



Paul Nash, *Landscape at Iden* (1929) Tate, London
 © Tate, London, 2009. From *Paul Nash: The Elements* by David Fraser Jenkins (ed.).

defensive earthworks that are still visible in many parts of England. His relationship with the English countryside took on a mystical quality, as in *Landscape from a Dream* (1936–8), with several characteristic objects in it: a mirror, a structure of slats which could be a screen except that it has no panels, a large bird, the sea and the coastal cliffs of Dorset, the sun as a large red ball.

One very helpful aspect of this book is the practice of printing comments by Nash himself and his wife, Margaret, together with those of an array of friends, critics, exhibition curators, biographers, or art historians with each of the pictures illustrated. These enigmatic images and combinations are like Rorschach tests for art historians, and the comments through the decades are sometimes rather speculative but nevertheless thought provoking. Even when they contradict each other they suggest interesting lines of approach. Nash's own descriptions of his work show how his ideas developed, often from quite mundane country walks or from a sudden perception.

Several commentators mention a similarity to de Chirico in Nash's mysterious structures and shadows of off-stage figures. There are also faint echoes of René Magritte. Nash was at heart the kind of Surrealist who sees similarities in objects which others see as merely a

rock and a leaf or a tree stump and a cloud. One of his most surreal pictures, *Harbour and Room* (1931), shows the walls of a room which also seems to contain a harbour, so that a boat seems to be sailing into the room instead of merely being visible from the window.

Officially there are 99 figures in the book, separately numbered in the essays and the catalogue proper, but there are more than that because sometimes one number relates to both a picture and an enlarged detail of it. The numbers given in the heading of this article reflect the true number of illustrations, by my count, at least. Suffice it to say that the book is a beautifully illustrated and intelligently organised way in to Nash and his work.

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ANDY WARHOL: THE LAST DECADE

JOSEPH D KETNER II

DelMonico Books: Prestel Publishing 2009 £45.00
 \$60.00
 224 pp. 144 col/7 mono illus
 ISBN 978-3-7913-4344-0

Much has recently been written in consideration of a supposed 'late style' in the careers of certain artists. This catalogue, which accompanies an exhibition travelling to major US museums in Milwaukee, Fort Worth, Brooklyn, and Baltimore between September 2009 and January 2011, is not in that

camp. Instead, Warhol is presented here as having had his most prolific and diverse decade of artistic production by reinventing and returning to earlier themes and modes of work, including hand-painted figural work, at the end of his life. The catalogue's 80 plates thus focus on the following series: the 1978 silkscreen *Self-Portraits*; the 1978 *Oxidation Paintings* (urine on metallic pigment); the 1978–80 *Shadow Paintings*; the 1979 *Big Retrospective Painting*; the 1983 *Yarn Paintings*; the 1984 *Rorschach Paintings*; the 1984–6 paintings in collaboration with Jean-Michel Basquiat and Francesco Clemente; and finally, the 1986 *Self-Portraits*, *Camouflage* and *Last Supper* paintings. By any measure this is a prodigious output, especially considering that nearly all of it is in very large format.

The catalogue's argument in regard to the proper orientation from which to consider Warhol's late paintings is marshalled by three eclectic essays. The first, by the curator of the exhibition, Joseph Ketner, explains the pivotal role of the late 1970s *Oxidation Paintings* in turning Warhol away from silkscreened Pop images. Ketner deftly shows that this turn away was also a kind of return insofar as the *Oxidation* series is also the product of Warhol's recollection of having urinated on a few blank canvases in the early 1960s. But so too, insofar as these paintings might be seen as a gay parody of Jackson Pollock, do they demonstrate Warhol's continuing fixation with and admiration for abstract art. For Warhol – who arrived in New York as a 20-year old in 1949 – painting meant, for better or worse, abstraction. Two key exhibitions of 1979 are claimed to have the most profound influence on the direction and content of Warhol's late paintings. One is the Heiner Friedrich Gallery show in Soho, New York of Warhol's *Shadow Paintings*, 102 large, abstract, silkscreened and painted canvases which the artist conceived to be hung in a continuous sequence, abutting one another around the walls of the entire gallery. This installation thus harked back to the installation of Warhol's Elvis paintings in 1963 at the Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles. The *Shadow Paintings* exhibition, despite Warhol's anxieties concerning its reception, was a critical success. A very contrary response, however, awaited Warhol's late 1979 exhibition at the Whitney Museum: 'Portraits of the Seventies'. This show



Andy Warhol, *Self-Portrait (Strangulation)*, 1978. Collection of Anthony d'Offay. From *Andy Warhol: The Last Decade* by Joseph D Ketner II.

instead became iconic for critics, who took it to be symptomatic of all that was supposedly wrong with the art and celebrity culture of the 1970s. Warhol, always a master strategist, did not fail to learn the artworld lesson of having committed a large portion of his 1970s output to celebrity portraiture. 1980 would thus include more *Shadow Paintings*, followed soon thereafter by the abstractions of the *Yarn* and *Rorschach Paintings*. The next step forward, for which Warhol himself credited the collaborations with Basquiat, was the return to making paintings by brush. The ambiguity and tentativeness of Ketner's conclusion nicely mimics these same major themes within Warhol's work: 'It is almost as if Warhol had anticipated the artistic avant-garde of the late 1970s and 1980s by introducing a revival of painting, appropriation, and figuration'.

The second essay, 'Andy Warhol: Abstraction', by Keith Hartley, is concerned primarily with locating the proper place of the late paintings among the works of a few of the great abstractionists of the twentieth century. Hartley makes a compelling case for the influence of Paul Klee, Pollock, and Ellsworth Kelly on what come to be the *Yarn*, *Rorschach*, and *Camouflage* paintings. So too is the influence of Duchamp and Dada invoked, along with that of Picasso's own late figure paintings, the better to illuminate Warhol's ambitions for the look of the *Oxidation* and later *Mao* paintings. One of the many connections to the influence of Pollock had already been

noted by H D Buchloh and Rosalind Krauss in their observation that Warhol's *Diagram* paintings of 1962 were placed on the floor at the time of their first exhibition. Hartley's most insightful commentary explains the format of the *Shadow Paintings* as the product of Warhol's longstanding appreciation for Klee's technique of achieving nonfigurative abstraction via the repetitions of formal elements. So too does Hartley nicely capture the mood of several of the late figurative paintings, including *Last Supper* and portrait paintings, in which the images are covered with camouflage, by describing them as perfectly reflective of Warhol's ambivalence toward his own fixation with abstraction.

This Warholian ambivalence is carried over into the title of the third substantive essay, by Gregory Volk: 'The late, great Andy Warhol'. Volk's informed impulse is to see Warhol as an *echt* American, and therewith to place him in the same stream as three other robustly American figures, though of the nineteenth century: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman and, most poignantly, P T Barnum. Volk thus succeeds in revealing new aspects of Warhol's work by declaring the continuity of his artistic achievement with the lives and works of some very particular, and particularly American, self-made pioneering spirits. In sum, this is a thoughtful, provocative, and well-illustrated catalogue of Warhol's late work.

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THE DARKER SIDE OF LIGHT: ARTS OF PRIVACY, 1850-1900

PETER PARSHALL (ED.)

National Gallery of Art, Washington/Lund
Humphries 2009 £35.00 \$50.00
192 pp. 86 col illus
ISBN 978-1-84822-021-8

The curators of Washington's National Gallery of Art took a refreshing decision to draw our attention, with this thematic selection of artists' prints and small-scale sculpture from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to a period which saw a rich flowering of graphic art. The exhibition travelled to the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles and the Smart Museum, Chicago. It has also led to the production of a fine book to accompany the show.

With the honourable exceptions of Mary Cassatt and Käthe Kollwitz, the story is very much one of troubled artists and troubling, if not to say fatal, women. Shadows and silhouettes, glimpsed in enclosed rooms, shafts of light finding a way through draped windows, illuminating their subjects, find their ideal medium in the richly textured tones of soft-ground etching, aquatint and lithotint, occasionally abstracted to the extremes of readability, in the case of Degas' monotypes. The strengths of the medium also emerge in the oppressive interiors of labour and poverty in the work of Kollwitz. But they