
NEW ORLEANS
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Cover image: *Most Wanted Man No. 7, Salvatore V.*, 1964, by Andy Warhol, panel 1 of diptych. Collection Museum Ludwig Cologne / Donation Ludwig

p. 114: Thirteen Most Wanted Men *by Andy Warhol on Facade of New York State Pavilion Theaterama*, 1964, Patrick A. Burns, *New York Times*

p. 121: "The Thirteen Most Wanted," Police Department, City of New York, 1962. Collection of The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh; Founding Collection, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc.

Our story begins in 1961, with billionaire art collector and New York State Governor Nelson Rockefeller, and peripatetic critic and architect Philip Johnson. The two men were connected through the Museum of Modern Art: Rockefeller's mother had co-founded the institution and Johnson was the first director of its architecture department. When Rockefeller asked Johnson to design the New York State Pavilion for the 1964 New York World's Fair, his only instructions were to make the host state's structure the tallest at the global expo. The resulting pavilion — which still exists, partially dilapidated and partially as a working theater — was a multipart complex whose main structure was somewhere between a classical ruin and a circus tent. It featured the world's largest terrazzo map of New York State sheltered by the "Tent of Tomorrow," an oval roof of brightly colored translucent plastic panels suspended many feet above. Three yellow disc-shaped observation decks, each higher than the last, supported by concrete columns, towered over the tent. Finally, there was the circular "Theaterama," built to contain a panoramic film of New York State.

Johnson invited ten up-and-coming artists, some of whom he collected personally, to produce new work for the Theaterama's featureless gray exterior. These artists were Peter Agostini, John Chamberlain, Robert Indiana, Ellsworth Kelly, Roy Lichtenstein, Alexander Liberman, Robert Mallary, Robert Rauschenberg, James Rosenquist, and Andy Warhol, who had opened his first New York exhibition of Pop paintings in November 1962, just a month before the New York State Pavilion work was commissioned. (Johnson had purchased Warhol's 1962 *Gold Marilyn* out of this exhibition, probably on the advice of his life partner, David Whitney, who, 30 years his junior, was what we would now call an "independent curator" and major tastemaker in his own right. Johnson would donate it to the Museum of Modern Art very soon after.)

In planning the exterior of the Theaterama, Johnson had invited each artist to produce a new work for a 20 × 20 foot slot, to be spaced all around at regular intervals on the exterior wall. For his contribution, Warhol chose to enlarge the mug shots of the New York Police Department's 13 most wanted criminals of 1962, silkscreen them on square Masonite panels, and tile them together into an animated black-and-white rogues' gallery which, along with the other works, would overlook one of the fair's central byways. All of the works were installed by April 15, 1964. But after

triggering objections at the highest level, *Thirteen Most Wanted Men* was painted over with silver paint a few days later. When the fair opened to the public on April 22, all that was visible was a 20 × 20 foot silver square, mounted on the concrete structure between a fragile-looking white sculpture by Agostini and a colorful combination of advertising imagery by Rosenquist.

That July, Warhol reused the mural's silkscreens to make a set of paintings, each featuring one of the *Thirteen Most Wanted Men*. He abandoned the square format of the fair tiles in favor of 40 × 40 inch canvases that emphasized their presence as portraits. In titling these new, individual works—20 of which were made altogether (some were made in triplicate; some doubled; and others are unique)—he also returned to the source material for the first names, initials of last names, and "numbers" of the criminals themselves. Before moving on to other work, Warhol produced a replacement for the New York State Pavilion piece: 25 Masonite panels each depicting the smiling face of New York City planning mastermind and World's Fair president Robert Moses. This was rejected immediately by Johnson—who said he didn't think they should "thumb [their] noses"—and, though consigned to Castelli Gallery at the end of that summer, these works were subsequently lost. Although there is no evidence that Moses had anything to do with the commission or the covering-over of the mural, Warhol appeared to be identifying him as the mural's censor. (The 75-year-old Moses's conservative cultural attitudes, his destructive urban renewal policies, and, specifically at the fair, his refusal to remind the building trades of the desegregation laws that were on the books, generated much anger among New Yorkers from Greenwich Village to Harlem. The fair presidency was a kind of "consolation prize" for Moses' loss of other public offices—which had been orchestrated by Nelson Rockefeller, the only man powerful enough to do so. After 40 years of reigning over New York's public realm he had become for many a kind of Public Enemy #1.)

The fair was open from April to October of both 1964 and 1965, and the square, silvery blank that had been *Thirteen Most Wanted Men* stayed up for both of those seasons. In a *New York World-Telegram* article from summer 1965 headlined "Silver Square 'So Nothing' It Satisfies Warhol," the artist is described standing before the mural at the World's Fair

with members of his entourage, saying that the silvered-over version is "more me now." Through typical, jesting Warholian attitudinal alchemy, *Thirteen Most Wanted Men* had become a new work in the form of a silver mono- chrome. Indeed, the "blank" appears frequently in his work and words. He added identically sized, single-color panels without imagery to a selection of the "Disaster" paintings; and in many other works of that period, he left areas of the canvas untouched, including a section of *Thirteen Most Wanted Men*. (The number of individual images [22] did not match the number of panels that would make up a grid [25], so he simply left three squares at the bottom edge empty.) Not just comfortable with the void but personally identified with it, Warhol also wished later that his gravestone be left blank—then adjusted this statement to say that it should, rather, say the word "figment."

The works on the New York State Pavilion were commissioned in December 1962 and announced (with one-line descriptions for each, and no illustrations) in the *New York Times* on October 6, 1963. It was during precisely this period that Warhol was repurposing imagery of suicides, car crashes, an electric chair, and protestors clashing with police, which he found in the newsmedia, as subjects for paintings now known as the "Death and Disaster" series. The first "Disasters" serially repeat dreadful scenes of dismemberment—a body impaled on a telephone pole, a foot next to a car tire, bodies hanging out of car windows amidst crumpled steel. Others repeat an image of an empty electric chair in 1963, the same year that New York State, after banning capital punishment, performed its last two executions. *The Race Riots*, also considered part of this body of work, reproduce a series of photographs of a police dog tearing off a civil rights protestor's trouser leg—three frames of humiliation unfolding as the civil rights movement was gaining strength, assisted by media exposure of exactly this type of violence.

According to poet John Giorno, it was at a dinner party in April 1963 (just weeks before the photograph of the Birmingham protests that Warhol used for *Race Riot* would be published in *Life* magazine) that painter Wynn Chamberlain suggested the most wanted men as subject matter for Warhol's World's Fair commission. Chamberlain reportedly offered to ask his boyfriend, a policeman with the NYPD, to bring Warhol a stash of police department printed matter for inspiration. Indeed, a handy, pocket-

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sized, police-department-printed booklet containing the mug shots, aliases, crimes, "fingerprint classifications," and other identifying information for the NYPD's Thirteen Most Wanted of 1962 was found in Warhol's *Time Capsules*, along with examples of the kind of FBI wanted posters that were apparently on view in post offices at that time. (Warhol's *Time Capsules* consist of approximately 600 boxes of life-related ephemera accumulated by the artist since the mid-1960s, whose cataloguing over the past 20 years by The Andy Warhol Museum has allowed much insight into his work.) *Thirteen Most Wanted Men* is frequently mistakenly thought to be based on the FBI's most wanted, but Warhol's usual deadly precision is in evidence in his choice of the NYPD booklet. In line with his interest in seriality and repetition, Warhol chose the readymade "collection" of men over the single criminal, and, better to represent his city and state, focused on local, rather than national, fugitives from justice, with the possible result that New York City visitors to the fair might have recognized a family member or neighbor in the dubious group. When quizzed about the piece by a reporter for a *New York Journal-American* article published April 15, 1964, the day the mural went up, Warhol said, "It just had something to do with New York." As usual, there was New York City (sexy-dangerous and ungrateful) sticking its finger in the eye of New York State.

Warhol's New York gallerist, Eleanor Ward of the Stable Gallery, did not show or sell the works in the "Disaster" series. Ileana Sonnabend showed them in Paris in January 1964, in an exhibition Warhol had wanted to title "Death in America." Too hot for New York, the *Men* canvases themselves were also shown for the first time together at Sonnabend's Paris gallery three years after the incident at the fair. In the exhibition booklet for this 1967 exhibition, the *Thirteen Most Wanted Men* are dated to 1963 rather than 1964—emphasizing their connection to the "Disaster" series and other work that year, and deemphasizing their connection to the World's Fair. (Inside is an essay by art critic Otto Hahn, with an epigraph by Robert Delaunay: "La photo est un art criminel.") *Thirteen Most Wanted Men*'s unusually long gestation—only a year or so less than the time required to plan the World's Fair itself—meant that a work generated during Warhol's most provocative period, whose results had not been seen by New Yorkers even within the protected confines of an art gallery, would have ended up, had the mural remained, in the most visible venue of its day. Its covering-over in silver effectively brought it up to date in his

own work and life: silver was the color with which Billy Name was covering every possible corner of Warhol's new studio, which would become known as "the Factory," into which he had moved in January 1964. Although absent from the fair, the images of the *Thirteen Most Wanted Men* in the form of acetates hanging on walls and over windows served as a backdrop to activity at the Factory at least through 1965.

But as much as these works — with their black-and-white palette and their disturbingly seductive imagery of violence as captured by a cruel camera — are "Disasters," they are also portraits. During the same period, Warhol produced his first portrait commission, 1963's *Ethel Scull Thirty-Six Times*, based on a session with the socialite in a Times Square photo booth. The final product was a wall of shots of his subject's head and shoulders, reordered into a multicolored grid of animated poses. Like the mug shot, a photo-booth picture is an industrial or workaday (as opposed to fine-art) photographic format whose multiple frames resemble a segment of film — a medium into which Warhol had recently plunged.

Also in January 1964, Warhol began shooting the *Screen Tests*, three-minute-long portraits in 16 mm film. The very first series of these — which could be said to be the inspiration for all of the Tests, which eventually numbered 472 — were titled *Thirteen Most Beautiful Boys*. As identified by Callie Angell, this "conceptual series," which continued into 1966 but was concentrated in 1964, eventually comprised 42 portraits of 35 young men, ranging from underground film star and poet Taylor Mead to dancer Freddie Herko to poet and artist John Giorno to Factory photographer Billy Name to actor Dennis Hopper to someone noted only as "Boy." In an unpublished interview conducted for Angell's *Andy Warhol Screen Tests*, Billy Name says that the work was the title — a perpetually open-ended group that could always be added to, like any other collection. The *Boys* and *Men* share more than the first part of their title: in the *Tests*' very process, in which a subject is placed under bright lights and requested to stay as still as possible for three minutes, we also find a hint of law enforcement's punishing constraints.

Warhol's identification with criminals and other transgressors, as well as his artistic deployment of the state structures that discipline and punish them, can be read in the context of his own sexuality and that of his peers.

At a time when the expression of gay sexuality, either between people or in media, was illegal, all references to it had to be in code. *Thirteen Most Wanted Men* has, in fact, been persuasively decoded by art historian Richard Meyer and others, and now we can read the double meaning in its punning reference to "wanted men." We can also see the active glances going on amongst those men in their mural configuration, and pick up the work's reference to "rough trade" or desirably threatening forms of masculinity. Warhol coded his early films as well: from *Eat* to *Empire* to the *Screen Tests*, he generally preferred visual and verbal puns on sex acts to showing forbidden body parts. In a letter to a traveling Warhol, probably from spring of 1965, Billy Name informs him about a police department visit to the Factory in search of "13 Most" (a likely reference to either *Thirteen Most Beautiful Boys* or *Thirteen Most Beautiful Women*, a companion group of *Screen Tests*). But had law enforcement viewed what they were after, they would have seen only an anonymous series of quiet faces. This contrasts strongly with the explicit *Flaming Creatures* (1963), whose far less politic author, underground filmmaker Jack Smith, was one of Warhol's main inspirations as he took up filmmaking. *Flaming Creatures* was a lightning rod for police enforcement of obscenity laws, especially in the run-up to the New York World's Fair in spring 1964. During the summer of 1963, Warhol had made what may have been his first film on the set of Smith's second film, *Normal Love*. On March 3, 1964, a Jonas Mekas-organized screening of *Flaming Creatures*, which had Warhol's three-minute "newsreel" of *Normal Love* on the bill as well, was raided and all films and equipment confiscated and never returned. Protesting this and other shutdowns, on April 22, 1964—the opening date of the World's Fair—a group of artists and poets including Taylor Mead, Alan Marlowe, Diane di Prima, Julian Beck, Allen Ginsburg, and others marched from Bryant Park to the newly constructed Lincoln Center where they dumped a coffin marked "Will Free Expression be Buried?" next to the fountains adjacent to the New York State Theater, another Philip Johnson building that would open officially the following day.

In one of the comparatively few newspaper articles that reported the covering-up at the time, Philip Johnson claimed that it had been Warhol's decision to paint over the mural, and that official objections were not, and would never have been, the deciding factor. In another, he claimed that due to the length of time that had elapsed, one of the criminals had been

pardoned, and they wanted to avoid lawsuits. Here it's worth quoting at length — despite the inaccuracies — an unpublished interview that the prominent curator and close Warhol friend Henry Geldzahler conducted with Johnson in 1982:

Henry Geldzahler:
Philip, we're going to end this with a story that perhaps hasn't been printed before. In 1964, for the New York World's Fair, you did the New York State Building. And you commissioned Andy Warhol to do 10 paintings — enormous ones — 20 × 20 feet, for the exterior of this building. A very daring commission, because Andy was not the enormous Pop figure in '64 that he has become. And yet somehow those paintings disappeared overnight. What happened?

Philip Johnson:
It was a very sad story. He chose, unbeknownst to me, but I don't care. I gave each artist a chance to pick his own subject, and he picked — impishly — the ten most wanted men, their heads would be about 15 feet. And I thought, "That would be an absolutely delicious idea." Why not? He used the FBI list we used to see in Post Offices — we don't anymore — of the ten most wanted names. And I thought nothing of it until I got a call from Rene d'Harnoncourt that the Governor wished to have it removed, just before the show opened.

HG:
Did it have anything to do with the high number of a certain ethnic group that was in the top ten?

PJ:
It had all to do with the fact that 9 out of 10 names that were all from …

HG:
A certain part of the world.

PJ:
Yes. Well, the Governor wanted to be elected (in the worst [way]), and this never crossed my mind, so I didn't check with him. The Governor, by the way, helped us pay for that, personally.

HG:
The first part or the second part?

PJ:
Well, he didn't help pay for Andy, no. But there were lots of other artists. And the Governor was most, most helpful. But they weren't painted over — they were removed. Eventually all the canvases were removed; they don't still hang there. The Rauschenberg is in the Dallas museum.

Rene d'Harnoncourt was the director of the Museum of Modern Art. As a trustee of that museum, New York State Governor Nelson Rockefeller was also d'Harnoncourt's boss; Johnson was probably MoMA's most influential ex-employee, the designer that same year of the renovation of its signature garden, and a major donor. His mention of the FBI (rather than NYPD) might be Johnson misremembering, or it might have been his real understanding of Warhol's intentions at the time. But the phrase "absolutely delicious" calls up both Johnson's deep attitudinal alignment with Warhol (in an interview with Billy Klüver and Julie Martin he calls him "méchant" [naughty] ("Andy's was the one the governor turned down. He was a méchant boy that time." echoing the indulgent tone of this interview's "impish") and his surprising political naïveté, which had had incalculably worse results 30 years earlier, before and during World War II.

The ethnicity that dared not speak its name was Italian-American (seven out of 13 of the *Men* had Italian names), indeed an important potential constituency for Rockefeller. But Warhol's elevation of career criminals — with all their bruises and booking numbers — to the facade of a building which existed explicitly to promote a positive image of New York State to a predicted 40 million visitors would seem to be reason enough to have the mural removed, especially for a Northeastern moderate running for the Republican nomination for US president against a much more conservative opponent at a moment when New York City was experiencing a well-publicized rise in its crime rate. And it may be that Rockefeller's extraordinary role as a supporter of art and artists as well as his liberal views generally — not to mention his involvement in the destruction of Diego Rivera's mural at Rockefeller Center in 1934 — prevented him from saying openly that it was outrageous and had to go.

Indeed, the *World-Telegram* article in which Warhol is quoted affirming the silvered-over work as a more accurate reflection of himself begins with a reference to *Thirteen Most Wanted Men* as having been "deemed inappropriate for a Fair." Here the reporter seems to be taking for granted that the various explanations provided in the press the year before were specious, and leaps to the most obvious conclusion — and the one that may be, viscerally, the truest.

Everyone remained friends. Nelson Rockefeller was New York State governor until 1973, and though he was the one who gave the order that the mural must go, in 1967 he commissioned Warhol to do his own portrait and, in 1968, one of his wife, Happy. Johnson, occupied at the time not only by the New York State Pavilion but by the New York State Theater at Lincoln Center — funded in part by Rockefeller's office and made possible by Robert Moses's urban renewal policies — and the new garden at the Museum of Modern Art, almost certainly worked with Warhol to select silver as the color to paint over *Thirteen Most Wanted Men*. Johnson remained an important ally of the artist and a collector of his work, commissioning his own portrait in 1972 for which Warhol used a photograph taken in the summer of 1964 as source material.

All this is just background — an account of various aspects of the forces at work on an artist famous for refusing to describe his own motivations. Perhaps, however, it provides the essence of the story without taking the place of an artwork that is, above all, a gesture — a powerful act that supersedes words.

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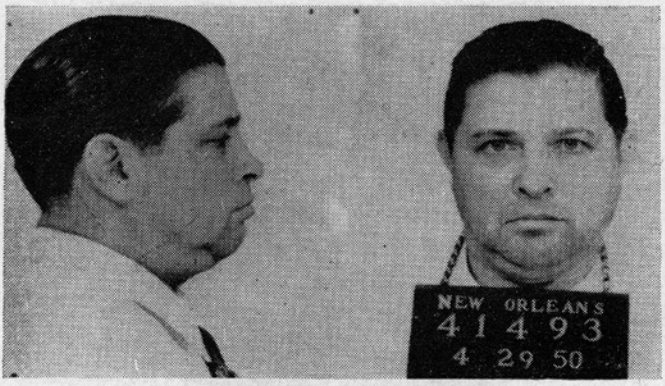
GRAND LARCENY



SALVATORE VITALE

ALIAS

Sal Vitole.

DESCRIPTION

Age, 54 (1957); ht., 5'3"; wt., 200 lbs.; straight black hair, slightly gray on sides; olive complexion; blue eyes; round chubby face; irregularly cut scar below left nostril; cut scar top of forehead at hairline; short and stocky build. Last known address, 9 Prince Street, Manhattan; born in Cinic, Italy.

FINGERPRINT CLASSIFICATION

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P.D. No. B 107,032
Special Frauds Squad

Issued July 20, 1957

CIRCUMSTANCES OF CRIME

Vitale was indicted by the New York County Grand Jury on January 3, 1957, on six counts of grand larceny in aspirin switch confidence game. Poses as possessor of $50,000 seeking to return to Italy with it. Accosts victim on street, supposedly seeking a "builder" who was to help him. Victim, induced to perform this service by accomplice who flashes bundle of cash, withdraws money from a bank to show good faith. He is sent for aspirin to help illness feigned by perpetrator. Victim leaves money with the perpetrators and when he returns with drugs, they are gone.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Vitale has a history of thirteen arrests, among them two for violation of Harrison Act; one each for suspicion of murder and violation of immigration laws; larceny by fraud and trickery, four times. Moves from city to city; arrested for aspirin switch in Pennsylvania and Louisiana.

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