

Warhol's Portraits

George Green

Liz

Marilyn killed herself because she thought
that middle age began at thirty-five.
In Liz's case it did, but she kept going,
though Dick went down in flames (*Exorcist II*).
This print's from '65 and she looks ready
to frug the night away with Peter Lawford,
who hasn't started wearing beads (not yet).
Those were the days, before the TV movies,
before the Percoset and Häagan Dazs.
Oblivious to the telltale signs, she smiles,
the long descent to Neverland begun.

Mick Jagger

He is in my opinion past his prime
already in this print, and he and Keith
are fast becoming tacky little skanks
and sherry-slurping, chicken-headed whores.
They shake their butts and sweat in leather pants,
like ancient drag queens high on Angel dust.

Dennis Hopper

His cowboy Hamlet death scenes are the best.
He flops, jerks, and blabs beseechingly,
then flops, imploringly, and dies. John Wayne,
even, is stunned by so much hamminess.
(He kills him twice: *True Grit* and *Katie Elder*).
Now Dennis sells investments on TV,
blabbing away to boomers who have bucks
enough to golf all day, enough to die
of boredom in the sun. Dennis is cool, though,
and still the hippest actor on the scene.
A poet and a painter, and, what's more,
a recognized authority on Andy.

Goethe

From Tischbein's portrait of the noble poet
lounging beside a shattered obelisk.

The campiness of Goethe's hat and cloak
no doubt explains why Andy did this copy.

The coloring is pure Electric Circus
and Maharishi-era Donovan.

"The savoring of unintended ironies"
is Peter Schjeldahl in last week's New Yorker
explaining camp to dopes out in the burbs.

Deborah Harry

She is expressionless, or nearly so,
and yet the muffled insolence is there,
a look that prom queens have—the secret stoners;
a look that cover girls will overdo.
I've seen that look on Bombay prostitutes
in coffee-table books, but, some of them,
pathetically, look out at us with hope,
as if a photograph could rescue them
or set them up inside a better cathouse.

Truman Capote

Those A-list types who had rejected Andy
(Capote, Rauschenberg, and Jasper Johns)
all came around when he got really big,
though friendship had become extraneous.
The portraits of his friends are extra flat.
You can't look into them: There is no in.
A frightful vacancy and transience
is what, I guess, he meant us all to see.
He might as well have kept on painting shoes.

Jerry Hall

I could step back and make a case for these,
regard them, somehow, in another light.
Maybe the sitters have been divinized
and that's why they all fade into abstraction.
Maybe those patches where the colors smear,
blurring the lines, express the soul's diffuse
ethereality, reminding us
of what, time and again, the Lord enjoins—
that we behold each other as divine.

Mao

The Chairman's constipation was so bad,
he only defecated once a week,
and during the Long March his weekly voidings
were sometimes celebrated by his troops.
Mao moved his bowels once on a mountaintop
above the clouds, and members of his staff
began to dance and clap their hands. The news
spread rapidly as cheers went up along
the mountain side. The tattered ranks rejoiced,
ten-thousand hats were tossed into the air!
From goat trails near the summit bugles sounded,
and acclamations echoed in the dells.