enigmatic to this day, though there have been credible attempts to link it to Gertrude Stein's poem "Lifting Belly," which she wrote for her lover, Alice B. Toklas. Containing lines such as "Lifting belly is no joke. Not at all ... Sneeze. This is the way to say it ... Arrest" and "Lifting belly is sugar. Lifting belly to me ...," the poem creates a complex set of personal code words to describe Stein's sexual life and celebrate her love for Toklas. The poem is also a meditation on the creation of meaning–"Lifting belly is a language"–and the joy of creation–"In the midst of writing. / In the midst of writing there is merriment."

A DECEPTIVELY SIMPLE piece from an artist who has worked within the *vanitas* and memento mori traditions from the beginning of his career. The vitrines of formaldehyde recall Damien Hirst's larger works such as *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* (1992). That sculpture has recently revealed new, complex layers of meaning as museum conservators have begun to comment on the rapid deterioration of the shark. Several experts have confirmed that dead specimens are more reliably preserved in an alcohol-based solution than in formaldehyde. A large specimen like a shark may begin to decay after 50 years.

In the mid-'90s, Hirst addressed this issue publicly: "I did an interview about conservation and they told me formaldehyde is not a perfect form of preservation.... They actually thought I was using formaldehyde to preserve an artwork for posterity, when in reality I use it to communicate an idea."

Damien Hirst, *Anaesthetics (and the way they affect the mind and body)*, 1991

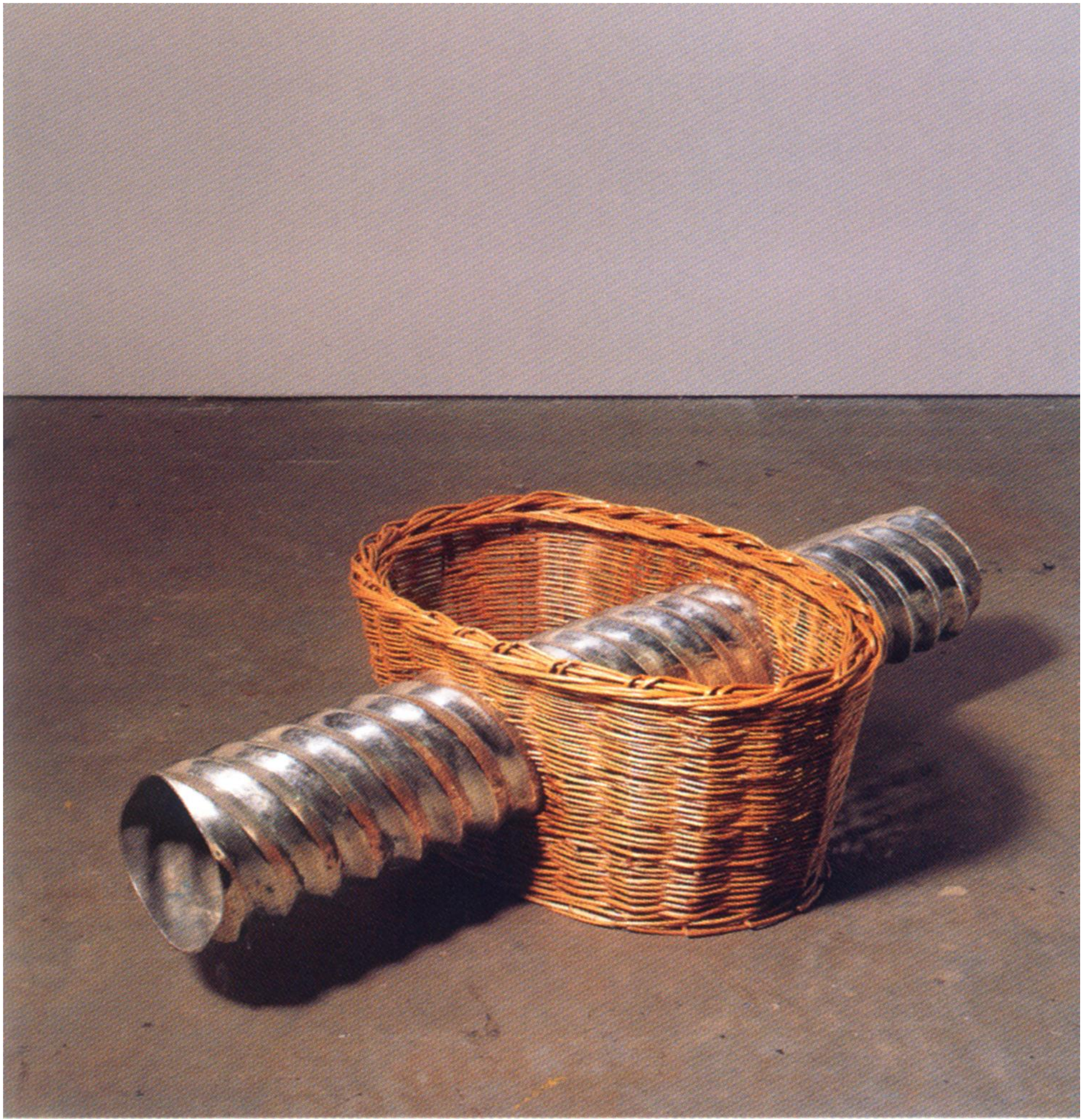
A CURATOR AT the Wellcome Historical Medical Museum wrote the following in a text from the 1920s: "In Portugal, where smallpox is still common, votive offerings of various parts of the body modeled in wax, spotted in color to indicate the pustules, are still sold and found hanging in the churches."

There is a similar sense of offering in *Fragile hands*. The piece's fingers were damaged during the compression needed to make it, leaving me with a work that Marcel Duchamp might have termed "definitively unfinished."

Given the authority and authenticity ascribed to the hand of the artist in art history, a little uncertainty may be healthy. It's not unusual for one hand to be unaware of the actions of the other.

o androgyny," which appears "initially very familia
ut the more time you spend with it, the less familiar
ecomes." She concludes, "I think of it as a self-portrait.
n her sequence of head shots of a young woman i
vater, *You Are the Weather*, Horn takes a similar approach
For me, this work is deeply erotic in a genderles
vay.... I have always felt androgyny as central to m
elationship with both myself and the work. As far as a
ndividual's experience with a given work goes, I throw
he issue of self-identity back out to the viewer."

Horn's work reminds us of minimalist reduc
ion, but it's hard not to think also of Parmigianino'



IF THERE IS vanity in allegory it may reside in the symbolist's hubris—the godlike presumption of making one thing stand for another, implying a landscape of meaning beyond the object itself. Robert Gober's sculptures seem to invite an immediate, symbolic reading, but the artist has said, "I always try to get people to focus less, or at least not first, on finding 'meaning' or a 'theme' in the work, but to focus on what it is exactly. What is it physically made of and how is it made. A lot of times metaphors are almost embedded in the medium."

Here, Gober has handwoven an oversize dog basket, which is pierced by a culvert pipe. The work recalls the artist's untitled 1997 installation, in which a statue of the Virgin Mary was put atop a storm drain, taking the place of the large woven basket that initially occupied the space.

Gober's formal, almost tactile, interventions crucially retard our interpretative impulse, allowing us time to ground our thoughts in commonsense physical reactions. Allegory also tempts the vanity of the viewer. The interpretation of works in an exhibition often reveals more about the viewer than about the artist's intentions.

RONI HORN HAS spoken of the owl image in this diptych in terms of difference and identity: "It occurred first as *Dead Owl* where it offered an experience of infinity or at least the beginning of infinity. Then the same image, again paired, was used as a spread toward the end of *Arctic Circles*. A form of punctuation, it was a full stop. And then, in *PI*, I used a cropped version of it, a head shot. There it was one element among 44 others."

Horn's repeated use of this image and her relating it to the realm of infinity offer an artistic parallel to the work of the mathematician Georg Cantor, who argued that there were different kinds of infinity, some larger than others. In all, Cantor identified three infinities: Alephs Null, One, and Two. His work allowed Kurt Gödel to confirm the incompleteness theorem, which demonstrated the limits and boundaries inherent in every system.

THE NINE FILMS in Horn's *Berlin Exercises* form an extended series that explores various claustrophobic scenarios in a single room with closed windows. In *Exercise 9: Epilogue*, a text is superimposed over an image of that space, its windows finally open. The text reads: "When the woman and her lover lie on their sides, looking at each other, and she wraps her legs round his legs and the windows are open wide, it is the oasis."

The journey to that end point is often punishing and intense. A ferocious relationship is implied in the early scenes, as much an internal struggle with a body's double as any recollection of a lover. At one point the couple are depicted as snakes merged "into a single body whose two heads move to and fro in parallel. The fight is decided when the stronger animal has pressed his opponent down against the floor."

The prosthetic extensions of the protagonist's body in the films extend the senses and the sense of self. The room, however, contains the body until the opposing forces within are reconciled. The final text recalls the alchemical marriage of god and goddess to ensure fertility in the world—the oasis.

NIJINSKY GIVES AN effect in his arm gesture of himself remaining at the center of space, a strength of voluntary limitation.... In *Faun*, the space between the figures becomes a firm body of air, a lucid statement of relationship.... There is indeed nothing effeminate in these gestures; there is far too much force in them.... It is interesting to try oneself to assume the poses on the pictures, beginning with arms, shoulders, neck, and head. The flowing line they have is deceptive. It is an unbelievable strain to hold them. The plastic relationships turn out to be extremely complex.... Nijinsky does just the opposite of what the body would naturally do.... One might say that the grace ... is not derived from avoiding strain, as a layman might think, but from the heightened intelligibility of the plastic relationships.... The delicacy with which he cantilevers the weight actually displaced keeps the firmness from being rigidity.... He is never showing you himself, or an interpretation of himself. He is never vain of what he is showing you.... He disappears completely, and instead there is an imaginary being in his place.

Edwin Denby, "Notes on Nijinsky Photographs"

EITHER WE ARE outside or on the wrong side of a looking-glass mirror. Wherever it is, it's not right. We remember that the sign was shown in a 1996 exhibition (*Inverse, Reverse, Perverse*) with a concave mirror that distorted the viewer's reflection, producing instant, unsettling self-portraits. And there was an hallucinatory appearance before the First Committee of the International Necronautical Society, where Wyn Evans testified on the nature of the crypt: "The crypt is perceived as being a kind of enclosed chamber which is called ... I think quite fittingly and rather kind of disgustingly as far as I'm concerned–[and which] is perceived as being a kind of cyst based or growing in the ego somehow. The ego becomes this kind of fleshy, formless envelope that protects this kind of notion of the crypt, this kind of tomb. We don't have access to what's inside the tomb when it's in this situation. Possibly there's a certain kind of seepage that happens where there's a kind of rupture to the walls of the crypt, then some kind of very telling radioactive goo can kind of emerge and enlighten us in some way."

LIKE AN ICON maker, Beuys created works that tried to both inhabit a spiritual realm and satisfy secular needs. He wove his own personal life stories into a narrative that had significance far beyond the events themselves. Often Beuys's works seem built on a provoking mixture of self-absorption, showmanship, and generosity of spirit. *Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch): The Scottish Symphony* (1970) was a collaborative work presented at the Edinburgh School of Art. The curator Richard Demarco described it as "a kind of requiem to all the artists that Beuys wished to acknowledge in the history of art. It was, indeed, a symphony in response to Mendelssohn's *Hebrides Overture*. The action was four hours long and it was performed twice a day. Every single square inch of the floor and the walls was taken into consideration. I had the feeling that the room was being blessed."

Beuys's commitment to Scotland at this time had an immeasurable impact. Given the ephemeral nature of much of the artist's work, the physical traces of his presence have quickly faded, but his influence still runs deep. And his dark environmental vision has only become more pertinent with time.

Photo by Bernard Gotfryd

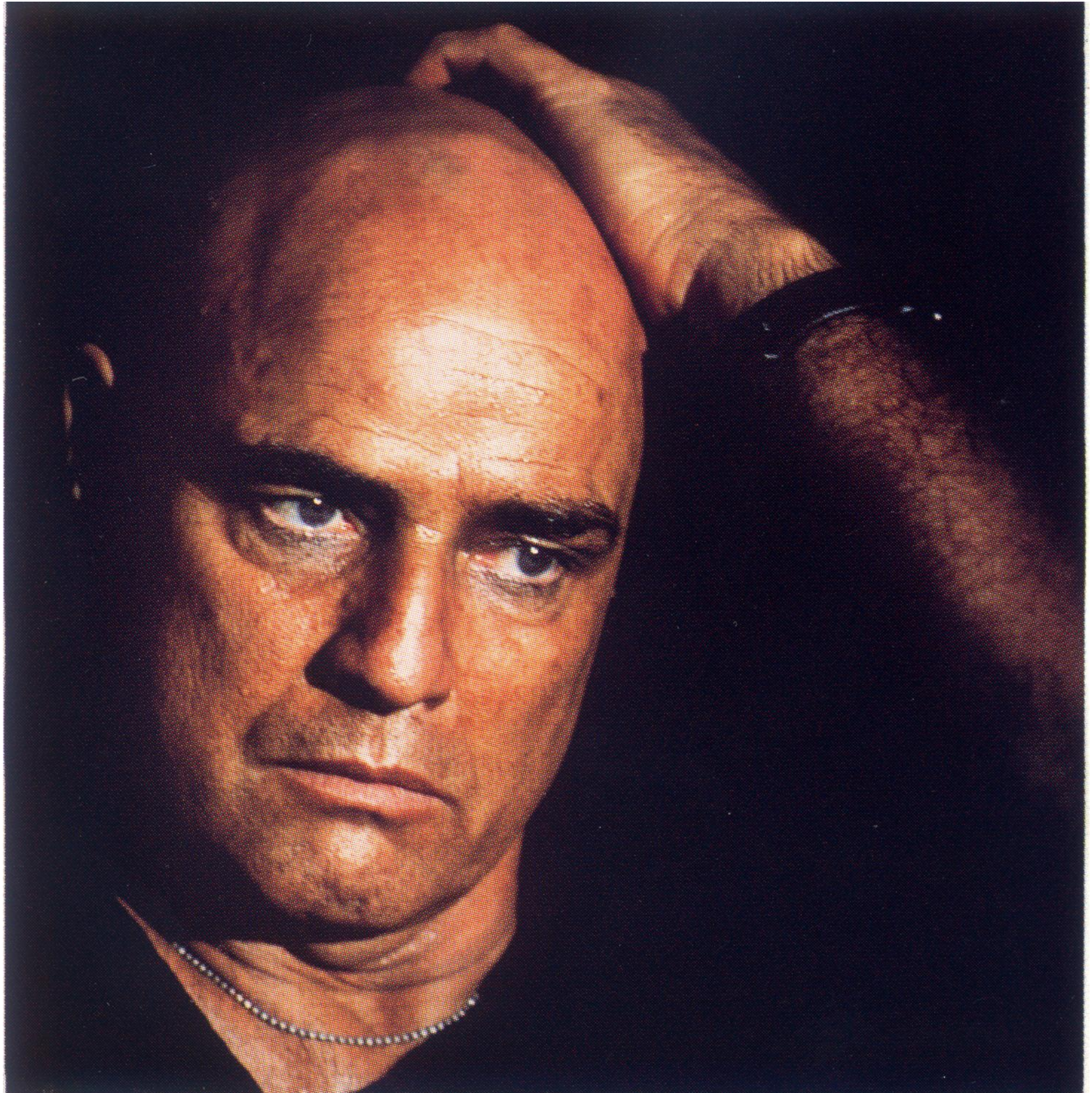
OSCAR WILDE'S *The Picture of Dorian Gray* preceded J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* by 14 years, but there are clear parallels in the unnatural desire to halt the process of aging and time. The film, on the other hand, bears the influence of Rouben Mamoulian's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, focusing as much on the monstrous within the human psyche as on the passage of years.

The director Albert Lewin's choice of artist to paint the portrait that is the culmination of the film was intriguing. Ivan Albright had worked as a medical draftsman in an army hospital during World War I, sketching war wounds. His later paintings depicted what Jean Dubuffet called a "crumbling, rotting, grinding world of excrescences." Working in the memento mori tradition, Albright made flesh appear diseased, and figures often verged on the grotesque.

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE to talk about Leigh Bowery's works without talking about Leigh Bowery himself. If Oscar Wilde defined the idea of a life being lived as a work of art, it is clear that he considered it a textual work, a life entwined with ideas and language. Bowery took a bolder step, defining a life as art in purely visual terms. It was the formal, choreographed expression of the body through costume, color, and action–ambivalent without the precision of words and grammar, but also immediately present in the world.

This is not to say there were no precedents or formal languages to draw on. Bowery ransacked the histories of the diva, the grotesque, and the monstrous to create something entirely new. In ballet, his costume designs were the most radical since Nijinsky, but his performance at the Anthony D'Offay Gallery may have been his finest work. Cerith Wyn Evans's film of the event documents Bowery posing in various costumes on a chaise longue–confined like an animal in a zoo. His wild surrender to vanity transcended banal notions of a cautionary tale.

Photo by Fergus Greer, courtesy Fergus Greer and Palm Pictures/Arthouse Films



FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA reminisced about the difficulties of getting Marlon Brando to begin work on set: "And one day, the fifth day, I come in and I'm astonished. There he is, and he's cut off all his hair, which is the image of Kurtz from the book. And I said, Marlon, what happened, is it you're going to do it like Kurtz? He said, yeah I think doing it like Kurtz is the best way. I said, but you told me that wouldn't work, you said you read the book and it would never work. And he says, well I didn't read the book, and I said, but you told me you did, and he says, well I lied."


©CPC

THE SWIMMER EXPLORES the potential vanity of a well-honed leading man who appears in every scene wearing only a bathing suit. Lead actor Burt Lancaster avoids the celebrity pitfalls of this premise to create a truly ambiguous allegory—does the film represent the fracturing and decay of the self? the death of the American Dream? the exodus from Eden?

The Swimmer has been variously interpreted as a parable of the destructive power of alcohol or of the neglect and loss brought about by vanity and obsession with success. For Lancaster, who dedicated two years to the film's production and funded it with his own money, *The Swimmer*'s box office failure marked the onset of the decline of his career.

Nothing is given easily in the film. The concept of "swimming home" holds the story together as protagonist Ned Merrill is gradually revealed to suffer from a dysfunctional conglomeration of memories and amnesiac gaps. His may be a linear journey across a valley, but the more we piece together in this enigmatic movie, the more we see Merrill fall apart.

Cheever, O Nadador: http://www.ficcoes.org/anteriores/ficcoes_de_ferias/ficcoes_ferias-conto-por-extenso.html

MARION MORRISON REMAINS Hollywood's least known star, buried as he is under his invented persona, John Wayne. Ironically, the sexual confusion implicit in Morrison's name persisted in his alter ego, manifesting itself in his oddly graceful, feminine gait and his defensive loneliness. Jonathan Lethem has described this dark tension in the actor: "His persona gathers in one place the allure of violence, the call away from the frontier, the tortured ambivalence toward women and the home, the dark pleasure of soured romanticism—all those things that reside unspoken at the center of our sense of what it means to be a man in America."

In his best roles there seems to be a triadic relationship among the actor Marion Morrison, the director John Ford, and the persona John Wayne. Ford acts vicariously through his star, whose real power lies in vulnerability, the damage that undercuts his swagger. Wayne's delicate but kinetic gestures give away the competing voices within him like a series of tells.

"WE HAVE COME to the Age of Double Men. We don't need mirrors anymore to talk to ourselves.... We are made of dreams and dreams are made of us."

The events of *Pierrot le fou* may happen in a dream. Characters mutate and become other than themselves. The script and the storyline are never less than witty and light, like a comic-book plot. The film, rather than hoodwink you into suspension of disbelief, continually admits that it is a film: "We've played Jules Verne too long. Let's get back to our gangster movie."

Godard's near-schizophrenic amalgam of voices and genres sits easily alongside *Scorpio Rising* as an early postmodern attitude to the self. Not just the self of the characters onscreen, but the self of each member of the audience. In its patchwork of cultural allusions and narrative shifts, it assumes that we are essentially a complex interplay of images and reference points.

Pierrot/Ferdinand: I'm looking at myself.
Marianne: And what do you see?
Pierrot/Ferdinand: The face of a man who's about to drive over a cliff at a hundred kilometers an hour.

THIS IS OSTENSIBLY a portrait of one artist by another. Tarkovsky's choice of Rublev, a 14th-century icon maker who was little known before the film, is itself a telling fact. Icons occupy a marginal position in the art world today, partly through lack of familiarity and understanding and partly because they sit uneasily in such a context. For an art historian, an icon may be a historical object of great aesthetic interest, but for many Christian believers an icon is a sacred artifact still to be used in worship. This direct involvement with religious process is difficult to reconcile with a secular interpretation.

A portrait of Rublev immediately places Tarkovsky on the edge of the contemporary world. His choice of the icon maker raises questions about his own desire to create actively spiritual work.

In 1985 El Greco's icon *Saint Luke Painting the Virgin and Child* was shown in London. The image depicts Saint Luke painting one of the most famous of all icons—a Madonna and child known as the *Panagia hodigitria*. Marina Warner at that time noted that El Greco's work was not just homage but satire, contrasting old and new styles of religious painting.

FELLINI'S *SATYRICON* REVOLVES around the image of frescoes and the sense of loss that pervades our appreciation of them. This is not the only film in which the filmmaker returns to the fresco as a fragile portal to a vanished past, but here he extends the metaphor to explore the whole notion of ruins and the dissolution of a culture. The key image in this world of mourning may be Trimalchio's tomb. The monstrous character lies inside, feigning his own death while his guests enact eulogies in his honor.

This scene occurs quite early in a film that then launches into a series of carnivalesque sequences that celebrate life much in the spirit of Marcel Duchamp's punning motto for Rrose Sélavy–"Eros, c'est la vie." For Fellini, movie making was essentially an autobiographical activity, often expressed through the alter ego of his favorite actor, Marcello Mastroianni.

Satyricon, a fragmented multifarious text, is inexorably absorbed into the director's broader self-portrait, even as the film interprets the original work of Petronius.

"IT'S NOT IMPORTANT to understand *Teorema*.... I leave it to the spectator ... is the visitor God or is he the Devil? He is not Christ. The important thing is that he is sacred, a supernatural being. He is something from beyond....

"A man in a crisis is always better than a man who does not have a problem with his conscience. However, the conclusion of the story is negative because the characters live the experience but are not capable of understanding and resolving it....

"We are passing from a peasant world to an industrial world. But a world does not die, so the peasant civilization lives within us, buried within us. It is buried, along with the sense of the sacred, within the factory owner and his family in *Teorema*....

"I suffer from the nostalgia of a peasant-type religion.... But I do not believe in a metaphysical god. I am religious because I have a natural identification between reality and God. Reality is divine. That is why my films are never naturalistic. The motivation that unites all of my films is to give back to reality its original sacred significance."

LIKE JOSEPH L. MANKIEWICZ'S *All About Eve, Peter Pan* is a tale of time's ruthless movement: "As you look at Wendy, you may see her hair becoming white, and her figure little again, for all this happened long ago. Jane is now a common grown-up, with a daughter called Margaret; and every spring-cleaning time, except when he forgets, Peter comes for Margaret and takes her to the Neverland, where she tells him stories about himself, to which he listens eagerly. When Margaret grows up she will have a daughter, who is to be Peter's mother in turn; and thus it will go on, so long as children are gay and innocent and heartless."

Peter, ever in search of his shadow, is typically played by a woman in theater productions and his androgynous character was created by the apparently celibate author J. M. Barrie. Patti Smith saw something of Peter in Robert Mapplethorpe–"venturing to Papua to secure for his soul a legendary butterfly, which he would tack to his chest as [Peter] Pan had attached his shadow to his wild little feet."

Courtesy Photofest

HOW DO YOU do? How do you do what? How do you kill a beautiful woman?

Well, dip a poisoned apple in a cauldron until a skull appears on the surface of the fruit. Then recite the following:

"Let the Sleeping Death seep through.
Look on the skin, the symbol of what lies within.
Now turn red to tempt Snow White
To make her hunger for a bite ...
When she breaks the tender peel
To taste the apple from my hand
Her breath will still, her blood congeal
Then I'll be fairest in the land.
But wait! There may be an antidote. Nothing must be overlooked. Oh, here it is. The Victim of the Sleeping Death can be revived only by Love's First Kiss. Love's First Kiss. No fear of that. The dwarfs will think she's dead. She'll be buried alive. Ha, ha, ha ..."