



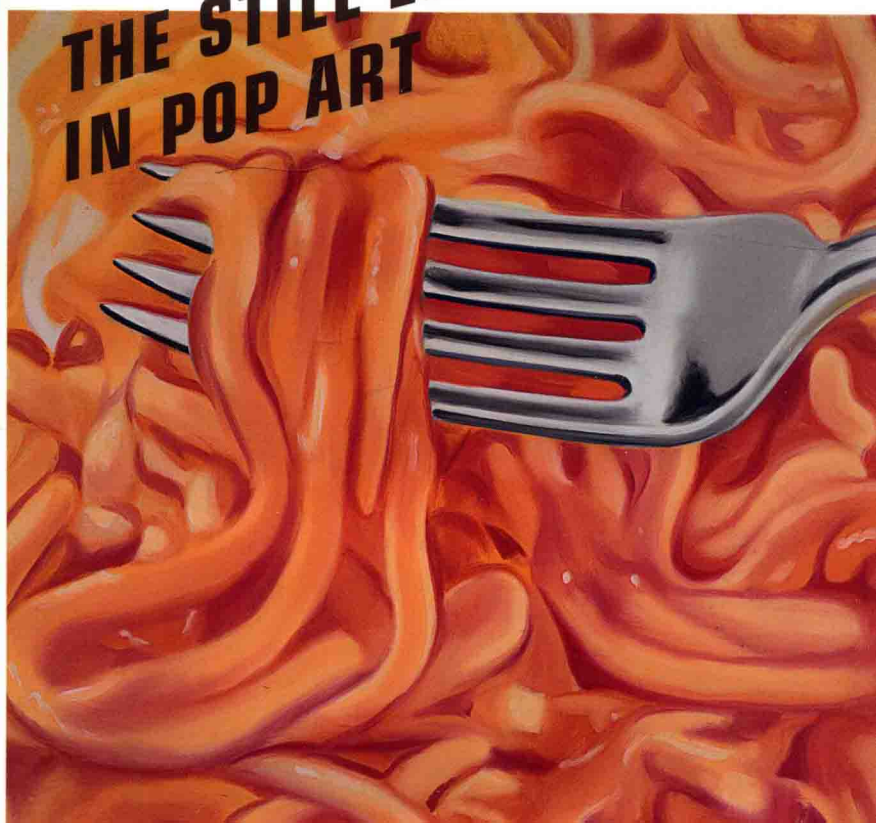
John Wilmerding

The
Object



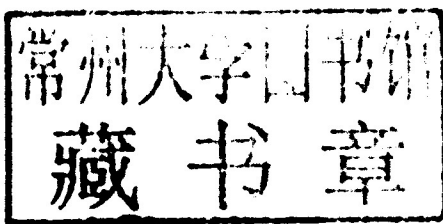
Pop
Object

THE STILL LIFE TRADITION
IN POP ART



THE POP OBJECT: THE STILL LIFE TRADITION IN POP ART

John Wilmerding



ACQUAVELLA

RIZZOLI
NEW YORK

THIS PUBLICATION ACCOMPANIES THE EXHIBITION

THE POP OBJECT

THE STILL LIFE TRADITION IN POP ART

CURATOR

JOHN WILMERDING

ON VIEW

APRIL 10 – MAY 24, 2013

ACQUAVELLA GALLERIES

18 EAST 79TH STREET

NEW YORK, NY 10075

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FRONT COVER [CLOCKWISE]

Roy Lichtenstein, *Still Life with Palette* (detail), 1972
Oil and Magna on canvas, 60 x 95⁵/₈ inches (152.4 x 242.9 cm)
Acquavella Galleries

Tom Wesselmann, *Smoker #3 (Mouth #17)*, 1968
Oil on canvas, 71¹/₂ x 67 inches (181.6 x 170.2 cm)
Courtesy The Estate of Tom Wesselmann

James Rosenquist, *Orange Field* (detail), 1964
Oil on canvas, 32 x 36 inches (81.3 x 91.4 cm). Private Collection

Andy Warhol, *Flowers* (detail), 1964
Acrylic and silkscreen ink on linen
48 x 48 inches (121.9 x 121.9 cm). Private Collection

BACK COVER [CLOCKWISE]

Wayne Thiebaud, *Lipstick Row* (detail), 1964
Oil on canvas, 12⁷/₈ x 18 inches (32.7 x 45.7 cm). Private Collection

Marjorie Strider, *Red Roses* (detail), 1962
Carved wood over Masonite panel painted over with acrylic
63 x 41⁷/₈ x 7 inches (160 x 106.4 x 17.8 cm)
Courtesy of Hollis Taggart Galleries

Andy Warhol, *Three Coke Bottles* (detail), 1962
Silkscreen ink and graphite on linen, 20 x 16 inches (50.8 x 40.6 cm)
Collection of The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh

Tom Wesselmann, *Seascape (Foot)* (detail), 1967
Three-color silkscreened, vacuum-formed Plexiglas, Edition Proof
14¹/₂ x 13 x 5⁵/₈ inches (36.8 x 33 x 1.6 cm)
Courtesy The Estate of Tom Wesselmann

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Tom Wesselmann, Roy Lichtenstein, James Rosenquist, Andy Warhol,
and Claes Oldenburg at the Factory, April 21, 1964

Foreword

SINCE THE 1970S, ACQUAVELLA GALLERIES has enjoyed a rich history of working with and showing Pop artists. Important loan exhibitions have included *Robert Rauschenberg Drawings* in 1986 and *Robert & Ethel Scull: Portrait of a Collection* in 2010, in addition to solo exhibitions by James Rosenquist and Wayne Thiebaud. For the past decade we have represented Rosenquist, and recently showed our fourth exhibition of his work, *Multiverse You are, I Am*. Last fall we also held a retrospective of works by Thiebaud, our first exhibition of the artist whom the gallery is delighted to now represent. In addition to exhibiting Pop works and representing two of the movement's most important practitioners, the gallery has placed major Pop works into private and museum collections.

I would like to thank, first and foremost, John Wilmerding for curating the exhibition and writing his informative essay that provides a fresh and insightful look at the movement. In obtaining the loans for this exhibition, we have been privileged to work directly with many of the artists and their families who have kindly and generously helped us throughout the process of planning this show. Warm thanks go to Stephen Antonakos, Vija Celmins, Jann Haworth, Jasper Johns, Alex Katz, Nancy Reddin Kienholz, Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, James Rosenquist, Rena Segal, Wayne Thiebaud, and Claire Wesselmann. We are also grateful to the many private collectors and museums who have lent their works to the exhibition; without their generosity this show would not have been possible.

Finally, I would like to thank the gallery for organizing the many facets of the exhibition. Thanks go to Eleanor Acquavella Dejoux and Emily Salas for working closely with John Wilmerding on this show, and also to Jean Edmonson, Michael Findlay, Kathleen Flynn, Mary Pell Lea, Garth Szwed, Eric Theriault, Kim Vick, and Devon Vogt.

William R. Acquavella

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INTRODUCTION

POP ART WAS THE DOMINANT ARTISTIC FORCE OF THE 1960S, and its influence continues strongly up to the present. A few of its original practitioners are still alive and active, some pursuing permutations of Pop styles through their later work. A movement drawing its inspiration from consumer culture and commercial techniques, Pop flourished as a new and revolutionary art form in its own right. But since its first decade, it has in turn powerfully affected the shape and character of commercial production and much of popular culture. The names of Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol are widely familiar well beyond the fields of art and art history, and as one critic has pointed out, Warhol's face is now one of the most recognizable to a broad public of any artist in history.

Most of the artists grouped under the Pop umbrella—some never liked the term or were resigned to having it applied—have received extensive documentation, numerous comprehensive monographs, and exhibitions devoted to full careers as well as component phases or aspects of their art. Almost all the figures associated with the style were born in the decade between 1925 and 1935; some were New Yorkers, but a number gravitated there from other parts of the country or abroad, generally in the later 1950s as young aspiring artists in their twenties. They arrived to the overwhelming dominance of Abstract Expressionism and the critical vocabulary of formalism. Their immanent struggle was to develop a new artistic voice and language of expression. As we know, the new realism they developed emerged in a near spontaneous artistic combustion between 1958 and 1962.

While there were distinct precedents for Pop in London—indeed, the term we owe to the English critic Lawrence Alloway—and funkier versions appeared with some west coast personalities, the movement unfolded foremost in New York. Although British and European Pop also celebrated the banal and quotidian, overall their expressions tended to be more narrative and more frequently based on compositional formats from magazines and newspapers. An even more significant difference from American Pop was the blurring of subject categories abroad, quite different from the distinctive groupings we shall explore by American artists. Hence the primary attention of this survey will look at Pop's development in the United States.

The general subject matter of Pop is well known: elements of the supermarket, the bathroom, the kitchen, and the highway. Almost every survey of Pop organizes discussion by these general themes or by the individual artists themselves. There has been virtually no attention to the Pop landscape, or figure, and certainly not the Pop still life. Although many of the artists associated by the style knew each other and regularly attended one another's openings or other gatherings, they never worked as a school or considered themselves part of a movement. But still life also has long been treated as a minor preoccupation for artists, yet has turned out to be the occasion for some of Pop's most innovative and witty expressions.

The still life object has been relatively less examined than other areas of Pop, yet has been a shared interest of all the major figures. Two particular aspects have been especially noteworthy: the cleverness of experimenting with multiple unconventional media and the representation of things both in the traditional two-dimensional forms of painting and screen printing as well as in multi-dimensional sculptural expressions. Think, for example, of the originality of Jasper Johns' commonplace objects in sculpmetal, Robert Rauschenberg's provocative early series of Combines, or Tom Wesselmann's laser-cut steel drawings of flower bouquets. To these we could also add Lichtenstein's ceramic teacups, Jim Dine's early assemblages, Claes Oldenburg's soft stuffed appliances, James Rosenquist's motorized canvases, and Jeff Koons' cast glass flowers. Together, such works are an index of the fresh vitality in subject matter, materials, and techniques explored by these artists. What we discover is how much they participate in earlier traditions of still life representation while transforming those traditions in striking new directions.

The paradox is that despite the constant evidence of originality by Pop artists in thought and execution, many of them demonstrably admired and paid homage to earlier figures and art historical precedents. Typical are Wesselmann's career-long affectionate encounters with the paintings, sculpture, and cut-outs of Henri Matisse, or Lichtenstein's investigations in the 1970s of still life examples by seventeenth-century Dutch painters and the early nineteenth-century American practitioner Raphaelle Peale. In addition, we might cite George Segal's plaster homages to Edward Hopper and Edgar Degas, and Oldenburg's playful remakes of objects by Pablo Picasso or Marcel Duchamp. Also well known are Robert Indiana's great tributes of his *Hartley Elegies* to that early American modernist, or the links of Johns' aesthetic to Duchamp and Man Ray. Because of this element of engagement with the record of art history, and the place of still life within the traditional hierarchy of artistic subject matter, it is worth digressing briefly to survey the highlights of still life's history as a context for Pop's reincarnations.

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