

Rediscovered Andy Warhol interview explores pop art and queerness

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A new paper in the *Oxford Art Journal* examines the significance of a newly discovered recoding of Andy Warhol's famous 1963 interview with Gene Swenson, published in ARTnews under the heading "What is Pop Art?" The printed interview omitted a large part of the recording, which actually starts with the question "What do you say about homosexuals?" Warhol's early and explicit on-the-record statements about Pop's relationship to homosexuality were suppressed from publication.

Author Jennifer Sichel discovered the original cassette recording of the interview, which contains discussion of Warhol's views on homosexuality that were removed from the final print edition. Her paper asks to what ends the editorial decision to redact sections from the printed version effected subsequent receptions of both Swenson and Warhol's work.

In 1963, as part of an ARTnews series titled "What is Pop Art? Answers from 8 painters," the art critic Gene Swenson conducted a defining interview with Andy Warhol. It was in this interview that Warhol first declared "I think everybody should be a machine" and "I think everybody should like everybody" - utterances that have, over the years, sustained many of the most rigorous arguments about Pop, Postmodernism, and Warhol's practice.

Despite the fact that the printed interview was taken to define Warhol's world view, the discovery of the original cassette recording shows that

the final printed version was a heavily edited edition of the original conversation. Most strikingly, Swenson begins the interview by asking Warhol, "What do you say about homosexuals?" - a theme that runs through much of the interview. However this question, along with every subsequent reference to homosexuality, was expunged from the published interview.

Although it's unclear why the material was removed, ample evidence survives documenting the many protracted battles Swenson waged against publishers, curators, and institutions over their willingness to suppress disruptive social, political, and queer content during the sixties.

This new evidence both supports many of the important arguments scholars have advanced over the past two decades to establish and understand Warhol's queerness, and restores the significance of Swenson's battle to discuss disruptive social, political, and queer content despite it being suppressed in 1963.

"During a dissertation research trip in March 2016, I found the unknown tape-recording of Andy Warhol's defining early [interview](#) with Gene Swenson," said Sichel. "Warhol's famous statements 'everybody should be a machine' and 'everybody should like everybody' were uttered in direct response to Swenson's probing questions about homosexuality. Elevating Swenson alongside Warhol, I argue for the importance of both of their divergent queer practices, and in particular, of Swenson's loud, angry demand to show up and protest even when resistance feels futile. This opens a new approach to the study of Pop Art focused on archival evidence of what actually happened on the ground, and on the queer practices that grew up in response to the movement's dominant trends."

More information: "'Do you think Pop Art's queer?' Gene Swenson and Andy Warhol" *Oxford Art Journal* (2017). [DOI: 10.1093/oxartj/kcx044](https://doi.org/10.1093/oxartj/kcx044)

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