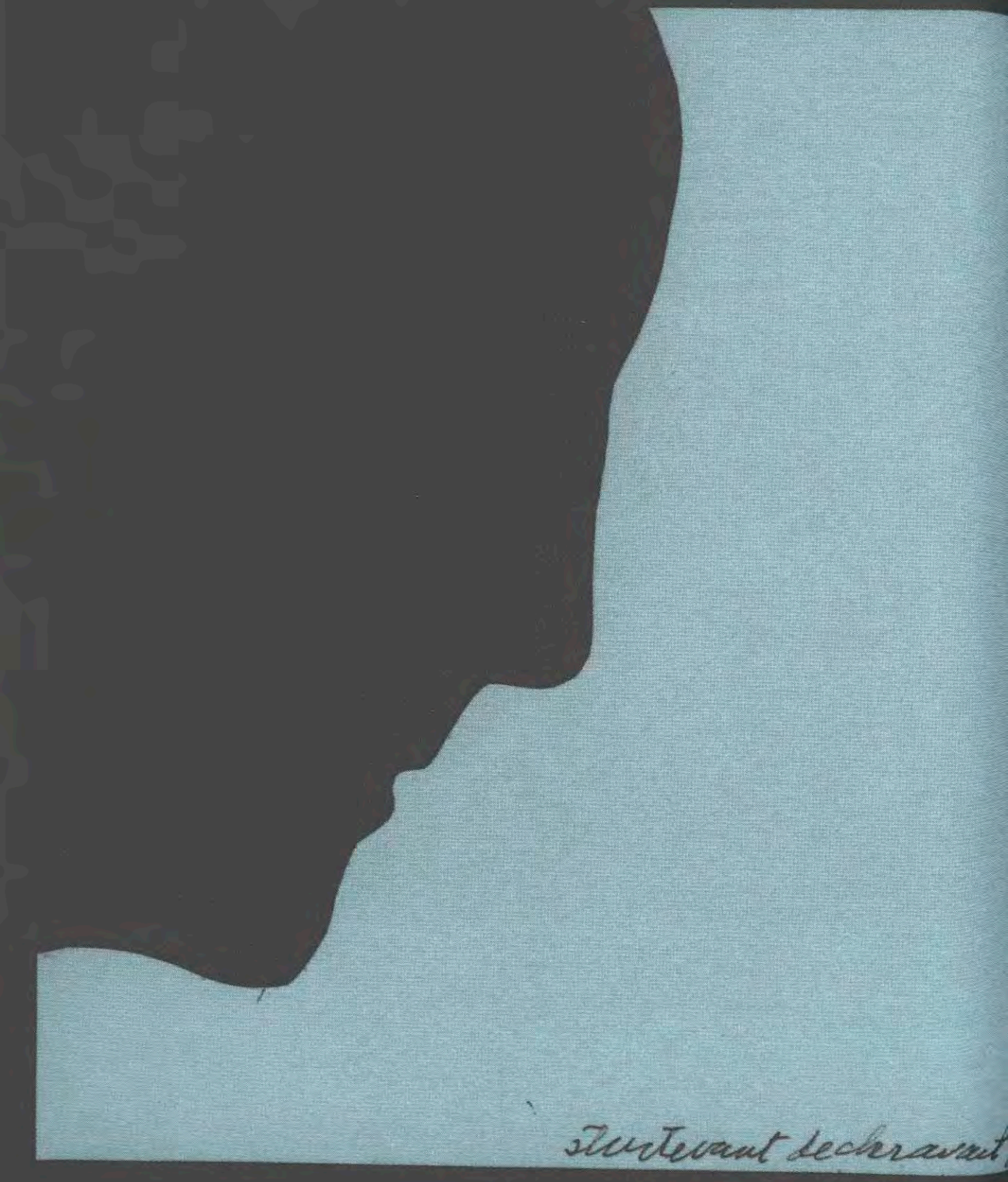

Sturtevant Lichtenstein

Duchamp dechiravit, 1970, torn paper, 15 × 15cm

Sturtevant: On Art and Its Time
– Belinda Bowring

Comebacks are the pastime of fading starlets, nipped, tucked, puffed to perfection and wheeled out in front of a no-longer adoring public in order to win them over once more. They are notoriously hard to pull off, and the cost of failing to invest the old and overly familiar with a lost novelty is high. For that reason, a comeback is usually a one-off, and since success rules out the need for repeat performances, it is not the most likely of activities in which to specialise, excel or even make the means of a career. However, the notion of a comeback can be used to think through Sturtevant's ongoing practice of carefully remaking iconic artworks by an all-male line-up of art stars, including Marcel Duchamp, Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Frank Stella and Andy Warhol, which she began in the 1960s – often before these figures gained broader recognition.[1] Taking her 1986 'comeback' exhibition as my point of departure, I will extend the logic of this show so that the tactic of the comeback can be tracked throughout her career, with the aim of demonstrating that a practice that depends on the pre-existing is not necessarily a retrospective exercise but, as in Sturtevant's case, can also be an action oriented to the future.

Sturtevant's famous comeback took place in 1986 at White Columns, New York – her first solo show since her 1974 exhibition at Onnasch Gallery (also in New York) of remakes of works by Joseph Beuys, after which she ceased producing and exhibiting art. In what has become an undeniable allusion to Marcel Duchamp's exchange of art for chess, she has stated that during those years she had dedicated her time to 'writing, thinking, playing tennis and carrying on'.[2] However, in the manner of her earlier work, this co-option of Duchamp's gesture of removal and return is not a picture-perfect copy of his heroic homecoming; Sturtevant rejected the opportunity to present a masterpiece in the manner of *Étant donnés* (1946–66), and instead offered an almost po-faced presentation of the very same work she was producing prior to the hiatus in her practice: the exhibition included *Duchamp Fountain* (1973), *Lichtenstein But It's Hopeless* (1969), *Warhol Marilyn Diptych* (1972) and *Warhol Gold Marilyn* (1973), all made throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s.[3]

Although visitors to White Columns were not met by a body of work cosmetically enhanced for that decade of image and excess, Sturtevant's reemergence in the 1980s was regarded as somehow 'timely'. Work that once seemed out of step all of a sudden appeared at the same pace as art made according to what had become mainstream principles. After transposing these works from the 1960s to the 1980s and casting them against a backdrop of appropriation and simulation, Sturtevant's insistence on remaking the work of others did not seem so perverse. The press release that accompanied the exhibition attests to her 'of the moment' appeal: 'Elaine Sturtevant may have

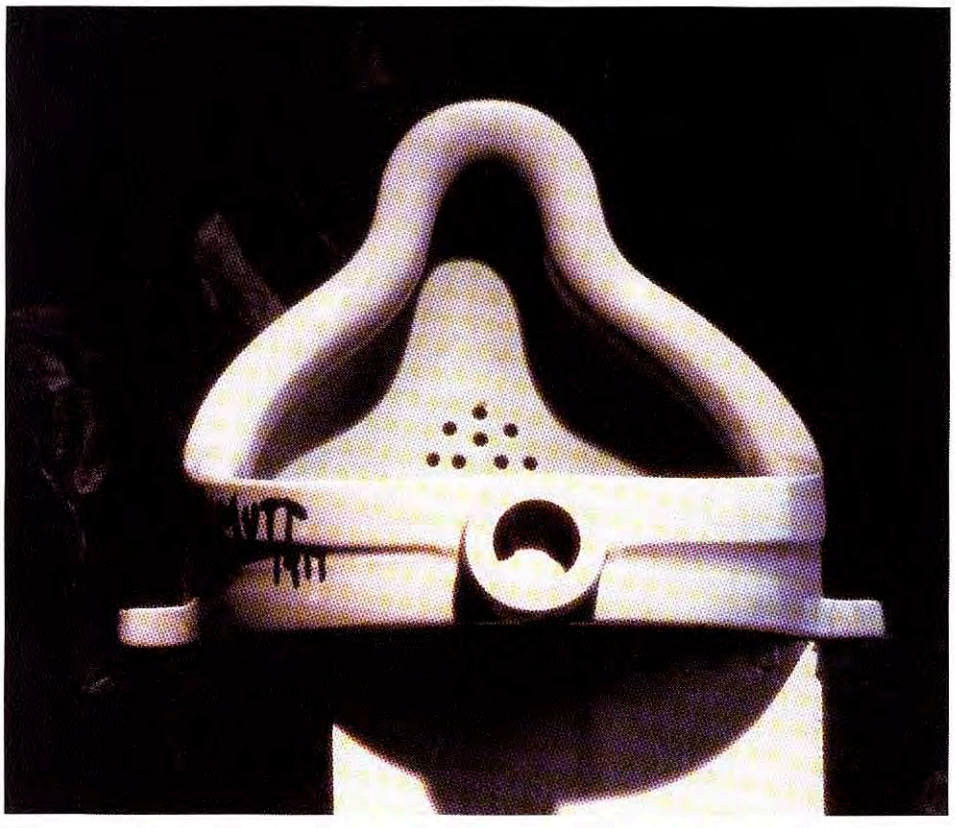
1 Many critics have sought to distinguish the Sturtevant versions from the original source of inspiration by describing how her copies are not exactly the same as their models. See, for example, Donald Kuspit, 'Repeating the Unrepeatable: Elaine Sturtevant's Absolution of Art', in *Elaine Sturtevant* (exh. cat.), Chicago: Rhona Hoffman Gallery, 1990, pp.2–6.

2 'Sturtevant talks to Bruce Hainley', *Artforum*, March 2003, pp.246–47.

3 Although some artists, such as Andy Warhol, were vaguely supportive, hostility increased towards her work, particularly after the remake of Claes Oldenburg's *Store* (1961–62) in April 1967, a few streets away from his original outlet. The work was met with fierce animosity from Oldenburg himself, who had previously supported her practice. See Bruce Hainley, 'Erase and Rewind', *frieze*, June–August 2000, pp.82–87.

been the first postmodernist intruder on the American scene [...] her ideas seem of particular historical importance.'[4] Indeed, her co-option of the role of the commentator as her own, in which she has always already consumed the object under scrutiny, hinders any attempt to account for the object itself.[5] In her 1966 exhibition at Galerie J in Paris, the gallery door remained locked for the duration of the exhibition, inside of which her *Wesselmann Great American Nude* (1966) was propped up against a wall and *Lichtenstein Crying Girl* (1966) was upended rather than hung in a conventional manner. Yet despite literally distancing the viewer from these works, her practice was not an exercise in alienation, for these works were not seen anew; rather, the commentary she provided spoke back as a dissenting voice.

Indeed, a comeback is also the ultimate retort, and, in a textbook example of *l'esprit de l'escalier*, Sturtevant's response to the criticism that led to her withdrawal from the art world came to her only latterly. While generally a time-lag thwarts the opportunity to deliver a killer comeback, it worked in Sturtevant's favour. 'Fortunately the appropriationists were hanging out at the time, which gave me a whole new space for potent dialogue. This was very crucial, as it allowed entry into the work by negative definition – a valid, powerful position.'[6] Despite her acknowledgement of this about-turn in thinking, her words suggest that her practice cannot be abridged in the convenient tag of precursor, as her work calls into question the very structures that such chronological

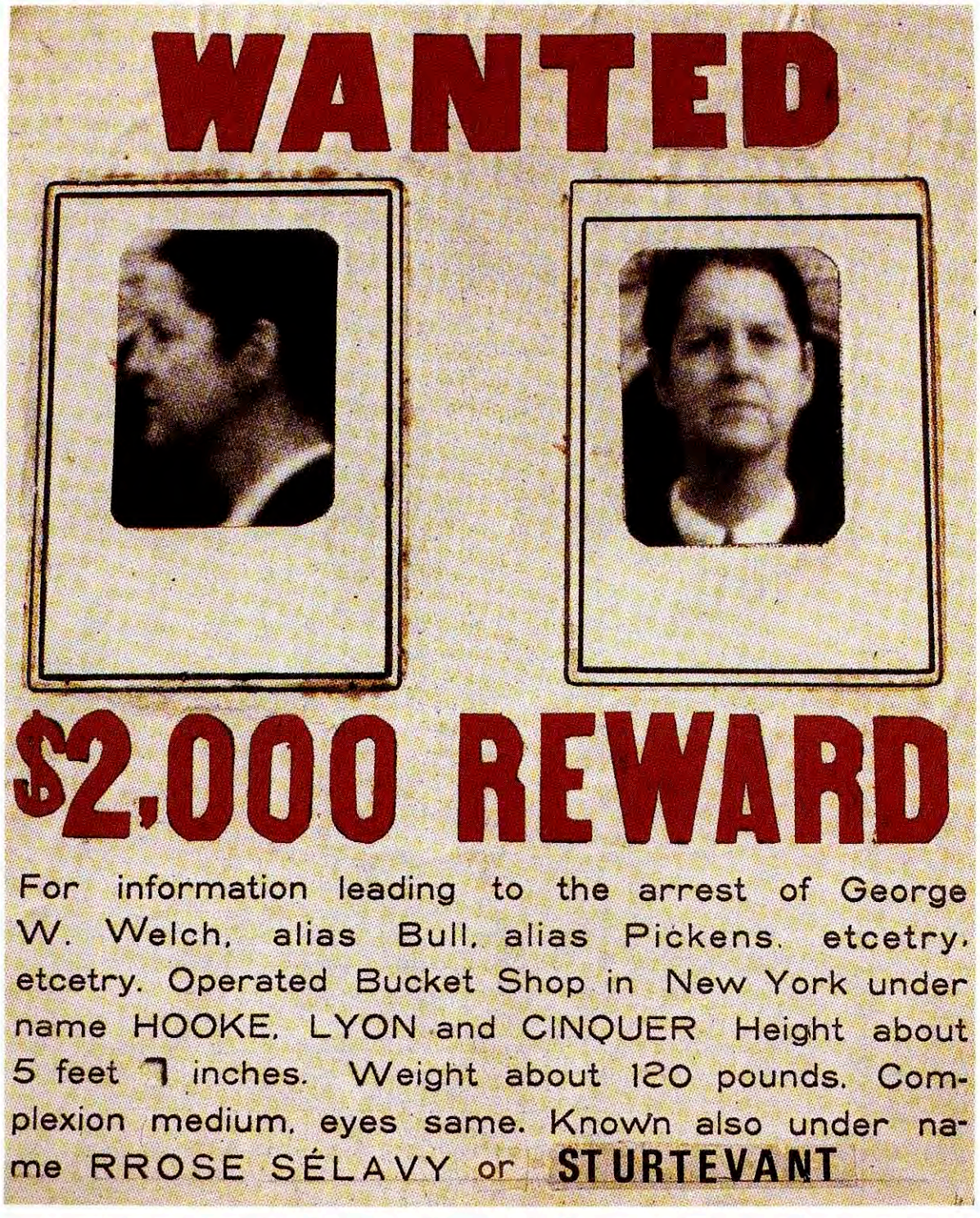


Duchamp Fountain, 1973, readymade turned upside down (urinal), white porcelain, acrylic paint, 32.3 × 40.5 × 45.6cm

designations depend upon. It is often noted that, rather than reaching back into the annals of art history for her source material, she remakes work at the point of its production, pointing towards the years of half-light in the life cycle of an artwork (however, these observations do not account for the recurrence, time-lag and delay that she puts in motion). Claes Oldenburg's *Store* (1961–62), for example, was reproduced six years after Oldenburg's installation. Sturtevant's practice finds work that is actually lying in wait, between its first flush of youth and its ascension to art-historical elder. But by intervening in that moment of indeterminacy she voices a scepticism towards any conventional historical framing.

4 Quote from the press release published to accompany the exhibition at White Columns, New York, 1986.
5 See Antony Hudek, *Invisible Painting: Pictorial Mimesis at Work, New York 1976—1986* (unpublished doctoral thesis), London: Courtauld Institute of Art, 2005, p.144.
6 'Sturtevant talks to Bruce Hainley', *op. cit.*, p.246.

Cover of *Sturtevant: Drawings 1988—1965*, New York: Bess Cutler Gallery, 1988



Duchamp Wanted, 1969, corrected readymade, 32 × 24.8cm

Not only did simulation return attention to Sturtevant's practice in the 1980s, it also had the less desirable effect of restricting discussions of her work to simulation's own terms. However, mobilising the concept of a comeback opens an alternative narrative in the strategy of remakes, freeing Sturtevant's work from its associations with appropriation – and, by extension, from a reading of it as criticism of amnesiac methodologies that sever items from their origin. Jean Baudrillard diagnosed the tendency to depend upon historical examples as a 'retro scenario' in which 'all history is resurrected in bulk' and where 'a controlling idea no longer selects, only nostalgia endlessly accumulates';[7] Sturtevant's practice provides a counterpart to this indiscriminate rehabilitation. The artworks she remakes are always iconic for their time or style, as she herself has stated:

> *In order for the work to function you had to recognise the work immediately* [...] *You had to know who that particular artist was. So of course you'd take these painters who had very strong images, and they'd function for me.*[8]

The bottle-blonde comic-book heroine of *Lichtenstein But It's Hopeless* is unmistakably Roy Lichtenstein's, yet the fit of despair into which she has thrown herself, the portentous tear welling in her eye and the primary colours delineated with a fat black outline are not – they are the stock-in-trade of popular culture and Pop art alike. By using a work that is not only familiar to the viewer but which also trades in the imagery of commercial culture, she can rest assured that its content has always already been consumed. Rather than investing these forms with new meanings, associations and inferences, Sturtevant opts to push the viewer's focus beyond that of representation. Accordingly, the work does not provoke in the way an 'original' might. The slow curl of excitement that obscurity tends to bring about is not offered, but neither is it done away with; instead, that tug of intrigue is located elsewhere, someplace almost beyond reach. Sturtevant describes this process as 'the immediacy of an apparent content being denied'.[9] Not being the Lichtenstein that it appears to be, *Lichtenstein But It's Hopeless* counteracts that 'apparent content' so that the spectator's attention is not held by the internal relations or surface of the object but by its conceptual identity, and pushes the viewer to examine where meaning can reside (if not in representation).

Instead, she shifts the focus of her viewers' attention to the contexts of the works, both geographical and temporal. Whilst her return cannot be seen apart from 1980s New York, her logic of production is chronologically promiscuous. By effecting a temporal shift, coming by way of going back, she employs the past in the service of the future. The predominance of Pop as Sturtevant's point of departure directs us to work that speaks definitively and succinctly of 'the 1960s'. Yet she proposes that the work is neither reducible to nor best understood in terms of those historical and cultural relations. Although appearing the same as its prototype, *Warhol Gold Marilyn* (1973) effortlessly shrugs off the previously indelible marks of its era; the violent shocks of pink, blue and yellow almost float free from the inferences they previously held and in so doing almost obliterate the likeness of the iconic film star, so that the fate of this work is newly up for grabs.[10] The glossy ground of gold accentuates the surface of the work, reducing the Marilyn portrait at the centre to a series of colours that are ripe for consumption yet acid, bitter but ultimately irresistible. She makes the work come back in such a way that it speaks of an entirely different duration to the one suggested by the commercialism for which both Marilyn Monroe's image and Andy Warhol's technique act as shorthand today. Sturtevant's work demonstrates that capitalism brings about a specific notion of time, one that reduces it to a synchronised system that allows for

7 Jean Baudrillard, 'History: A Retro Scenario', *Simulacra and Simulation*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994, p.44.

8 Dan Cameron, 'A Salon History of Appropriation with Leo Castelli and Elaine Sturtevant', *Flash Art*, Nov—Dec 1988, pp.76—77.

9 Quoted in Bernard Blistène, 'Label Elaine', in Udo Kittelmann and Mario Kramer (eds.), *Sturtevant: The Brutal Truth*, Frankfurt a.M. and Ostfildern-Ruit: Museum für Moderne Kunst and Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2004, p.37.

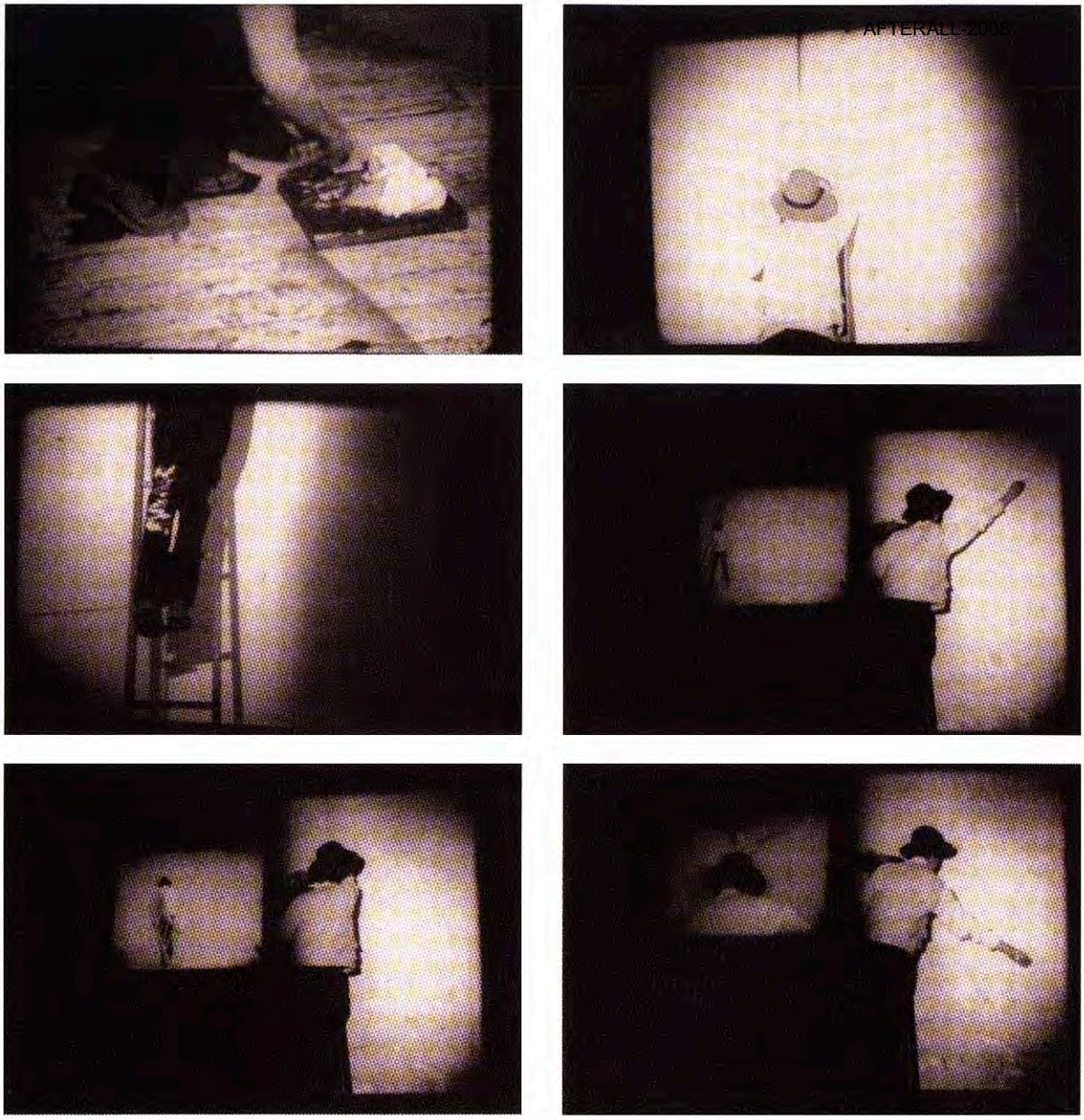
10 Sturtevant produced three *Warhol Gold Marilyns* in 1973. Two of them are monochrome round canvases (cat. numbers 176 and 184). The one discussed here is a portrait-shaped canvas with Marilyn's portrait at the centre in blue, pink and yellow, with a gold background (cat. number 188). See Lena Maculan (ed.), *Sturtevant: Catalogue Raisonné 1964—2004*, Frankfurt a.M. and Ostfildern-Ruit: Museum für Moderne Kunst and Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2004, pp.87, 89 and 90.

an efficient, mechanised, working world. Yet the instantaneous efficiency of capitalism, which divides life into the homogenised units of minutes, hours and days, is simultaneously rendered inadequate by her *Marilyn*, as it resists the immediacy of consumption that such a system involves. Sturtevant takes Warhol's *Gold Marilyn Monroe* (1962), a work that is definitively 'of its time', and demonstrates how its persistence attests to an entirely different temporality that literally runs rings around both the conceit of historical trajectory and the homogenisation of time itself. It burns through its history as if it couldn't be left in the 1960s, and simultaneously retains a currency that can never be spent. By remaking a work from the year of Monroe's suicide ten years after and then re-showing it again in 1986, Sturtevant conjures a time that is not composed of regular units but that reflects the vagaries of history. The recurrence of *Warhol Gold Marilyn* in different decades brings together disparate moments, and the consequent fluctuations of memory and perception flood the work until it can no longer be reduced to any particular date – and until the viewer is able to intuit alternative organisations of time.

One sense of time that Sturtevant does not dispense with is that of memory – her own. She uses catalogues only to check the size and scale of work, and declares that her working process is one of 'summoning with sufficient intensity the memory of

images viewed in order to be able to recreate and invent them'.[11] This might suggest that Sturtevant's glance is always a backward one – the front cover of a 1988 exhibition of drawings at Bess Cutler Gallery, for example, features the always convivial *Lichtenstein Laughing Cat* (1988) emblazoned with the dates of Sturtevant's career reversed: 1988–1965.[12] Yet retrospection has a finality that, in Sturtevant's world at least, is always off-limits: 'Nobody wants a retrospective; once you've had a retrospective you're done.'[13] Sturtevant is anything but done – she finds use in fabric others would find exhausted, blank and wrung dry of any potential. If her objects speak in terms of a return it is to goad us to revisit the prospects the works conjured at their point of conception. *Duchamp Fountain* has the look but not the feel of its more famous counterpart, as it manages to

11 Quoted in B. Blistène, 'Label Elaine', *op. cit.*, p.37.
12 *Sturtevant: Drawings 1988—1965*, New York: Bess Cutler Gallery, 1988.
13 Sturtevant speaking on the panel discussion 'Custodians of Culture — The Museum: Institutions of Market or Measure?', Frieze Art Fair, London, 12 October 2007.



Study for Various Beuys Films, 1971, black-and-white film, Betacam SP, 30min

Warhol Gold Marilyn, 1973, synthetic polymer silkscreen and acrylic on canvas, 211 × 145cm

evade the reams of writing on the readymade that intervene between us and Duchamp's object. ***Duchamp Fountain*** refuses to fit into the opportune hole to which it has been assigned; it awkwardly bulges beyond those confines, forcing us to notice what has been shaved off by the generalising effects of history. Sturtevant reverses the tactic that Duchamp introduced by holding hostage not an everyday object but an artwork, and in so doing she scrutinises the particularity of the art object itself. She cannot re-present the original object, but rather her remaking is a means of investigating how and why these particular artworks have taken hold of our consciousness so firmly. In ***Difference and Repetition*** (1968), Gilles Deleuze writes that memory is not simply about the past, but about a past that is caught up in the present, intertwined with and orientating the now in a way that is not immediately apparent. Sturtevant has made this project her own by attempting to mine one from the other – the present from the past – by excavating the art object from the web of historical associations that have come to stand in for and before itself. Yet she does not share in Deleuze's all-encompassing enthusiasm for such an enterprise, and instead proposes it as subject to scrutiny. If she renders Duchamp's urinal – the object that speaks most eloquently of art in the twentieth century – up for interpretation once more, this is not to disavow the object's status, as the producer's name is included in the title and acts as an unabashed reminder of its position in art history. Rather, it is to return us to the point of its conception so that we can question whether the trajectory embarked upon by the readymade is the only one that it inaugurated when it

was introduced into art history. Deleuze's description of the synthesis of time as 'the past and the future [that] do not designate instants distinct from a supposed present instant, but rather the dimensions of the present itself in so far as it is a contraction of instants' is entirely dismantled.[14] Instead, the viewer is compelled to re-enter the work and reassess the impact that it made, so that the comeback that Sturtevant stages is not one of Warhol, Marilyn, 'the 1960s' or her own career, but that of every initial encounter with the object and, more importantly, the power contained in that moment.

In this way, the comeback frames a retrospective way of working as neither reactionary nor in thrall to fictions of origin. A comeback is not just a return to the moment of conception but an action that looks to retrieve the power and potential that was encapsulated by that moment. To consider exhibitions by Sturtevant as 'The Best of the Twentieth Century Part I' would mean to imagine her practice as a mere exercise in preservation. Such an approach would fail to acknowledge the way Sturtevant's operation is always orientated towards difference, or, more accurately, the potential for difference. In *Untimely Meditations* (1876), Friedrich Nietzsche draws a distinction between uses and abuses of history on the understanding that we abuse history when we repeat the past in order to remain the same and guarantee continuity. Sturtevant's methodology never comes close to such an abuse; for her it is not a question of amassing material to establish the security of a stable sense of the past. She rejects an archival approach to history in which the more material is added the more secure we are in the knowledge of the past and the better we can build on it. The works she remakes do not consolidate or repeat their time but differ markedly from anything produced previously so that, in order to be understood within the time when they are remade, they force a rethinking of the nature of time itself. To remake *Gonzalez-Torres Untitled (Go-Go Dancing Platform)* (1995) is to remake the creative potential that gave origin to Gonzalez-Torres's piece, reliving the potentialities that once constituted the work. Sturtevant evokes Felix Gonzalez-Torres before his institutional acceptance – that is, Gonzalez-Torres at his most radical and political – and, because of that, her work proves to have a power that creates or alters the direction of time in order to shake off the lassitude of the present. This comeback is not just an example of what Sigmund Freud calls deferred action (*Nachträglichkeit*), for these works have not been repressed by a collective psyche in shock (indeed they are thoroughly ingrained in the our idea of art history). Rather, Sturtevant shares in the disdain that Nietzsche reserved for those who 'no longer let the consequences of an action, but its origin, decide with regard to its worth'.[15] Yet her interest is not in the consequences that have already been played out but those that are yet to be forged, the alternative narratives and durations that her objects bring about. Works can thus no longer be consumed in the same way; presentness of perception and representation is 'thrown out' and the process of engagement literally slowed down. She does not prompt us to search our unconscious for what is already known (although maybe forgotten), but instead ensures that previously trained responses and habits are no longer of service, reanimating the psyche to undertake new thinking rather than delving back into its murky recesses.

Sturtevant is not that fading starlet who looks to erase the signs of experience; she is the half-time coach who reminds her team of viewers of the deficit in their thinking, challenging them to make a comeback. This time-out slows down the perception of the object so that this delay becomes co-extensive with the time-lag that has taken place in the understanding and appreciation of her practice. The game she plays, however, is not Duchamp's chess – for chess, as Deleuze and Félix Guattari have noted, is 'coded'. The artworks she co-opts (those 'you had to know') can be compared to chess pieces, as 'they have an internal nature and intrinsic properties from which their movements, situations and confrontations derive' – and it is this resemblance that she casts into doubt.[16] What she shows is that it is only in their delayed state that art objects come back to be endowed with relative powers that depend not on the place they occupy or the time when they occur but the time and place that they work to create and the viewers create for them.

Gonzalez-Torres Untitled (Go-Go Dancing Platform), 1995, wood, light-bulbs, acrylic paint, wire and go-go dancer in silver lamé bikini and Walkman, 54.5 × 183 × 183cm

14 Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (trans. Paul Patton), London and New York: Continuum, 2004, p.91.
15 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future* (trans. Helen Zimmern), New York: Dover Publications, 1997, p.24.
16 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (trans. Brian Massumi), London and New York: Continuum, 2003, p.353.

Warhol Black Marilyn, 2004, synthetic polymer silkscreen and acrylic on canvas, 40 × 35cm

Not eccentric to but working as a centrifugal force amongst the artists who made the American art world of the 1960s and 70s so dynamic, Sturtevant, in addition to landmark solo interventions, participated in important performances by Claes Oldenburg and Robert Rauschenberg, and exhibited her work in key group shows including Gene Swenson's 'The Other Tradition' at the ICA in Philadelphia (1966); the Dwan Gallery's 'Language II' (1967); and the Leo Castelli Gallery's benefit show for E.A.T. (1969). In the 1970s Sturtevant made repetitions of works by Walter De Maria and Michael Heizer; her *Study for Various Beuys Films* (1971) was shot by Robert Fiore, whose involvement was crucial to the completion (and sonic evolution) of Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* film (1970). When she returned to the art world in the mid-1980s, most notably with what was billed (somewhat paradoxically, since Sturtevant has always had little truck with retro-spection) as a 'career retrospective ... curated by Douglas Davis and Eugene Schwartz', she continued to present a radical challenge to the historical-categorical separation of different movements of art (Pop, Conceptual, Land art, institutional critique) while showing art's economic, contextual and social complications.

Sturtevant reveals the total structures working in the interior of art; in other words, her work concerns the inappropriable.

Bruce Hainley:
For your first solo show in England, 'Cold Fear', you put into catalytic tension two *Warhol Black Marilyns* (both from 2004), facing off across from your *Duchamp Fresh Widow* (1992).[2] The works were lit so everything else in the room fell into utter darkness. Coming into the gallery, everyone was almost blinded by the effect. Your 1973 show at the Everson Museum also placed *Warhol Marilyns* (1965–73) counter to several of your Duchamps (with Beuys works as a third meaning or component).[3]

How would you suggest people begin to think about these two exhibitions in relation to one another? In terms of *same* and *difference*? In terms of *reversal* and *power*? The two shows, separated by thirty years, both accomplish something radical, but is it more helpful to think about continuity or rupture? How does recurrence get rewired?

Sturtevant:
The high-tension wire of 'Cold Fear' was created by displacement and the confrontation of space as an object.

This is to articulate visibilities: to make thought visible.

The Everson Museum had four rooms – *Duchamp 1200 Coal Bags* (1973); Beuys fat/felt sculptures (1971–73); *Warhol Marilyns*; and the last room containing the films *Duchamp Nu Descendant un Escalier* (1967/68), *Study for Various Beuys Films*,

overleaf
Infinite Exhaustion, 2007, video installation, 4 monitors, Betacam SP PAL

1 This interview resumes a previous conversation between Sturtevant and Hainley, which was published in *Artforum* in March 2003, pp.246–47.
2 At Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London, 2006.
3 'Sturtevant. Studies for Warhols's Marilyns, Beuys's Actions and Objects, Duchamps's, etc. Including Film', Everson Museum, Syracuse, NY, 1973.

'Sturtevant in Conversation with Bruce Hainley', Afterall, 18, Summer

Warhol Empire (1972): it is pushing disparity and repetition to force the radical ejection of representation.
This is to trigger thought.
Both exhibitions are the rupture of continuity, leaps and dark crevices – with the running thread of conceptual movement forward.

The difference of underlying structure stems from the reversal of hierarchies that cybernetics has forced into potent and dangerous modes of being. 'Cold Fear' is image over image. The Everson show is concept over object.

Note: The current speed of our digital world has shifted the object to its own representation; to the vast violent absence of image as object.

BH: Some parts of your answers are speeding right past me, so let me rewind – not to erase but to clarify!

Rupturing continuity marks a key Sturtevant mode.

'Raw Power' was your most recent show at Thaddaeus Ropac in Paris.[4] There was a work in the show that many people would recognise as having a relation – perhaps even continuity?! – with what 'Sturtevant' means for most: *Gober Partially Buried Sinks* (1997). Your Gobers remain more ominous and funereal (venereal?) than Gober's. But there were other works – *Hate Kill Falsity* (2006), which summoned Abu Ghraib, and *Infinite Exhaustion* (2007), which showed a dog endlessly racing across four monitors – that many might not see as 'Sturtevants': seemingly, the repetition unleashed from a stabilised artistic referent ('Gober') operates on another level and/or in another way. I can begin to comprehend 'Cold Fear' as image over image more easily than 'Raw Power'. Could you talk about the relation between those two shows and how your work jettisons the referent?

Oh, also, is the best catechism for cybernetics Paul Virilio, or walking into the Apple Store to ogle the new MacBook Air? I notice that Rome has an Apple retail outlet before Paris. Strange, *n'est-ce pas*?

S: Implicit in conceptual thinking is development of thinking. Thus we go:
from objects to grabbing the dynamics of movement in film;
from jetting representation to strangling cybernetics' tight hold on our mode of being;
from object to shifting mental structures;
from hate as specific to the hard-core game of hate killing;
from truth glued to concealed falsity.

Infinite Exhaustion is time-movement and image-movement to reveal our digital world of excess, limitation, transgression and exhaustion.
As for continuity, it is dismal identity and the demon of Same.

BH: 'Dismal identity': this leads me to ask another kind of question. You have, from the start of your career, resisted biography. Sturtevant's air force deploys only stealth jets from an undisclosed location. Your resistance to the biographical throws light upon how often biographical information structures how art is considered, written about, sold or even stands in for the 'object'. People have come to expect this kind of information – as if a picture of the artist were more important than a reproduction of his or her work. Of course, as finite beings, we are all accidentally delivered into the moment of our birth, so history impinges upon us. Could you say something about your stance? And does your resistance have anything to do with your move into writing? It is only after your infamous return, after more than a decade's hiatus, with the show at White Columns that you start doing interviews and writing not only about your work but also about others' (i.e. Duchamp, Paul McCarthy, etc.).

4 'Raw Power', Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Paris, 2007.

S: Not really. Also not really about other artists.

BH: So you would say your essays, rather than being about other artists, are about ... art? The contemporary situation? Man's plight?

S: Think we have some confusion here.
I don't write about other artists.
Never wrote about other artists.
Initial writing was not about 'art' but rather the understructure of art: the silent power of art.
And pushing to create vast new space for thinking.
Never is the writing about specifics.
Rather the disentangling of cyberimpositions.
And the infinite dimensions of shifting mental structures.

BH: How do you see your work being used by other artists? So much of your project unravels artistic teleologies, questions the 'development' of a signature style, challenges ideologies of 'influence', decentres subjectivity. And yet, you demonstrate (deploy?) the artwork as a possibility of and for thinking. It's difficult not to consider that you provide an X-ray image of the system of art. For example, it was as if Roy Lichtenstein was addressing you, when he asked, in the form of a painting: 'What? Why did you ask that? What do you know about my image duplicator?'[5] You showed him and others what you knew, and then some. But how do you think someone thinking about art – who wishes 'to be' an artist – should use your work?

S: Definitely the work should not be 'used' but rather for confronting the force of the thinking that brings it to a higher level.
Image duplicators, etc. are the power of our thrust to surface and absence, obsessively firing up disastrous interior resemblance.

BH: Would you say something about 'America America'?[6] How did you know Jeannine de Goldschmidt, who ran Galerie J? How did the show come about? Did you design invitation cards or a poster for the show? The work was all made in France, correct?

S: ... [*laughing*] This is so no way.

BH: Well, I ask about 'America America' because it would be a powerful title to use right now, although because of completely different reasons. When I first saw the huge banners for your MMK show with the image of your *Johns Double Flag* (1966) and the exhibition's title, 'The Brutal Truth', I thought of the Americanness of those double flags, the dark regression of America under the current administration, and I momentarily read 'The Brutal Truth' as if it was a translation of 'America America'.[7] How do you think about your work and your thinking in relation to America and Americanness? I remember hearing you correct someone when he referred to you as an 'expatriate', saying it wasn't so despite the fact that you reside in Paris.

S: What a switch. Hip-hopping from abstract to information and explanation is disrupting.
Anyhow, thus, and, because: the premise is that knowledge is not for understanding but for cutting.
Voilà.

overleaf
Duchamp Fresh Window, 1992, enamel paint on wood, leather, glass, brass knobs, 79 × 53 × 13cm

5 Roy Lichtenstein, *Image Duplicator*, 1963.
6 'America America', Galerie J, Paris, 1966.
7 'The Brutal Truth', Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt a.M., 2004.


FRESH WIDOW